BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 13

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 13, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

196 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume 13

Brief Thoughts on 1 Chronicles 11-17

There is a great difference between the David of Chronicles and that of Samuel. The king in 1 Chronicles is the David of grace and blessing according to the counsels of God. The king in Samuel is the historical David exercised in responsibility.

In Chronicles we do not find the matter of Uriah nor that of Absalom. Even Joab with all his crimes, who is not cited in 2 Sam. 23, is here mentioned because he took the stronghold of Zion. This makes us understand what value Zion has in the eyes of God, and in what way the Chronicles regard the history. There is absolutely no evil reported, save that which is necessary to make us understand the history. In the books of Kings it is the history of Israel and the conduct of the kings under responsibility. In the books of Chronicles it is a question of God's mind, and in chapters 11 to 17 of the first book as to placing David in Jerusalem, chapter 10 having given us the fall of Saul.

Chapter 11.

David begins to reign over all Israel with the desires of the people; he begins at Zion. Afterward we have his valiant men, and their joy at installing him as king.

Chapter 12.

Here we see the heart of Israel returning to David, as it will return to Christ when He shall have established the throne in Zion. It is the heart of Israel which concentrates itself round the Beloved of God. Certain persons came when he was a stranger; now it is all Israel.

Chapter 13.

Then it is a question of putting the ark of God in its place. Before this the ark had been taken. (See Psa. 78:59-72.) It is sovereign grace which returns. He chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which He loved.

1st. God was wroth and greatly abhorred Israel, so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand.

2nd. With David God takes up His people and sanctuary. David re-commences all the history of Israel.

Then, if Psa. 132 be looked at, this feature will be seen as to the ark: it was the sign of the covenant finally, and a new thing to be set in Zion. When Moses in Num. 10 said, “Rise up, Lord,” he did not add “into thy rest.” The tabernacle in the wilderness could not be the rest of God. But Zion is the place that Jehovah chose for His rest. He desired it for His habitation. (Ver. 13.) And David enters into the mind of God. Compare verse 4. (“I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until,” &c.) We see in the Psalms generally all the deep feelings in the heart of David for God.

On the other hand God makes Himself respected, as we see in His dealing with Uzzah.

We have thus as a summary of all this: first, that God had rejected His tabernacle, Shiloh; and secondly, that meanwhile He gives prophets to sustain sovereign relations with His people till Messiah comes. Samuel had truly begun prophecy, which is not anything established, but only serves meanwhile. See the song of Hannah who figures the remnant there. Prophecy declares that God is all, come what may, and that He sustains all things till He have raised the house of His anointed. Thirdly, at last in His anointed He accomplishes His mind. The people no more wished to have God working by prophecy than when He wrought by priesthood. They demand a king, and God gives Saul. Meanwhile God prepares His anointed by affliction: Hebrews is just the counterpart of David's history. So, too; Jesus will reign over Judah before reigning over all Israel. In the Chronicles we have no history of David's reign in Hebron.

Chapter 14.

David king over all Israel renders himself terrible to the nations (ver. 17), as the Lord will in due time. (Zech. 9; Mic. 5) Victory follows dependence and obedience; and as the blessing of Jehovah comes, the fame of David goes out everywhere. Psa. 18 finds its place here: in taking it all one must place it a little later.

Chapter 15.

David now has no rest till he has prepared a resting-place for the ark of Jehovah; even as the Lord also, in the midst of conflicts, will have no rest till He establishes the tie between God and His people.

Knowing that the tabernacle was abandoned, David did not dream of putting the ark in the tabernacle. This would have been to restore things on the spoiled footing of the law. The external routine had quite fallen short of God's glory. The king takes the lead, as priesthood had failed; and the ark is put in the seat of kingly power; as Christ the deliverer in grace will order all by-and-by in Zion, whence the rod of His power is to go forth.

Then (ver. 16) David institutes choral worship or psalmody: Heman, Asaph, and even David himself in an ephod of linen danced and played. It was he that recalled the due place of the Levites, and summoned the priests in their due order, who also had the singers appointed with instruments of music, psalteries, and harps, and cymbals sounding by lifting up the voice with joy. All is new here and in relation to David's mind touching Zion, the center chosen, after having left aside the tabernacle at Gibeon and all the order established primitively by Moses. “So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of Jehovah came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing; and she despised him in her heart.” (Vers. 25-29.) Nevertheless David was not king and priest like Solomon, though it be true that his faith made all the joy of the people of God. It is a sort of

anticipation of the true Melchizedek.

Chapter 16.

This song is composed of several Psalms. We find here all the principles on which God founds the blessing of His people for the last day. But there is a remarkable difference—that He does not put them in the definitive blessing.

There is to begin a part of Psa. 105 He shows how He kept Abraham. He recalls the faithfulness of God toward them until then and bids them recollect it. Only He bids Israel be mindful always of His covenant without saying yet that He remembers it, because it is not yet the full blessing.

From verse 23 we have Psa. 96 It is always an invitation. It is not yet Psa. 98 where all is accomplished. The temple is wanting, &c.

From verse 84 we have the beginning of the Psalms which celebrate the faithfulness of God, 106, 107, 108, and 136. Psa. 106 is His goodness faithful forever, in presence of all the unfaithfulness of Israel. Psa. 107 is that which He has done to gather at the last day. Psa. 108 is the celebration of the Messiah come back. It is the psalm in which it is said that the stone rejected by the builders is become the head of the corner. Psa. 136 is the celebration of God's goodness which begins from the creation, and goes through to the millennium. In this psalm mercy occupies the place from one end to the other. After this in verses 35,36 he cites still the end of Psa. 106. One sees by verse 35 that at this moment, as in Psa. 106, all Israel is not yet brought back and everything not yet restored. Only the pledge of the covenant is there. Alt the scene of the re-commencement of the relations of God with Israel is found in the Chronicles.

In verses 39-43 the altar was still with the tabernacle at Gibeon. It was a high place which one had to condemn in following David who had the fresh truth. Faith did so, though Solomon did not, but clung to the altar. However David with the priests to offer burnt-offerings established Heman and Jeduthun, &c., to give thanks to Jehovah because His mercy endures forever. It is thus that one can judge what is old system in the church; though we can also say, His mercy endures forever. The altar there was a testimony to the fallen state of the people, for the ark was not in the tabernacle.

It is touching to see that the Chronicles were written in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. At that time it was less necessary to say all the sins of the people than to say, His mercy endures forever.

A basis is laid for all in Christ's death, and by His resurrection all are sure mercies to be displayed at His coming and kingdom.

Chapter 17.

Here the condition laid upon the seed of David is not found as in 2 Sam. 7 God did not allow David to build the temple; because, when He would glorify Himself in the midst of the people", it was necessary that it should be in peace and that there be no more enemies. The warrior was the character of David, though at that moment there was rest all around. Because of that David could not build the house of Jehovah. Nevertheless as depositary of promises he learns that Jehovah will build him a house (ver. 10), and that his son should build Him a house, as He would establish his house for evermore. (Vers. 12-14.)

How touching is the prayer of David on this occasion! (Vers. 6-27.)

Notes on 2 Corinthians 6:1-3

The apostle now follows up the striking specimen he had given of the ministry of reconciliation toward the close of chapter v. by an appeal to the Corinthians themselves. There we saw how erroneous it is to treat verse 20 as a call to the saints; for he is illustrating the word they had to preach to the world. Hereto the opposite error is common through fear of compromising the security of the believer; and the more so, as men like Olshausen say, It is undeniable that the apostle assumes that grace when once received may be lost: the scriptures know nothing of the dangerous error of the advocates of predestination, that grace cannot be lost; and experience stamps it as a lie. This the more orthodox Calvinist, like Hodge, attempts to meet by saying that the apostle is only exhorting men not to let God's grace be to no purpose in making His Son sin, as it regarded them; that is, that a satisfaction for sin sufficient for all and appropriate to all had been made and offered to all in the gospel. But this is incorrect. It is a direct exhortation to the Corinthians, and not a declaration of the method in which the apostle preached, like the concluding verses of the preceding chapter. He is not exhorting all men, but the Corinthians who bore the Lord's name not to receive the grace of God in vain. Were there no ■μ■ “you,” expressed, it might be so argued; but there it stands, not in chapter 5:20, but here, a distinct and effectual disproof of those who would assimilate the two; and its reserve to the last place gives such an emphasis to the pronoun that the only wonder is how grave and godly men should have ignored its force. The aorist inf. δ■ξεσθαι does not necessarily imply, as Meyer alleges in at least an early edition, a past reception of His grace, but may mean the act complete and decisive irrespective of time, which is thoroughly if not more consistent with the application to the Corinthians. What the apostle has in view is the danger of easy-going self-satisfaction in those who already called on the name of the Lord. So He Himself in the parabolic marriage of the king's son had warned, first, of despising or maltreating the messengers of the gospel; secondly, of indifference to what alone suits those who come, of wearing one's own garments instead of having put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism would aggravate, not hinder, the most condign judgment.

“And working together we also beseech that ye receive not in vain the grace of God (for he saith, In an acceptable season I listened to thee, and in a day of salvation I helped thee: behold, now a right acceptable season, behold now a day of salvation), giving none offense in anything that the ministry be not blamed.” (Vers. 1-3.)

There is no authority for inserting “with him” as in the italics of the Authorized Version, though supported by many commentators. It is an unscriptural familiarity, if not irreverent. 1 Cor. 3:9 gives it no real countenance; for the messengers are said to be, not fellow-workers with God, but His fellow-workmen, or journeymen together doing His work. So here, but by and on behalf of Him they work together, and exhort not men only to believe the gospel, but those who already professed faith not to receive His grace in vain. And “beseeching,” while just applied to those without in token of the incomparable goodness of God to His enemies, is still more suitable in urging on His professing saints to beware of all inconsistent with His grace. The security of His children is unquestionable, not so much through their perseverance as men say, but by His power

through faith: but the Corinthians needed and received faithful entreaty, for their ways were not such as became the gospel. They were compromising His glory who had called them to the fellowship of His Son, and the apostle instead of comforting them with the blessed assurances at the close of Rom. 8, would here exercise conscience as well as affection in presence of God's grace.

Nor is this enfeebled but strengthened by the following verse in which Isa. 49:8 is applied. It is a quotation from that section of the prophecy in which Jehovah arraigns the Jews, not for idolatry but for rejecting the Messiah; and it is deduced to be a light thing in consequence to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel. Jehovah would also give Him, thus cast off by His own people, for a light to the Gentiles, that He might be His salvation unto the end of the earth. If man despised and the nation [Israel] abhorred, His glory as on earth should be secured among kings and princes, whereon follows the word here cited. It is the principle, not the mere fact, which is taken up.

There is no need of supposing in this case that a promise to the Messiah included at the same time His people, though we see how strikingly this appears in the use made of Isa. 1 by the apostle in Rom. 8 Here the blessing to the Gentiles is expressly mentioned, so that it seems more akin to James's use of Amos 9:11, 12, in Acts 15. And this is confirmed, it would appear, by the fact that the apostle breaks forth into a strong expression of the grace God is now showing, surpassing as it does the actual fulfillment in the days of the kingdom, when the earth shall be raised and the desolate heritage is enjoyed, when the prisoners shall go forth and those in darkness show themselves, when hunger and thirst shall be no more, and heat and sun shall not smite, but the merciful Jehovah shall guide even by the springs of waters, when the mountains shall be made a way, and the scattered return from every quarter under heaven; and the heavens themselves shall sing and the earth be joyful in Jehovah's mercy and comfort for His afflicted people. Yet in presence of such an anticipation, bright as it was in the apostle's heart, there shone a light brighter by far in Him who is exalted into a new and higher glory at God's right hand, which leads him to say, “Behold now a right acceptable season, behold now a day of salvation:” words suggested by the prophecy, but designedly rising above them in strength as expressive of God's present display of grace in the gospel.

Then resuming the thread of his exhortation to the Corinthians, the apostle shows how far he was from refusing to measure himself and his service by that which he meted to others, “Giving none offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed.” Who knew better that inconsistency above all things undermines preaching or teaching? Christianity is real and living, not dogmatic only, still less official: else it becomes of all things the most contemptible; just as when genuine it is heavenly and of the Holy Spirit, as the moral expression of Christ in those that are His. In Moses' chair sat the scribes and the Pharisees, it was a duty to do and keep all things whatever they might bid, whilst not doing according to their works; for they said and did not. But unreality, as it is a lie against Christ, destroys the weight of Christian teaching, which derives its power from the Spirit of God. And no more eminent witness of his own words ever lived than the apostle, not more to endure the heaviest burdens for Christ's sake than to bear those of any or of all others. His life, not only as a whole but in every detail, was a comment on his ministry; and who so vigilant to cut off occasion from those who sought it?

Chapter 3

Notes on 2 Corinthians 6:4-7

IT is a right and needed thing to begin with giving no offense in anything which might occasion blame to the ministry. How often there is unguardedness of which the enemy takes advantage, not merely against the servant, but the objects of his work and above all the Master whom He serves! The apostle however would go much farther:—

“But in everything as ministers of God commending ourselves, in much patience, in affliction, in necessities, in straits, in stripes, in prisons, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, in pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in [the] Holy Ghost, in love unfeigned, in [the] word of truth, in [the] power of God.” (Vers. 4-7)

Earlier in the Epistle (chap. 3) we have seen the character of the ministry. In contrast with the ministry of death and condemnation, as set out in the law graven on stone, it is of the Spirit and of righteousness, the Spirit given and righteousness revealed to the believer in virtue of Christ's redemption. Later (chap. 5) we saw its source in the God who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and gave to suited instruments, called and qualified by sovereign grace, the ministry of the reconciliation: how that it was God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offenses, and having put in us the word of the reconciliation. And as all the thoughts and feelings of men fall immeasurably short of the simple but deep truth of God here made known, so does the apostolic statement of the spirit and manner of its exercise rise above all the practices and theories of Christendom, never so alien, never so low, as when it indulges in the haughtiest pride. And no wonder, for it is then most remote from Christ; and Christ here as everywhere alone gives us the truth. Under law priesthood was the characteristic, the intervention of a representative class charged with maintaining before God the interests of His people who could not draw near into His holy presence for their own wants or His blessing. Under the gospel ministry it is no less characteristic, as being the instrument of God's active love, both in reconciling His enemies as it goes out to the whole creation under heaven, and in building up the faithful who in one Spirit were baptized into one body and were all given to drink into one Spirit. Christ is the fullest expression of this love in its activity both to the world and to the saints; and those who desire the will and the glory of God have Him before their eyes as the test of all.

So we know it was with the apostle; and such is the revelation here of the spirit in which God would have His ministry exercised. He never meant it only for the pulpit, as men say, nor for set occasions, nor in a little or a larger sphere of one's own, nor as a matter of vested rights or of personal authority. Conversion did not of itself correct the tendency even in the apostles toward a direction the most opposed to Christ. “There was also a strife among them which should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.” (Luke 22) So here the first quality set before us is

“in everything as ministers of God commending ourselves;” if not as His ministers, what are we? Worse than useless. And that as a fixed purpose of the soul, not now and then, nor in specified duties only, but in everything as God's ministers commending ourselves.

It may be noticed that in this version “as God's ministers” is placed before the participle, whereas in Greek it follows. The reason is that our idiom does not admit of the order which is correct in the original because of its definite case-ending. The Authorized Version really expresses ■ς θεο■ διακ■νους which is the reading of the Clermont manuscript, and the more extraordinary, because the corresponding Latin is “sicut Di [Del] ministri.” The Vulgate falls into the error of translating ■ς θ. δι■κονοι “sicut Dei ministros.” If the same order were sought in English as in Greek, it would necessitate, I think, the addition of “should;” for there is a difference of sense attaching to the difference of construction, and the apostolic phrase expresses precisely what the context requires. Were it the accusative, διακ■νους, the meaning would be commending ourselves as competent to be God's ministers, whereas with the nominative δι■κοναι, as it is, the force is that in everything we in the capacity of His ministers commend ourselves, &c.

What then is the prime quality which is looked for? “In much patience” or “endurance.” So the apostle in chapter xii. 12, where he sets “all endurance,” or patience, before signs and wonders and works of power as apostolic vouchers. God Himself is called the God of patience no less than of comfort or encouragement, and this with a view to grant the saints to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; nor is there a happier proof of moral power in His servants than such constancy in the face of suffering, opposition, trial and temptation. When impatient, one is overcome of evil instead of overcoming it with good in the lowliest form.

Then follows a threefold cord of the several ways in which endurance is put to the proof: “in afflictions, in necessities, in straits.” “Afflictions” or tribulations (θλ■ψεις) are cases of pressure which every saint has in the world. We are set for this, and must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God. Necessities (■ν■γκαι) express distresses which take the shape of need or constraint, and so, as the early Greek writers noticed, indicate an advance in suffering; as straits (στενοχ■ριαι) point to such troubles as shut a man up without space to move or turn.

Next come specific inflictions, “in stripes, in prisons, in tumults.” As to the first of these three, the apostle further gives us the fact that from the Jews he five times had received forty stripes save one, and been scourged thrice. As to “prisons,” we know of but one, recorded minutely in Acts 16, doubtless for its momentous connection with the first planting of the gospel in Philippi; but 2 Cor. 11:23 speaks of the apostle's being “in prisons more frequent,” so that we know such shame to have been abundantly his lot. There remains “in tumults” (■καταστασ■αις), which some apply to the forced changes of the apostle's unsettled life, comparing 1 Cor. 4:11 with Isa. 54:11, 70. And so not moderns only, but apparently Chrysostom. Nevertheless New Testament usage does not support such a meaning, but either a “riot” in the world or “confusion” among saints; and here the context confirms the former: a shocking trial to one of well-ordered habits. But we see in the Acts how often it befell the apostle in his preachings; and doubtless very much more frequently than that history records.

Then we pass on from inflicted to voluntary trials, “in labors, in watchings, in fastings,” which are not the least witness to sustained devotedness. The language so clearly intimates one's own agency here that it might have seemed needless to say a word more. But scripture fares as no

other book; and this at the hands of friends as well as foes. Dr. Bloomfield will have it that this application to voluntary sufferings is not only unfounded, but devised to afford countenance to monkish austerities; that κ may very well refer to his corporal labors at his trade, dγρ to the abridgment of rest to make up by over-hours at night for evangelizing by day; and v. to the scanty fare that must follow such a trade. But 2 Cor. 11 is the true parallel, and not merely 1 Cor. 4; and in the former we have “fasting” distinguished expressly from “hunger and thirst,” clearly as voluntary from involuntary suffering. No! the apostle's “labors, watchings, fastings,” had to do with the gospel and the church, as well as individual souls, and were quite above the circumstances of trade good or bad.

But now we turn from circumstances and sufferings to quite another class, to qualities which God looks for in His service: “in pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in love unfeigned, in [the] Holy Ghost, in [the] word of truth, in [the] power of God.” There is thus not only perseverance in the face of antagonism and enmity, but the exercise of all that is holy and wise, long-suffering and gracious, and all this, not in mere amiability but in love unfeigned, yea, in the Holy Spirit, and hence in the word of truth and in God's power, not mere human wisdom and ability, that its excellency might be of Him, and not from the man though by him.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 6:7-10

There is a slight change in the middle of verse 7 indicated by a difference in the preposition and beginning with the needed arms of the Christian servant. We have ■ν (“in” or “by") no longer, but δι■. Even the latter cannot here, or elsewhere, be restricted to the sense of “by means of;” for though this might suit the first occurrence, it does not fit in with the two which follow, but rather “through,” or “with” as with the genitive it sometimes means (as in chap. 2:4).

“Through [or, with] the arms of righteousness on the right and left, through glory and dishonor, through ill report and good report, as deceivers and true, as unknown and well-known, as dying and behold! we live, as chastened and not put to death, as grieved but always rejoicing, as poor but enriching many, as having nothing and possessing all things.” (Vers. 7-10.)

As the Holy Ghost naturally precedes love unfeigned, and the word of truth is accompanied by the “power of God,” so “the arms of righteousness” in full equipment follow. Some here as elsewhere take “righteousness” as that which is secured by justification before God. But this is to mistake both the figure and the context. As a figure it is a mistake, inasmuch as armor is used to protect one against the assaults of an, enemy, which God assuredly is not to the believer. Hence, where we have details as in Eph. 6, we see beyond controversy that we are told to put on the armor in order to withstand the powers and wiles of evil; not to stand before God, in which case we hear of a robe, not of arms. Clearly then righteousness in the practical sense is in question, rather than the righteousness of God. And the context equally requires it; because the apostle is insisting here, not on the standing of the believer, but on the avoidance of all which could expose the ministry to reproach, and on the cultivation of all that should approve it to universal conscience, representing God aright in a world where everything is opposed, and spite of a nature which is enmity against Him, and this in an earthen vessel as weak as the pressure of circumstances was great and varied and constant, so as to test the workman in every conceivable way.

Next we have a series of contrasts, not more paradoxical in appearance than strictly true. “Through glory and dishonor, through ill report and good report.” Who among mankind ever touched the extremes of both as he who thus portrays the path of service according to God? Who ever served the Lord Jesus so superior to circumstances? Who less elated? Who farther from depression? Revered as a divine being and afterward stoned, now suspected of murder and immediately after regarded as a god, he experienced vicissitudes only less wild and rapid among the saints themselves, and among none more remarkably than at Corinth and in Galatia, where he had to vindicate even his apostleship among his own children in the faith, ready enough to bow down to arrogance and pretension.

Then by a simple transition we come to instances of ill or good report: “as deceivers and true, as unknown and well-known.” Never was it true of Paul, never can it be with a thoroughly devoted and unworldly servant of God, that all speak well of him. So did the Jews of old to the false prophets, not to the true. Faith loves not, but refuses, the chief place in feasts, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. The servant cleaves to His name whom the world

knew not and so is unknown; yet as with the Master grace in service cannot but make itself felt in a world of need and misery; it cannot be hid.

The clauses which follow have a rather distinct character, sliding from matters of report into actual fact: “as dying and behold! we live, as chastened and not put to death, as grieved but always rejoicing, as poor but enriching many, as having nothing and possessing all things.” If the Lord alone, when challenged as to who He was, could say of Himself as man here below, Absolutely that which I also say to you, the Truth in word and in deed, in everything and in every way; Paul inspired of God could speak with so much the more freedom as his heart entered into the spirit of seeing God according to Christ with a largeness and a humility, with a tenderness and a courage, with unwearied patience and unflagging energy, with a purity and a love, with a jealousy for Christ's glory and an exercised conscience before God, never seen so combined in another. Out of all this he exhorts, feeling all acutely yet moved by nothing, and making no account of life itself, that he might finish his course with joy and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, not only testifying the gospel both to Jews and Greeks, and preaching the kingdom of God, but also announcing to the saints all the counsel of God. What suffering did it not involve! What faith and perseverance under discipline and sorrow! Yea, surely, joy in the Holy Ghost was there if in any, and triumph by grace over all seeming disadvantages. He knew, if any servant did, the force of the Lord's word in Mark 10:29-31, as poor but enriching many, as having nothing but possessing all things.

Chapter 5

Notes on 2 Corinthians 6:11-13

Having closed the blessed sketch of Christian service from its source and power to its moral characteristics and effects, the apostle now turns to the saints with the expression of unhindered affection. There had been a barrier to that expression in their state; but God had wrought in grace, and they had in a great measure judged themselves, and faith working by love looked for all that is worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Hence he could say—

"Our mouth is open unto you, Corinthians, our heart is expanded: ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels; now for the same requital be expanded also yourselves." (Vers. 11-13.)

Love was no longer driven back, for God was at work; and joy and thankfulness open the lips, as sorrow isolates where sympathy fails. So he can and does speak freely. "Our mouth is open unto you, Corinthians." He similarly names the Galatians (chap. 3: 1), and the Philippians (chap. 4: 15); but each with a characteristic difference. The Galatians he blames severely, as senseless and bewitched, for turning aside from faith and the Spirit to law and flesh. To the Philippians he mentions that they alone had the privilege of communicating with him at the beginning of the gospel as now when the apostle was drawing near his close. The personal address to the Corinthians lies between those two. He could not accord to them that token of confidence in their spiritual simplicity and unworldliness which the Philippians had enjoyed first and last; whilst he is pouring out the fullness of his heart on the restored condition of the Corinthians instead of the stern censure on the Galatians. "Our heart is expanded," Lo says. There can be no doubt that this is the word and sense intended. But it is an instructive fact that the two oldest and best uncials unite in a positive and evident error. The Vatican and the Sinaitic uncials give your, not "our." Such facts should correct the exaggerated confidence of some in a few very ancient copies. The context has its grave importance where the external authorities differ. Here there can be no doubt that the mass of other and later authorities is right. The argument requires "our" imperatively, if ever so many voices had pronounced differently.

There was no narrowness in the apostle. His heart was ever large; and now he could show them so. It was in their own affections the Corinthians were contracted. (Ver. 12.) There was free and full room in his heart for them, but not in theirs for him. They had been lax, and he is about to warn them solemnly on this head; they were still narrow. How great an error to count narrowness fidelity, whereas it may well go as here with laxity! In the apostle we see largeheartedness with real holiness; and they too go together. But the apostle counts yet more on grace, and as he had declared how his heart was expanded, instead of being shut up, he adds, "and for the same requital (or, for requital in the same), I speak as to children, be expanded also yourselves." (Ver. 13.) Love never fails; and that their affections should answer his was the only recompense he sought at their hands.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 6:14-16

The Corinthians were not only straitened in their affections. They were lax in their associations. Had Christ been the object, the new life had not been hindered in either way; for as He creates, directs, and sustains the affections according to God, so does He guide and guard the feet in the narrow way, His own path outside and above the world. Where He is not before the heart, the world in one form or another fails not to ensnare, fair excuses which cover unholy alliances escape detection, and His honor somehow is ere long compromised.

The apostle's jealousy was alive to this danger in a love that bound together Christ and the church. Love speaks and acts freely, though with tender consideration. The apostle comprehends in his wide warning not only idolatry, but every kind of worldly association as defiling and unworthy of the Christian, because it suits not Christ nor the presence of God. If blessed with Christ for eternity, you cannot without sin have relations with the enemy in time.

Some have narrowed, if not perverted, the passage, by restricting it to an exhortation against the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever. But while the principle undoubtedly condemns the contracting of any such union, it is clear on the face of it that, strictly speaking, this cannot be the direct intent; for the corrective insisted on is exactly what one ought not to follow, even in so sad a case. Thus a Christian woman who had sinned in marrying a worldly man ought not to come out or be separate from her husband; and she might expect the strongest censure from God and His children, not promised blessing, were she to act thus rashly, whatever the purity of her motives. In fact, 1 Cor. 7 is the true and direct weapon for the question of marriage; our passage has a far larger bearing. It is the prohibition of every evil connection for a Christian, and it calls for thorough clearance from all; and no wonder, since the Christian has Christ for his life, righteousness, and hope, even now by the Spirit able to behold His glory without veil. It is incongruous, it is treason, if one has taken Christ's yoke, to accept also that of the world which rejected and crucified Him.

“Be not diversely yoked with unbelievers; for what partnership [is there] for righteousness and lawlessness? or what fellowship [hath] light with darkness? and what consent of Christ with Beliar? or what part for a believer with an unbeliever? and what agreement for God's temple with idols? for ye are [the] living God's temple, even as God said, I will dwell and walk among them, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Vers. 14-16.)

The figure with which the paragraph opens is obviously taken from the law which forbade yoking together heterogeneous animals, as the ox and the ass in plowing. (Deut. 22: 10.) It is not now the Jew severed from the Gentile, but the Christian separate from the world in every shape and degree. Principles, motives, interests, ways, are not only different but opposed; what common ground is possible? But this is not all. Faith is the life-breath of the Christian, and his only-avowed power the Holy Ghost, whom the world cannot receive as neither seeing nor knowing Him; and He works to reduce every thought to the obedience of Christ in absolute judgment of the world and its prince.

In detail what can be stronger than the clenching blows of every clause? First the apostle points to the radical difference of principles, low or high, righteousness and lawlessness, light and darkness. Next he points to their characteristic heads, Christ and Beliar. Then he contrasts the partisans or followers, believers and unbelievers. Lastly he closes with their joint place as God's temple, contrasted with idols. Thus all that forms the life outward and inward is embraced so as to exclude alliance with the world and claim the saints wholly for Christ apart from the world. This in no way bars doing good to all, or especially seeking the salvation of any. On the contrary, the truer the separateness to Christ, the more forcibly can grace be preached to the world as a lost thing, and Christ the only Savior. For righteousness was even looked for in a saint; light, now that Christ was revealed, is characteristic of a Christian.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 6:17-18

It is not here said that the body of the saint is the temple of God, as we see in 1 Cor. 6, but that the saints are His temple; and it is added that accordingly God said, I will dwell among them and will walk among [them], and will be their God, and they shall be my people: an Old Testament promise and privilege (Ex. 29; Lev. 26; Ezek. 37:7), but better enjoyed now, when His presence is given not in a merely sensible sign as then, but in the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven since Pentecost. Redemption in figure or in reality, as often observed, laid the ground for God's dwelling thus.

With this great privilege is ever bound up the imperative obligation of separation to God from all evil. Holiness becomes, and must be in, the dwelling-place of God. No doubt the heathen then as ever are characterized by all sorts of corruption morally: but it is not from heathenism only but from every evil that God calls out the believer and insists on habitual avoidance and judgment of it.

“Wherefore come out from the midst of them and be separated, saith [the] Lord, and touch not an unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be to you for Father, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters, saith [the] Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us purify ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear.” (Vers. 17, 18; chap. 7: 1.)

If privilege abide and be deepened since redemption, more obviously moral truth is seen with increasing clearness and force. The conscience is purged by blood, the heart by faith. God must have His own holy, for He is holy; and this not only in an inward way, without which all would be hypocrisy, but in outward ways also to His own glory, unless He would be a partner with us to His own dishonor. He will have us clear from associations which are worldly and defiling; He will exercise our souls in order to freedom from all that denies or despises His will. He would not force others, nay He refuses not things only but persons also that are of the world; He commands those that believe to come out from those that believe not, and to be separated. Indeed the union of the two is so monstrous that it never could be defended for a moment by a true heart; it is only when selfish interests or strong prejudices work that men gradually accustom and harden themselves to disobedience so flagrant and in every way disastrous. For as the man of the world cannot rise to the level of Christ, to be together with him, the Christian must descend to the level of fallen Adam and the world; and God is thus and ever more and more put to shame, in what claims to be His house with a loudness proportioned to its departure from His word.

Here again the Holy Spirit led the apostle to borrow words from various parts of the Old Testament, especially Isa. 52:11, Ezek. 20:34, 2 Sam. 7:8, 14, Isa. 43:6. Apostolic gift only enforced divine authority, and expressed itself in terms drawn freely from various parts of scripture. Nor could any other way have been chosen so wise or pertinent if the aim was to show the will of God and His promises. It is here to encourage individual submission to His word, as before for the enjoyment of His presence in common. There they were His temple in virtue” of His dwelling and walking about among them; here He says, “I will receive you and will be to you for Father, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters.” It is our new relationship in positive

blessing and supposes the divine nature given to us.

But there is another thing of much moment as well as interest to observe. Jehovah as such is introduced under the Septuagintal form of “Lord” (κ■ριος) and so without the article; and still more “Lord Almighty.” That is, in Old Testament form Jehovah Shaddai now brings out His New Testament relationship to those who in the obedience of faith come out from among the men of the world to be His sons and daughters. For these are the great relations into which God—Elohim—enters, as revealing Himself, first to the fathers as Almighty (Gen. 17:1; 27:3; 35:11; 48:3), then as Jehovah to the children of Israel (Ex. 6:3, &c.), lastly as Father, which was reserved for the Son to declare, not only out of the fullness of enjoyment and in testimony, but bringing us into it in virtue of His death and resurrection (John 20:17, &c.) And to our souls what more instructive than the fact everywhere patent, that those saints who cling to the world, which is enmity against God and involves in what is unclean at every turn, never seem to rise into the liberty of God's sons, especially in their public worship, but habitually drop into language more befitting the days when God was dealing with a nation and dwelt in the thick darkness, instead of being revealed as He now is in and by His Son, according to His true nature and that relationship which is so sweet to the believer as led by the Holy Ghost, the relationship proper to us now, though of course He be evermore Jehovah Shaddai?

Clearly too the possession of these promises is the great incentive to personal purification in practice. Nor is anything more hateful than the position of separateness from the world along with indifference to holiness. There are those who inculcate what is personal only and apologize for ecclesiastical evil as if it did not compromise them in the Lord's dishonor; there are others whose zeal is solely for ecclesiastical purity and whose personal ways are light and loose and far below those of many a saint in humanly formed and ordered societies. Both classes are condemned by the solemn words before us: the first by chapter 6: 14-18, the second by chapter vii. 1. May we, as having proved the truth and blessing of the former, have grace to find the constant value of the latter also, and to cultivate purity outward and inward, perfecting holiness in God's fear!

Notes on 2 Corinthians 7:2-18

The apostle returns to the expression of his affection towards the Corinthians, as he desired their love.

“Receive us: we wronged none, we corrupted none, we overreached none. For condemnation I do not speak; for I have said before that ye are in our hearts to die with and to live with. Great [is] my frankness toward you, great my boasting in respect of you: I am filled with encouragement, I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction. For also when we came into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but [we were] afflicted in every way; without fightings, within fears. But he that encourageth the lowly, God, encouraged us by the coming of Titus, and not by his coming only but also by the encouragement with which he was encouraged in your case, declaring to us your longing desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I the more rejoiced. Because if also I grieved you in the letter, I do not regret, if also I did regret; for I see that that letter if also for a time grieved you. Now I rejoice, not that ye were grieved but that ye were grieved unto repentance, for ye were grieved according to God that in nothing ye might suffer damage from us. For grief according to God worketh repentance to salvation not to be regretted; but the grief of the world worketh out death. For, behold, this very thing that ye were grieved according to God, how much diligence it wrought out in you, nay self-clearing, nay indignation, nay fear, nay longing desire, nay zeal, nay avenging! In everything did ye prove yourselves to be pure in the matter. Wherefore, if also I wrote, [it was] not for the sake of him that wronged, nor for his sake that was wronged, but for the sake of your diligence for us (or, ours for you) being manifested unto you before God. On this account we have been encouraged; but in our comfort we rejoiced the more exceedingly over the joy of Titus, because his spirit hath been refreshed by you all. Because if I have boasted to him anything of you, I was not put to shame; but as we speak all things to you in truth, so also our boasting of you to Titus was truth. And his affections are more exceedingly toward you, calling to mind the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice that in everything I am confident in you.” (Vers. 2-16.)

Thus does he call for room in their hearts: a touching appeal when we reflect who and what he was, who and what they were. The lack of love was certainly not in him; nor was lowliness absent from him who deigns to repudiate the unworthy insinuations whispered against him, which they had better see whether they might not be more applicable elsewhere: neither injustice nor corruption nor fraudulent gain were true of him. He was careful to exclude even the appearance of these evils. But if the Holy Spirit work in the saints, Satan is ever busy and knows how to avail himself of all circumstances to detract and undermine, especially where love should most abound. In speaking thus however the apostle is careful to guard his words from the semblance of a condemnatory spirit. As he had already implied in chapter 6: 11, they were in his heart to die with and to live with. He that is familiar with the Latin lyric may remember the well-known line which resembles this sentiment in form—O how different in reality! “Teem vivere amem, tecum obeans libens.” And how infinitely superior, in strength as in purity, is this outpouring of unselfish affection, where the Christian begins with dying together whilst the heathen can but end with it!

Far from a word to wound their spirits now restored, he can and does speak freely and in the strongest confidence. “Great [is] my frankness toward you, great my boasting in respect of you: I am filled with encouragement, I am overflowing with joy in all our afflictions.” Sorrow closes the heart, joy opens it; and now the apostle's gladness of heart was proportionate to the depth of his pain over saints so dear in the Lord. “For also when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way: without fightings, within fears. But he that encourageth the lowly, God, encouraged us by the coming of Titus, and not by his coming only but also by the encouragement with which he was encouraged in your case, declaring to us your longing desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I the more rejoiced.” It was not only in Troas he was full of heaviness and anxiety, but also in Macedonia whither he had gone in the hope of hearing the latest tidings from Titus. There he had yet more pressure of trouble till the good news came. Deeply interesting and affecting it is to hear the apostle opening his heart thus freely and to know how distracted and burdened he had been by all. “Our flesh” (ver. 5) is a peculiar expression, signifying I suppose his human weakness as such; “afflicted in every way” describes the circumstances (“without fightings, within fears") inward and outward. But God does not fail. He is the encourager of the depressed as He resists the proud; and He it was who now appeared to cheer the distressed apostle by the coming of Titus, above all by the tidings of what grace had wrought in the Corinthians, restoration in affection, and, as we shall see later, in conscience too.

The reason or explanation of his former severity, given in the verses that follow is highly interesting and important in various respects. It is not “a” but the letter, clearly referring to the first epistle to the Corinthians. Did our translators wish to conceal this? It is not the only instance here of want of faith in men of God; for Calvin also shirks the truth, when he contends that μετεμελ■μην “I repented” is used in the passage improperly for being grieved. For (argues he) when Paul made the Corinthians sad, he himself also shared in the grief and in a certain way inflicted sadness on himself at the same time. It is therefore just as if he said, Though I unwillingly pained you, it grieved me too that I was forced to be harsh to you; now I cease to grieve on this account whilst I see it has been useful to you. Otherwise if we own that Paul was concerned at what he had written, Calvin thought it would involve the grave absurdity that the former epistle was written under inconsiderate impulse rather than by the direction of the Spirit. So Erasmus considered that the supposition was not the fact.

But there is not the smallest need for toning down or altering the language. It is indeed, however common, an erroneous view of inspiration, which does in no way preclude the working of motive as we see in Luke 1:1-3, any more than deep exercise of mind as here. We are bound to accept the plain words of the apostle, which show his anxiety after he had written an unquestionably inspired epistle. “Because if also I grieved you in the letter I do not regret, if also I did regret; for I see that that letter if also for an hour grieved you. Now I rejoice not that ye were grieved but that ye were grieved unto repentance; for ye were grieved according to God that ye might in nothing suffer loss from us.” He recognized the indubitable fruit of the Holy Spirit's operation through the very epistle which had harassed his spirit after he had written and sent it off. He had no question more. It was of God, as he was divinely convinced and reassured; but now in his joy at their restoration he could tell them all his feelings freely, even a passing regret for having written the first epistle, truly inspired of God as it was, though joy abounded the more now for the blessing that had resulted.

It is a mistake to call even an inspired man infallible: none but Christ was, and He was pleased to write neither Gospels nor Epistles, without overlooking of course what He commanded His servants to write in the great and final book of the Canon. But the Spirit of God guided and kept the vessels of His inspiration, so that, maintaining the individuality of each writer, He should give a result perfectly according to God. In the first Epistle the apostle distinguishes between the fruit of his spiritual judgment and the positive commandments of the Lord; but he was inspired to give us both in chapter vii. Here he is inspired to tell us how his spirit was agitated even about that inspired epistle, in no way as to its absolute truth, but through his anxiety lest the very desire to win his beloved children back might not have estranged them forever.

Farther, we have precious light from God here as to that great work in the awakened soul, repentance. It is quite distinct from regret or change of mind. Even sorrow however deep is not repentance, though sorrow according to God works it out. Again, it is not correct to confound repentance with conversion to God, which is surely a turning from sin with earnest desire for holiness. Repentance is the soul as born of God sitting in judgment of the old man and its acts, its words and its ways. And as repentance for remission of, sins was to be preached in Christ's name, so He was exalted to give both. It is not a changed mind however great about God in Christ, which is rather what faith is and gives; it is the renewed mind taking account of the man and his course according to God's word and nature. Hence it is said to be not about God, but “toward God” or Godward; for the conscience then takes His side in self-judgment before Him, and all is weighed as in His sight. It is of course of the Spirit, not intellectual but moral. “Surely after that I was turned, I repented.” It follows conversion and consequently that application of the word which arrests the soul by faith, though it be not yet the faith of the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, which brings into peace.

Here of course it is the repentance of saints who had sinned. But it is the same principle, and in contrast with the world's grief which, knowing not God, gives itself up to despair and works out death. However overwhelmed may be the believer, God takes care that there shall be enough hope in His mercy to guard from the despairing fear which Satan wields for his deadly purposes.

And what a picture the apostle draws of God's recent work in the repentant Corinthians! “For behold this very thing, that ye were grieved according to God how much diligence it wrought out in you, nay self-clearing, nay indignation, nay fear, nay longing desire, nay zeal, nay avenging! In everything did ye prove yourselves to be pure in the matter.” (Ver. 11.) Of course its precise character was modified by the generally bad state of the assembly before grace thus used the first epistle. No indifference now, but earnest care; no extenuation of the evil, but thorough cleansing of themselves; a burning sense of indignation, fear, longing desire, zeal, and revenge, all had their place; so that he who had sternly reproved them could say that they had proved themselves clear in the matter: a, if not the, grand aim of the Spirit in discipline, and not merely getting rid of the offender.

Sometimes in a case of disciplinary truth, it is a question as at Corinth of the assembly's state as a whole. Before the first Epistle they were wholly ignorant that all were involved in the evil which was before their eyes, and which they did not know they were bound to judge. When we read that they were puffed up and had not rather mourned, we must bear in mind that they were quite inexperienced, and that the mind of the Lord as to dealing with wickedness in the assembly or its

members, had not yet been revealed to them. Still as saints they ought to have felt the sin and scandal deeply, and if they did not know how to act, they should have betaken themselves to mourning in order that he that had done this deed should be taken sway out of the midst of them. Spiritual instinct should have felt thus and laid it with shame and earnest desire before the Lord who never fails. But that epistle was blessed of God, to deal with their souls, not only as to the offender, but, as to their own state, and thus gave occasion for the apostle to open his heart so painfully burdened, and sorely agitated with all the fervor of a real love which only overleaps its old channel, because of the temporary repression.

Where souls since then, in the face of these epistles, have tampered with grave evil whatever it be, where palliation has been at work, where ingenious excuses have blunted the sense of right and wrong, as may be at any time among Christians, it is a state of things worse in some respects than that at Corinth. For there ignorance of the duty of the assembly in discipline prevailed, and we cannot wonder at it, though the sin was appalling. The mere getting the wicked person outside, important as it may be, is not what comforted the apostle's heart, but the working of deep and united moral feelings all round. “In everything ye have proved yourselves to be pure in the matter.” Where there had been such indifference to their complicity, even though in ignorance of their responsibility as at Corinth, the saints had to clear themselves and prove it for the Lord's vindication. But it is, I doubt not, a general principle, and always incumbent. Merely to have done with the offender would show in others an unexercised conscience, or but judicial hardness. The happy contrast with all this was here manifest. They had indeed been grieved according to God.

Hence the apostle adds that, if also he wrote to them, it was not for the sake of the wrong-doer nor of the one wronged, but for the manifestation to them before God of their diligent zeal for them or of the apostle's for them. (Ver. 12.) It seems passing strange that the early clauses should seem obscure; as to the latter in opposite ways, the copies singularly differ, some as the Sinaitic and the Boernerian yielding no good sense. Whatever the adversary had wrought for a while, their true zeal for the apostle was made plain to themselves at last before God. This is the best supported sense.

“On this account we have been encouraged; and in (or in addition to) our encouragement, we rejoiced much more abundantly at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.” Grace had given the happiest issue to that which fleshly energy or ease had ruined for a time. And joy abounded not in them only but more in Titus, most in Paul himself. And there were other grounds beyond, though connected with, their present state. “Because if I have boasted anything to him over you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also the boasting about you before Titus was truth; and more abundantly toward you are his bowels, while calling to mind the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice that in everything I have good courage in respect of you.” Such an allusion to his feelings towards the Corinthians, when they must have been conscious of their temporary alienation, and deplorably low state, would more than over seal their affection, as it proved his to have been true from first to last. His heart was not inconstant, nor was his tongue insincere. He loved, if also he had blamed his beloved children at Corinth, and they could now appreciate all better, as he could tell out all freely, however delicately.

Chapter 9

Notes on 2 Corinthians 8:1-8

The apostle was now free, so far as the state of the Corinthian saints was concerned, to introduce the great duty of remembering the poor. Even the most honored servants of the Lord were forward in this work, and not least Paul himself. This he would lay on the heart of the Corinthians. As he sought not his own things, he could plead for others; and he would draw out the affections of his children at Corinth toward saints suffering from poverty in Judea, whither he was going.

Yet we may notice how the character of the man comes out. He did not like the task of appealing to others for pecuniary help even though for others. The directness of his language in the first epistle is therefore in the strongest contrast with his circumlocution in the second. The need was deeply on his own heart; and he has no more doubt of the generous feelings of the Corinthians than of their ability, so far as circumstances were concerned, to respond; but the delicacy with which he deals with all is most marked and instructive. Personal influence has no place; faith and love are called out actively; the cheering example of saints where such devotedness could have boon least expected opens the way; and Christ is brought in, carrying it home with irresistible power for those that know Him.

“Now we make known to you, brethren, the grace of God that is given in [or, among] the assemblies of Macedonia; that in much trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality; because according to power [I bear witness] and beyond power [they gave] of their own accord, beseeching of us with much entreaty the grace and the fellowship of the ministering unto the saints; and this not as we hoped, but their own selves they gave first to the Lord and to us by the will of God; so that we exhorted Titus, that, even as he before began, so he would also complete as to you this grace also; but as ye abound in everything, faith and word and knowledge and all diligence and love from you to us, that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but through the diligence of others proving the genuineness of your love also.” (Vers. 1-8.)

How blessedly “the grace of God” changes everything it takes up! And what can it not reach in its comprehensive embrace? Where is the demand too hard for it to entertain? Or the evil too deep for it to fathom? What sin is beyond forgiveness? Whose misery or of what sort can it not tarn into an occasion for the all-overcoming goodness of God? See here how that which is among men but “filthy lucre,” an especial object of the covetousness which is idolatry, becomes the means of exercising faith in love to the glory of God and the exceeding blessing of His children, while it draws out the wisdom of the Holy Ghost through the apostle, who did not deem it beneath the fullest consideration in all its details.

First, the mighty influence of example is brought to bear on the saints in Corinth. (Ver. 1.) Nor is this surprising; for are they not one family with its common interests, yea, one body with its fellowship undivided and immediate? Granted that the wants are in carnal things; granted, that it is no question of pleading rights or claims. But a relationship in the Spirit is no less real and far more momentous than one in the flesh; and, if there be suffering, love feels accordingly. In the next

place God took care that the first to respond should be saints not in the wealthy city of Corinth, but in the long desolated and impoverished district of Macedonia, that the work might be of God's grace, and in no way a matter of worldly circumstances. Even in writing to the Corinthians the apostle had reminded them, as all experience shows, that the confessors of Christ are for the most part from the poor and obscure and foolish: and we know that in the Macedonian assemblies at this time the saints were no exception to the generally distressed condition of the country. On the contrary, we are expressly told here of their poverty down into the depths. They gave no gifts of superfluity; it was faith working by love, whilst they were proving themselves a great trial of affliction. The circumstances of Macedonia might have seemed eminently unfavorable; the reality of their liberality was the more evidently from a divine source; for in the face of tribulation their joy abounded, and their deep poverty, instead of appealing for aid to others, abounded unto the riches of their open-hearted generosity. (Ver. 2.) It was unselfish devotedness, loving others better than themselves; and as God gave them the grace that so wrought, so the apostle names it in love to the saints in Corinth, and, indeed we may say, to us all, that our hearts too should go forth in no less love. For love is as energetic and fruitful, as it is holy and free; and God would have not a grain of the good seed lost.

Nor does love calculate what it can spare nor what it can effect. (Ver. 3.) The heart animated by love thinks not of its own trials or deep poverty, but of those it hears to be suffering in any special degree, and acts at once. At least the apostle testifies of the Macedonian saints, that according to means, and beyond means, they gave of their own account. No earthly incentives were here; no pressure of agents, no rivalry of donations, no moving appeals among multitudes, no circulated lists to shame or to stimulate, no personal or party aims of any kind. It is the grace of God given from first to last; and as God treasures it, so His servant testifies of it so much the more because those in whom it wrought thought nothing of it in the love that felt only the need of its objects.

But this is not all: the Macedonian saints, far from being solicited, were themselves the suitors of Paul and his companions, and begged of them with much entreaty the grace and the fellowship of the ministering unto the saints, that is, to be allowed a share in the grace or favor of thus caring for the suffering saints of Judea.

It will be noticed that the Authorized Version, following the common Greek text, contains the words, “that we would receive” (δ■ξασθαι ■μ■ς), which again involves the insertion of “take upon us” in verse 4. But as the former is not warranted by the best authorities, so the latter is needless and indeed worse; for both additions enfeeble and falsify the sense, which is, that the Macedonian saints might have the grace and fellowship of the service which was to be done the poor saints, not the mere idea that the apostle would receive their collection and undertake its distribution.

But the apostle goes farther in his fine sketch of Macedonian devotedness; for it was not only spontaneous, but beyond all expectation of himself, accustomed as he was to live in the walk of faith every day. “And this not as we hoped, but their own selves they gave first to the Lord and to us by the will of God.” Is not this the reflection, yea reproduction, as far as it goes, of Christ's love in giving Himself? Doubtless directly and necessarily there is a perfection in Christ's offering which is altogether unique. He gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor; it was all this and more to God and for us, as nothing else could be. But these humble and loving saints, the grace of God in whom is commended to the Corinthians, did

not merely go beyond their means, but beyond the apostle's hope, who did not wish to be burdened with the wants of others those who were themselves in the depth of poverty. And no wonder that they thus exceeded, seeing that, as he adds, “their own selves they gave first to the Lord, and to us by the will of God.” Had they not caught a vivid impression of the Savior's love, where God always had the first place, whatever His infinite compassion for man? When love for the saints follows in their case, it is qualified by that which was the constant motive of Christ, “by the will of God.”

This acted on the heart of the apostle up to the point of beseeching Titus to carry out what he had formerly begun among the Corinthians when he delivered the first epistle. (Ver. 6.) Paul's love for them was holily jealous that their love should not slacken and that an early promise should not wither in the bud. And Titus was the meet instrument, as he before began, so also now to complete as to the Corinthians this grace also.

“But, as ye abound in everything, faith and word and knowledge and all diligence and love from you to us, that ye abound in this grace also.” The apostle exhorts the Corinthians too, as he had Titus. They had their part now, and as God had enriched with everything else, were they to fail in this grace? Nay, He looks that they should abound in it also. (Ver. 7.) Yet he is careful that it should not be by injunction but of grace. “I speak not by command, but through the diligence of others proving the genuineness of your love also.” (Ver. 8.) What a blending of tenderness, delicacy, and of faithfulness withal!

Notes on 2 Corinthians 8:9-15

We have seen how powerfully the thought of the Lord acted on the saints of Macedonia, who in spite of their deep poverty had so exceeded the apostle's expectation. Now he brings His grace to bear on those of Achaia whom he had ground to believe awakened to feel accordingly.

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christi that for your sakes he being rich became poor, in order that ye by his poverty might become rich. And I give an opinion in this, for this is profitable for you who began before not only the doing, but also to be willing a year ago. But now also complete the doing, that even as the readiness of the willing [was there], so also the completing [may be] out of what ye have. For if the readiness be there, [one is] accepted according to what he may have, not according to what he hath not. For [it is] not that others [should have] ease and you distress, but on equality: at the present time your abundance for their lack, that their abundance also should be for your lack, so that there should be equality; as it is written, He that [gathered] much had nothing over, and he that [gathered] little had no lack.” (Vers. 9-15.)

The parenthesis of verse 9 is eminently instructive, not only for that which would act powerfully on the Corinthians as on all saints who appreciate the grace of our Lord, but as a sample of the way the Spirit of God turns what was in Christ to every exigency of the individual or of the church. Nor does any other Motive act with equal power in holiness. And it could not be otherwise; for who or what can compare with Christ? To His grace, though it be really immeasurable, two measures are applied, the infinite glory of His person in itself, and the depth of humiliation to which He submitted for us. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes he being rich became poor, in order that ye by his poverty might be made rich.” Wealth consists in fullness of means and resources, and poverty in their utter lack. As a divine person our Lord had no need for Himself, and all things at command for others absolutely. He was rich indeed, yet for our sakes became poor, not in the letter only but in spirit to the uttermost. See the picture summed up in Phil. 2, and expanded or detailed in all the Gospels, the perfect pattern of One who hung in dependence on His Father and never used a single thing for Himself throughout His career. He waited on and lived on account of the Father; it was His meat to do His will and finish His work. He had no motive but the one of pleasing His Father, whatever the cost. The fast of forty days in the wilderness was doubtless a special scene of trial which ushered in His public ministry; but it was His ordinary life to count on the care of God while doing His work without an anxiety on the one hand, and on the other without independent resources. But His poverty went down into depths unfathomable in the cross when giving His life for the sheep. I do not speak merely of His garments parted among them and of their casting lots, upon His vesture, image though it was of extreme and helpless destitution. Deeper elements were there than man's eye saw, when all forsook Him and fled. God forsook Him too—His God. What remained then? Nothing but the unsparing judgment of our sins. Was He not the “poor man” then as none other was, never morally so high, yet never so abject, and this not circumstantially alone but in all the unspeakable abandonment of that hour? As He said prophetically in Psa. 22, “I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people...I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is

melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”

But He was heard from the horns of the unicorns, and in resurrection declares His Father's name unto His brethren, in the midst of the congregation praising Him. What tongue of men or of angels can adequately tell the change? None but His own when He passed from the abyss of woe where was no standing to the everlasting and immutable ground of divine righteousness where the once guilty objects of grace are set in Him without spot or stain or charge before God, who delights to show them His estimate of Christ's redemption, and gives the Holy Spirit to seal them unto the day which will declare it. Yet is this but part of the riches of grace wherewith Christ now enriches us who believe. And the blessing of Jehovah is not only for us an exhaustless treasure, but it will go forth with wide-embracing fullness when Messiah's praise shall be “in the great congregation.” Then all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto Jehovah; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him. For as surely as the Father will surround the Son with His children in His house in heaven, the kingdom is Jehovah's, and He is the Governor among the nations, and the earth is to be blessed in that day no less than the heavens be filled with the rich harvest gathered into the granary on high, when for the dispensation of the fullness of times He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Truly we by His poverty have been enriched, though not we alone but every soul who ever has been, and ever shall be, blessed. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship; all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him; and none can keep alive his own soul. Such is the grace, the known grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and these the ways of our God, not now only but in the ages to come for His own glory and to His praise, whose humiliation and redemption have wrought such wonders, as yet only seen by faith, soon to be displayed before every eye. How sweet to associate it with the gracious consideration of the poor saints and the supply of their need at Jerusalem! How worthy of God thus to bring Christ into that which otherwise had been but an exercise of benevolence and compassion!

The apostle adds his judgment of its profit for the Corinthian saints themselves (ver. 10), who began before not only the doing, but also the willing a year ago. He could therefore with the more delicate propriety urge the completing of their purpose out of what they had. Grace repudiates constraint, but values, encourages, and directs readiness of mind: without this, what is the worth of giving? Is the gift acceptable? or the giver? But if the readiness be there, one is accepted according to what one has, not according to what one has not. Sentiment disappears; reality takes its place. Truth accompanies grace; and equity follows. For it is not that others should have ease and the Corinthians pressure, but on equality; and, as the application is made, “at the present time your abundance for their lack, that their abundance also should be for your lack.” This is fortified by God's way and word as to the gathering of the manna of old; when God adjusted the supply to the demand with a wisdom and power which precluded superfluity no less than deficiency. He that gave the manna from heaven measured it exactly, whatever the differing measures is man's hands. And we have to do with the same God, who regulates all in the assembly with assuredly no less care and love.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 8:16-24

In the rest of the chapter the apostle dwells on the care taken that the administration of the bounty should be not only beyond suspicion, but clothed with dignity and godly confidence by the known character of those entrusted with it. For it is not enough that the end should be divine, but that the means also should approve themselves to every true conscience. If lucre be apt to be filthy, if covetousness be idolatry, if the love of money be a root of all evil, the Spirit of God knows how to bring in Christ into every detail, and turn both way and end into blessing to God's glory.

“But thanks to God that giveth the same zeal for you in the heart of Titus, in that he received indeed the exhortation, but being very zealous of his own accord he set out unto you. But we sent together with him the brother whose praise in the gospel [is] through all the assemblies, and not only [so] but also chosen by the assemblies our fellow-traveler with this grace that is being administered by us unto the glory of the Lord [himself] and our readiness; guarding against this, that none should blame us in this abundance that is being administered by us, for we provide things honorable not only before [the] Lord but also before men. And we have sent with them our brother whom we proved to be zealous many times in many things, but now much more zealous by great confidence that [he hath] in you. Whether as regards Titus, [he is] my partner and fellow-laborer toward you; whether our brethren, [they are] messengers of assemblies, Christ's glory. The shewing forth then of your love and of our boasting for you shew forth unto them in the face of the assemblies.” (Vers. 16-24.)

The apostle thankfully owned the grace of God in giving Titus to feel as he zealously felt himself about the Corinthian saints in the matter, so that while he met the desire, yet too zealous as he was to require it he was ready to set out of his own accord unto them. He speaks as if it were already done; because in the style adopted in letters the facts would be made good when Titus had reached Corinth with this epistle. How eminently suited to comfort as well as rouse to a holy zeal the saints themselves when such a servant of the Lord as Titus so promptly responded to the apostle's heart, confident as both were that, whatever appearances indicated to those who judged superficially, grace had wrought in them, really and would yet flow through them to God's glory abundantly! If Timothy was like-minded with him to care for the state-of the Philippians with genuine feeling at a later day, the Corinthians might now learn no less, as they were already prepared to do, how Titus shared the zeal of the apostle in carrying out the proffered bounty of Corinth, which had been so slow of execution as to compromise them.

Thoughtful too as ever that Christ's glory should be sustained in His servants, He would, not expose Titus to unworthy, however unwarrantable, question; and so he associated with him in this service “the brother whose praise in the gospel is throughout all the assemblies.” So well known was he by this description to the Corinthians that no direct designation was needed, though men of other times have found it so vague as to afford grounds equally plausible for many, equally uncertain for any one in particular. Of one thing we may be assured that, whether or not Luke was intended, “whose praise in the gospel” has nothing to do with him in respect of the inspired

account of our Lord which induced many of the ancients to appropriate the description to him, any more than to Mark. Barnabas and Silas have been conjectured; as also Aristarchus, Gains, Trophimus, Ste. But none of these guesses seems less happy than that of some speculative Germans, who have applied τ■ν ■δελφ■ν to a supposed brother (after the flesh) of Titus, not seeing the incongruity of such an one, if indeed he existed, for the work in hand. The object and character of the association would have been frustrated by selecting one so near to Titus. But we do know the further consideration that, whoever he may have been, he was chosen by the assemblies to travel with the apostle and the rest who were to carry the offering of love from the Gentile saints to their poor brethren in Judea.

Here we see an important principle in exact accordance with the direction of the twelve in Acts 6. As the Christian multitude gave the means, they were left free to choose the administrators. This was as wise as gracious. The apostles kept aloof from all appearance of favoritism, and adhered to their own work with prayer, the condition of power. They might solemnly establish the seven over their business of serving tables; but they called on the disciples in general to look out from among themselves men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom in whom they had confidence. Such were the proceedings in the assembly of Jerusalem; and alike method was adopted among the Gentile assemblies, where many joined their contributions for the need at Jerusalem as we learn in verse 19. Where the saints gave, they chose according to their best judgment for the due application of their gifts, whether in one assembly, or for the special work of many assemblies. But in no case did they meddle with the ministers of the word. These the Lord gave, not the church; and the church, instead of choosing, received those whom the Lord chose and sent, not merely the higher ones, as apostles and prophets, but the more ordinary, as evangelists, pastors and teachers. For they too all rest on the same principle of the Lord's gift, and not man's. And hence it is an utter confusion to mix up two things so different as the Lord's sole title to give and send His servants in the word, and the assembly's title to choose those in whom the saints have confidence to administer their bounty.

The case before us falls under the latter. “The brother” un-named was chosen by the assemblies “our fellow-traveler with the grace that is being administered by us unto the glory of the Lord [Himself] and our readiness;” as indeed the apostle had directed in 1 Cor. 16:3, 4. The moral reason of the caution follows: “guarding against this, that none should blame us in this abundance that is being administered by us, for we provide things honorable not only before [the] Lord but before men.” (Vers. 20, 21.) It is not lack of faith, but rather faith working by love which would cut off occasion from men, as well as walk with pure conscience before God. The allusion is to Prov. 3:4 in the LXX.

The next verse, as well as that which follows, proves that the apostle added another brother. “And we sent with them [i.e. with Titus and the one already described] our brother whom we proved to be zealous many times in many things, but now much more zealous by great confidence that [he hath] in you.” (Ver. 22.) Still less is it possible for us to determine who is this second brother meant; because we have not even so many marks as attached to the first. But two particulars fitting him for the work are mentioned: the apostle's experience of his proved zeal often and variedly and again the exceeding warmth of his own zeal now by his (hardly Paul's) great confidence in the Corinthian saints. For the margin of the Authorized Version is more correct than the text, at least in my judgment. None could be so unsuitable an associate as a near relation, if

the aim were, as it was, to inspire confidence in the donors.

It seems to be clear from verse 23 that Titus stood relatively in the higher position of the three who were to accompany the apostle: “Whether as regards Titus, [he is] my partner and fellow-laborer toward you; whether our brethren, [they are] messengers of assemblies, Christ's glory.” Is it not then incredible that the apostle would have so classified or described men so eminent as Barnabas, Silas, Luke or Mark? Not to say that it was only at a later day that he expresses his re-assurance as to the last. Could he yet write that Mark was serviceable to him for ministry? or that he was among his fellow-workers for the kingdom of God who were such as had been a consolation to him? Renewed confidence may be gravely doubted then, though it came at length; and the apostle was glad to say so as soon as he could to the Lord's praise.

It is well to note how the expression “messengers [■π■στολοι] of assemblies” illustrates the difference of a charge from men however delicate and weighty as compared with a gift or charge from the Lord like an apostle. These brethren, while beautifully and graciously styled “Christ's glory” as being active in the display of His excellency, were deputed envoys of certain churches who entrusted them with their contributions for Judea. Not only did he decline the sole administration of the gift himself, but he directed and sanctioned the choice of more than one and gave their task dignity in all eyes by associating the two brethren, not only with Titus who shared the highest confidence of the saints, but with himself. Our Authorized Version, however, is quite right in not rendering the word “apostles” (which is appropriated to the envoys of the Lord in the highest rank of His work) and in preferring “messengers” here and in Phil. 2:25, where it is said of Epaphroditus who was the bearer of what the Philippian saints sent at a later day to the apostle in Rome. To translate the passage in our text or in Phil. 2 “apostles” can only be from inconsiderateness, or still worse-the desire to level down the apostles of Christ by leveling up the messenger or messengers of churches. The source of the commission is the measure of their difference. To confound them is to degrade the Lord or to deify church, the great effort of the enemy by those who know not the truth, however they may look in opposition to each other. For here it is that the highest and the lowest ecclesiastically meet: the one by exalting a merely human caste of church officials to the place which the Lord gave His apostles; the other by reducing the apostles of the Lord to those chosen by the assemblies or delegates of the people. They both agree, one superstitiously, the other rationalistically, in unbelief of Christ's gracious power in providing for the perfecting of the saints.

Having thus summed up what he had to say of his companions, of moment for the Corinthian saints at this time, he calls on the saints to give the proof of their love and of his boasting about them to those brethren in the face of the assemblies.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 9:1-7

But the apostle has a good deal more to say on a subject so constantly and often urgently needed in the assembly, where the poor are apt ever to abound. He had brought before the Corinthians the bright example of the Macedonian believers, notwithstanding circumstances most unpromising naturally. And this had stirred up the apostle to urge on Titus the completion of this grace also in Achaia which the Corinthians had begun a year ago. Not that he spoke by commandment, but through the zeal of others and proving the genuineness of their love, while setting before them the incomparable grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to act on their souls. So God in giving the manna to Israel took care that, whatever the inequality in gathering, none should be in excess and none want: was there to be less regard for each other in the church? Love desired not the ease of those, nor pressure on these, but rather a principle of equality in mutual consideration of each other, and this wherever the church is found. Then he sets forth the hearty diligence in this matter of Titus, who had gone about what remained to be done at Corinth with two other brethren; for thus had the apostle lent the contribution importance whilst guarding it from the smallest imputation of evil, and calling on the Corinthians to make good their love and his own boasting of them.

“For about the ministration for the saints it is superfluous for me to write to you. For I know your readiness which I boast of you to Macedonians that Achaia hath been prepared a year ago, and your zeal stimulated the mass. Yet I sent the brethren in order that our boasting of you may not be made vain in this respect, that (as I said) ye may be prepared; lest haply, if Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we may be ashamed, that we say not ye, in this confidence. I thought it necessary therefore to exhort the brethren that they would go before unto you and complete beforehand your blessing promised before, that it be ready thus as blessing, not as covetousness. But this [I say], he that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth in blessings shall reap also in blessings; each as he hath purposed in his heart, not of sorrow or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.” (Vers. 1-7.)

From Gal. 2:11 we know how earnest our apostle was like the rest as to the general principle, and how in this particular case his heart went out to the distressed saints in Jerusalem, none the less because his part of the work was emphatically toward the Gentiles. But his delicacy is no less striking and instructive here, where he gives the saints in Corinth full credit for the same love which overflowed his own heart; “it is superfluous for me to write to you.” They had been taught it of God themselves. Why then did he write so amply? Not because he did not know their ready mind; not because they had failed to give him ground to glory in what God had wrought in this respect; for as he in the last chapter boasted of the Macedonians triumphing over their trying and needy circumstances in their most generous remembrance of the poor saints in Judea, so now he lets the Corinthian saints know his habit of boasting of themselves to Macedonians, and very especially in their preparation for this call a year ago.

Hence, no doubt it is that in his zeal for themselves and the Lord's honor in them, and seeking the happy flow of love in every way, he speaks (in the epistolary aorist) of sending the brethren

referred to in the close of the preceding chapter, in order to guard in this particular against mishap in his boast on their behalf. He wanted them to be prepared beyond danger of disappointment as far as pains on his part could secure it. How painful for him, not to say for them, it would be if brethren came from Macedonia and found shortcoming in the very saints, the report of whose zeal had acted so powerfully in kindling their own! What shame on all sides if this confidence in the Corinthians should not prove well-founded He did not wish that there should be collections when he came himself; as he would guard against haste on the one hand or personal influence on the other, or malevolent insinuation. But his love for them and desire for the Lord's glory in the business made him exhort Titus and his two companions to go on before to Corinth and previous to his own arrival complete their fore-promised blessing. Compare, for this use of “blessing,” Gen. 33:11; Judg. 1:15 Kings 5:15; it is love not in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth, 1 John 3:18.

The apostle's longing was, not merely that their proposed beneficence should be ready, but in such sort as blessing, and not as covetousness, meeting thus the danger on both sides. As he would have it a blessing on the givers' part, he repudiates all covetousness on the part of those receiving it for the poor saints. He does not seem to limit his caution to the former nor to allude in covetousness to a niggardly spirit, any more than to make πλ. mean “tenacity,” instead of the desire of having more which soon runs into tricky means to get it.

But this further he adds, a wholesome thing to remember, being truth in God's moral government, and of all moment in our life on earth: he that sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that sows with blessings shall reap also with blessings. It is no question of correspondence in kind, but it may be spiritually also and so much the better. Still it is true, and especially among God's people, as it always was. (See Prov. 11:24, 25.) Scripture indeed teems with it in one form or another; and experience is the sure and plain commentary. God despises not what is given to the poor saints; but the spirit of giving is far More important than the gift. Therefore the apostle follows up the apothegm he had just applied: each just as he has pre-determined in his heart, not of sorrow or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver, quoting Prov. 22:8, Alex. LXX. To grudge and grieve over what is given is unworthy of a saint of His; to exact it no less unworthy of His servant. How needed is faith here as everywhere how energetic is love, which is our only due spring in this as in all else practically, whatever the encouragements God may and does give those whom grace has called and strengthens to walk in the path of Christ Himself the sovereign giver of all good, He loves to see the reflection of His grace and blessing in His children.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 9:8-15

The close of the apostolic exhortation on giving is admirably in keeping with all we have had already. Not only does God love a cheerful giver, but He is able in His grace to see that there shall be means to give, and not in this form only, but for every good work. “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.” (Prov. 11:24.)

“And God is able to make every grace abound unto you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in every [thing], may abound unto every good work; as it is written, He scattered, he gave to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever.” (Vers. 8, 9.) No doubt that God has now revealed Himself in Christ according to His own nature, in view of heaven and eternity; no doubt He has given us life in His Son and redemption through His blood and union with that glorified man at His right hand, that we might glory in naught but His cross here below, and count not life dear to serve the Lord in His way and our measure, as we wait for Him from heaven. But this does not hinder the government of God and the pleasure He takes in blessing large and generous hearts, as of old, so now. Special privileges do not forbid His general principles, and His power finds a way in His wisdom to harmonize all. And the apostle, who knew better than any what it was to suffer with Christ and for Christ, is just the suited one, out of his capacious mind and heart, to communicate the assurance of these His unchanged ways, for which he cites Psa. 112:9; the beautiful description of man blessed in the kingdom when divine judgment introduces it by-and-by. Then the fear of Jehovah and obedience will have might on the same side, and judgment will return to righteousness, and wealth in no wise corrupt it, but it endures forever with a spirit of compassion and gracious consideration of others. There may be judicial ways peculiar to that day as looking on his enemies, and his horn exalted, &c.; but true righteousness, far from being hard, dispenses with liberal hand from that which grace supplies abundantly. Nor could it be otherwise in the estimate of a true heart that now, in the day when grace is vouchsafed in other and deeper ways, it should fail in this. It is not so however; and He-who shows us His mercy beyond measure or thought is able to make every grace abound, and this that we might have the blessed favor of imitating Him here too, or as the apostle puts it to the Corinthian saints, “that ye, at every time having every kind of sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work,” as it is written in the Psalms.

There is no need we may by the way remark of altering the force of righteousness here or elsewhere. It does not mean “benevolence” as the Geneva Version renders it with many a commentator, but comprehends it. Cf. Matt. 6:1, 2. Righteousness means consistency with relationship; and what can be more consistent than generous remembrance of want in others, especially in the household of faith, on the part of those who own that all is of grace in their own case?

But this is not all. Not only is God able thus to do, but He, the God of all grace, acts accordingly. “But he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for eating will supply and multiply your sowing and increase the fruits of your righteousness [you], being enriched in everything unto all liberality which worketh out through us thanksgiving to God.” (Vers. 10, 11.) It is not a wish or prayer as in

the Authorized Version, nor is it (with the same Version, the Vulgate, Luther, Calvin, &c.) correct to construe χορηγ■σαι “minister” or supply (were this the true form) with ■ρτον ε■ς βρ. ("bread for your food"). Compare Isa. 55:10. It is an assurance that the God who amply provides for ourselves, loves to furnish means as well as opportunities of blessing to others, as He delights in owning and rewarding these fruits of righteousness, which are really of His grace, as if they were ours and not of Him by us. The form of the sentence following is slightly irregular, the sense quite sure and plain, without introducing the parenthesis of the English or other Versions. God would thus increase the fruits of their righteousness, while you are in everything being enriched with every kind of liberality, which is such as worketh out through us thanksgiving to God. The word translated “liberality” is given in Rom. 12:8 as “simplicity,” which is no doubt its literal force. But thence from conveying the absence of excuse for not giving it easily derived the sense here implied. The apostle acknowledges the source of all they had given that they might abound in good works, reminds them of his own share in it whether in strengthening their zeal or in dispensing the fruit, and anticipates the thanksgiving of those about to be relieved by it rising up to God.

On this last thought, the worthy conclusion of all previously urged, the apostle dilates to the end of the chapter. “Because the ministration of the service is not only filling up the wants of the saints, but also abounding through many thanksgivings to God; through the proof of this service [they] glorified God for the subjection of your confession unto the gospel of Christ and liberality of fellowship toward them and toward all; and their supplication for you, while longing for you, on account of the surpassing grace of God [bestowed] on you. Thanks to God for his unspeakable gift.” (Vers. 12-15.) Thus is shown the true and proper character of such a loving contribution for the poor saints. It is an honorable service and a ministry of love. It meets their wants, but it flows over, and rises into many thanksgivings to God. It drew out praise from those who received it in this subjection to His name; for why also thus liberally remember them at all? It roused them to prayer with earnest longing for those who manifested such grace. And if such be the blessed effect of love working, in the heart and the supplying the poor saints, with that which otherwise perishes in the using, what shall we say or feel, as we think of Christ? Thanks to God for His unspeakable gift. The reader will agree with me that it is strong to suppose the apostle could speak in such unmeasured terms of liberality in earthly things, however of grace. Spoken of Christ, of all God is to us in and by Him, what can be more proper? One would scarcely have deemed it needful to make even this brief remark, if Calvin and many others had not allowed a turn so derogatory, as it seems to me.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 10:1-6

From the exhaustive treatment of giving and receiving according to Christ which filled the two preceding chapters, the apostle turns to vindicate the authority given him in the Lord. This Satan had been bringing into question among the Corinthians, not merely to discredit the servant, but thereby to undermine the testimony and separate the saints from Him whose grace and glory were interwoven with it most intimately.

In the beginning of the epistle, now that they had begun to judge themselves in God's sight truly, if as yet imperfectly, he could open his own heart and speak of his ways and his motive which had been so basely misconstrued; he had just alluded to his authority enough to indicate his possession of it with calmness of spirit with his unwillingness to exercise it with severity. He even appeals to God as a witness upon his soul that it was to spare them, not through fear or levity or any other unworthy reason, he had not come as yet to Corinth, but with marvelous tact and gracious skill he binds up with his explanation of what had been misunderstood, the divine certainty we enjoy in Christ by God's word and the power of the Spirit given to us. And then, just touching on the case of discipline which Satan had used and was still seeking to use to separate the Corinthians from the apostle, not only in judgment but in affection and in the mutual confidence which springs from it, he lets them know how that an evangelistic door even opened to him in the Lord failed to turn his loving heart from themselves at this critical juncture; but spite of all, he thanks God for always leading him in triumph in Christ, as in an ancient procession of victory where sweet spices were being burnt, harbinger of death to some of the captives and of life to others. This gives occasion to the admirable setting forth of the gospel of the glory of Christ, the ministration of the Spirit in an earthen vessel in contrast with that of the law which false teachers would ever mingle with it, and to the manifestation of the superiority of life in Christ over all that can obscure, menace, hinder or destroy, which runs through chapters iii.-vi. 10. Thence he returns to his relations with the Corinthian saints, but not without exhortation to keep them clear of every association of Satan, flesh and world, inconsistent with Christ.

After this to the end of chapter 7 he freely speaks of what had tended to make a practical breach between him and them. Then in the grace and wisdom he who took nothing for himself from the saints at Corinth proves how his heart beat freely toward them by informing them of the grace displayed in Macedonia notwithstanding their well-known and deep poverty in liberally contributing to the poor saints in Judea, and by giving the Corinthians an opportunity of proving the genuineness of their love, especially as they had begun a year ago but had not yet given effect to it; a work in which Titus shared the gracious desires of the apostle, not only as to the help itself for the suffering poor but also that the saints in Corinth should not fall behind their boasting about them. But therein he manifests with equal strength the avoidance of all reproach on the part of those engaged with himself in administering the relief, and the manifold blessing of such liberality, and God's delight in it, whether one thinks of the saints that give or of the saints that receive through His grace who is Himself the unspeakable gift of God.

The apostle did not love to speak of himself or even of his authority, high as it was and most surely conferred by the Lord. But there was a necessity for the Corinthians as for the Galatians; but here he reserves it for and pursues it to the close of the epistle; whereas there he could not but begin with it, the call being yet more urgent.

“But I myself Paul entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of the Christ, [I] who face to face [am] mean among you but absent am bold toward you-but I beseech that present I may not be bold with the confidence with which I think to be daring against some that think of us as walking according to flesh. For walking in flesh we do not war according to flesh. For the arms of our warfare [are] not fleshly but powerful with God to the pulling down of strongholds, pulling down reasonings and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and leading captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ, and. being ready to avenge every disobedience when your obedience shall have been fulfilled.” (Vers. 1-6.)

It seems that Paul physically had nothing of a showy presence, such as men like generally, most of all perhaps Greeks. But besides his was a lowly and gracious bearing which judged self and set it aside, as in everything, so particularly in the delicate task of dealing with others; which did not suit the Corinthian mind, nor seem in keeping with the apostolic office: especially as the apostle could and did to them write severely now and then in his first epistle. His adversaries accordingly took advantage of all this in seeking to aggrandize themselves and lower the apostle and his teaching. He appears here and elsewhere to take up their words and meet them in the Spirit, as one who had learned the lesson, if ever saint did, of death and resurrection with Christ. He therefore introduces himself, now that they had morally compelled it, with straightforwardness and dignity; and he entreats them by the meekness and gentleness of the Christ, which had as great price in his eyes, as it seemed to have none in theirs. Did detractors tax him with a mean personal appearance, but withal boldness when absent, that is, in his letters? Well, he says, I beseech that I may not when present have to be bold (θαρρ■σαι) with the confidence with which I am (not “reckoned,” but) minded, or think to be daring (τολμ■σαι) against some that think of us as walking according to flesh. Whatever) the energy and fervid zeal and depth of feeling and strength of will found in his natural character, Paul had borne himself among the Corinthians with a self-forgetting humility and the forbearance of active love. It was what he had seen in the Master he served, and this reproduced itself in his adoring heart and in his ways. Let men beware of despising in the servant what was the fruit of the perfection of Christ. But who also so unsparing in his words? Is there the least incongruity? What can be so outspoken as love-the love of Christ? Did Paul find pleasure in blaming his “beloved sons” in the faith?). It was and must be due to their state if he came with a rod, or in love and the spirit of meekness. So far from liking to censure, as enemies insinuated, he beseeches that he may not when present have to exercise his authority with a power withering to those who opposed the Lord and sought to cloak their own carnality under such an imputation against him. Reveling in the grace of God for his own soul, it was his deepest grief to see saints misled by Satan, forsaking their own mercies, grieving the Spirit, and putting the Lord's name to disrepute. It was not of Paul to lord it over the faith of any; he was a workman, and a fellow-workman, of their joy. And it was his joy far more than theirs. But he was servant in all he had received of the Lord Jesus, and responsible to use his authority where requisite. And as he had spoken out in his letter, so he would act when present, but he would rejoice if no such need arose. For he sought not himself, nor his things, nor theirs, but them.

“For walking in the flesh we war not according to flesh.” All who live here below can say the former; how few, the latter-at least as the apostle could. But it was because the weapons of his warfare were not fleshly but mighty “with” God or “according to” Him or “for” Him. Flesh prides itself on its own resources within which it entrenches itself against God, who works in His children when dependent, least of all in His own when independent. The enemy was seeking to bring back again fleshly wisdom, which like all that is of the first man attracts nature and exalts itself against the knowledge of God, for this is inseparable from Christ, and from Christ dead and risen. If we war not according to flesh, it must be by pulling down reasonings and every, high thing exalted (or exalting itself thus) and leading captive every thought unto the obedience of the Christ. This is the object and effect of dependence, as wrought by the Spirit of God. For there is nothing harder to man than contentedness with being nothing; nor does aught more hinder the obedience of Christ.

We may see in the first how the apostle employed those arms with God to the overthrowing of strongholds, whatever the reasoning or the high thing that was lifted up against the knowledge of God. Take their fleshly zeal for Paul, Apollos, or Cephas: he brings in Christ and His cross to judge its roots, declaring that the former were but ministering servants through whom they themselves believed and as the Lord gave to each; and in fact all theirs, and they Christ's and Christ God's. It was a carnal corruption of their privileges. Take their worldly ease: he contrasts, with such an unbelieving anticipation of the day when we shall all reign together, the apostles set by God as the last appointed to death, despised, suffering, and become as the world's offscouring until now. Take their appeal to law courts: he confronts the indignity of saints, who are to judge the world and angels, prosecuting suits one against another before the unjust. Take their laxity about temple feasts: he shows that their boasted intelligence about the vanity of idols was exposing them to Satan's snare, and drawing them into communion with demons. Take lastly their denial that the dead rise: he proves that it virtually upsets the resurrection of Christ, and consequently the gospel with all their heavenly privileges and hope. Thus admirably does the former epistle lead captive every thought into the obedience of Christ.

But the apostle adds another word which yet more brings out the grace and wisdom which wrought in and by him. “And being in readiness [or, as we say, being ready] to avenge every disobedience when your obedience shall have been fulfilled.” (Ver. 6.) He loved the saints, and yet more Christ's glory in the church. Therefore he could stay away and be misrepresented, but still wait till the word was brought home by the Spirit. This had been in part at least: the gross evil had been not only got rid of, but the saints in Corinth had been deeply moved in judging their own haughty and insensible state, and were now in danger really of veering to the opposite extreme of judicial hardness toward the one who had not only sinned without shame but ensnared them also. Grace becomes the church as well as righteousness, yea it should characterize us now, as earthly righteousness was looked for in Israel. But grace in the apostle could wait, not with indifference at any time, but in all patience now that conscience was working, till their obedience should be fulfilled, never giving up Christ's title to punish every sort of disobedience, and not merely what was scandalous. He would have them all with himself united for the Lord against every evil thing. The church must renounce Christ if it sit down in quiet acceptance of what denies His name. But grace knows how to hail a little that is of God, and looks for all according to His will in due time, or the solemn judgment of what is repugnant to His nature and word.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 10:7-12

Sum is the way the apostle sets forth beseechingly the authority he had received in the Lord against the detraction of adversaries who were even yet exercising a poisonous influence over the saints. Nothing was farther from him than the fleshly, vacillating, and tortuous policy they attributed to him. But these are the common tactics of the enemy. The first to brand others with lack of spirituality, fidelity or even integrity, are those who are themselves guilty in these very respects, and spend their breath in a restless endeavor to imbue all they meet with their own surmisings; until they seem at last not only to believe their every impression, but to be satisfied that rancor is true love and invective nothing but faithfulness to Christ. The apostle, after showing that it is one thing to walk in flesh, another to walk according to it, declares that we do not war according to flesh. The arms of our warfare, powerful as they are with God to overthrow flesh's strongholds, are of small value in carnal eyes. The apostle insists on all being reduced to the obedience of Christ, and readiness to avenge every disobedience when their disobedience should have been completed. What are we here for if not for that obedience? Yet grace and wisdom would first deal with what most openly and seriously dishonors God; and then, when conscience answers to the word, would look for more, yea for all that is pleasing in His sight. God is in the assembly, His dwelling, His holy temple (however men may forget or fritter down the solemn fact), and surely there to give efficacy to His own word and will, as He then was to vindicate by His power the authority of His servant when undermined or denied.

“Do ye look on things according to appearance? If any one hath trust in himself that he is of Christ, let him of himself consider this again, that even as he [is] of Christ, so also we. For even if I should boast somewhat more abundantly of our authority which the Lord gave for building up and not for your overthrowing, I shall not be ashamed; that I seem not as, it were to terrify you by letters: because his letters, saith one, [are] weighty and strong, but the presence of the body weak and the speech contemptible. Let such an one consider this, that such as we are in word by letters when absent, such also in deed when present. For we dare not class or compare ourselves with some of those that commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves among themselves and comparing themselves with themselves, are unintelligent [or misunderstand].” (Vers. 7-12.)

It seems clear that Paul had nothing in presence or action, any more than in rank or position, to attract the fleshly or worldly mind. So we see elsewhere that the heathen who were struck by the miracles wrought called Barnabas Zeus, and Paul Hermes. Some of the Corinthians indulged in similar depreciation. They could not understand an apostle of such mean appearance, and a style of speech so little suitable to an ambassador of Christ. In this last respect they were much more fastidious than the Lycaonians who felt the force of Paul's words. External manner had an egregious over-value in Achaian eyes. The apostle at once brings in Christ, who reduces all men, and all things, to their true level. “Do ye look on things according to appearance? If any one hath trust in himself that he is of Christ, let him of himself consider this again, that even as he [is] of Christ, so also we.” He first puts himself with others, as simply “of Christ;” for such self-assertion as his detractors indulged in was no guarantee, no reflection, of Christ. And very cutting is his

appeal: trust, confidence, in self, what is the worth of it? And if they had no more in this respect to brag, on what plea could they deny Paul's relationship to Christ? Paul gloried in Him and in nothing else, unless it were in His cross or that which answers to it. But he goes farther. “For even if I should boast somewhat more abundantly of our authority which the Lord gave for building up and not for your overthrowing, I shall not be ashamed; that I seem not as it were to terrify you by letters.” Now he quietly, but with firmness, lets them know how much more he might have put forward his apostolic authority. He had not talked, we may be sure, of the blindness he had inflicted on Elymas; he had written in his first epistle of delivering the incestuous offender to Satan, as well as of coming with a rod for the refractory in general. But he had not come, and these vain men treated the warning as vain words. But the Lord gave not in vain the function of acting as His spiritual right hand on earth, though its prime aim was for blessing, not punishment. Still the hand that can wield the trowel can use the scourge; and it were better to fear for their own bold irreverence than to put him to the proof, whether the Lord was with him now.

The apostle's call was to build up, not to cast down; and love it is which builds up. But there was opposition to the Lord quite as much or more than to Paul in questioning the authority given him. And in order to sap and destroy it, advantage was taken of his words and ways to impute fickleness, vacillation, and untruthfulness, as we gather from the first chapter; lack of moral courage when present and despicable weakness in person and ministry as we see here, aggravated by the heroic style of his letters when absent; craft, guile, and self-seeking as it would seem from chapter 12. Ill will never did lack material for disparaging the person, character, office and work of a servant beyond all example used, kept, and honored of the Lord. If he refrained then from saying more, as he easily might and naturally would, of his authority in and from the Lord, it was that he might not seem as if he would frighten them by his letters. And this because his letters, said one, are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence weak and his speech of no account. Such was the carping of his adversaries or of one in particular. We can understand it well. Neither spirituality nor unworldliness nor faithfulness vaunts itself nor seeks to lower others; but flesh betrays thereby its pretensions and its party-spirit.

There were various parties in the Corinthians, and some who strove to stand clear in grace and truth; but of all this schismatic activity the Christ-party, I should gather, was the most obstinate. Certainly we have no allusion in the second Epistle to any other; but there appears to be a trace that the spirit of those who said, “I am of Christ,” claiming a peculiar and exclusive connection with Him, was not yet exercised. The root of this error is judged in chapter v., especially verse 16. We can readily understand how it might creep in among men boasting of having seen, heard, and perhaps followed the Lord in the days of His flesh. Here the apostle bids the man who is confident in himself that he is of Christ of himself to think this again, that even as he is of Christ, so is Paul. How simple is the truth, how destructive of airy dreams which would misuse oven Christ to flatter self! Nor is anything so holy or humble as the faith which cleaves to Him. Similarly of his authority from the Lord, as of his relationship to Him, he bids such a detractor think (ver. 11) that “such as we are in word by letters when absent, such also in deed [we will be] when present.”

It was the adversaries who had nothing to boast but words or manners, show or position. When he came, the apostle would know not the word of those puffed up, but the power; but he desired earnestly that it might be, through self-judgment on their part, a visit in love and in a spirit of meekness. But their state might compel him to use a rod, as it did to speak of himself when he

would rather discourse only of Christ. Their boastfulness about themselves, their alienation from him, went along with real evil and error in some who misled them, with whose vaulting ambition he deals afterward. For the present he contents himself with this severe rebuke: “For we dare not class or compare ourselves with some of those that commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves, are unintelligent.” With this clique of self-satisfied men the apostle did not venture (he severely says, though with courtesy) to rank or compare himself and brethren like him; but he retires with a Parthian shaft, for he lets them know that to measure or compare themselves thus is the reverse of that intelligence on which they most plumed themselves.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 10:13-18

Another thing forgotten by his adversaries the apostle here introduces. The sphere of work is not a question of human choice or judgment, but of the divine will. There were those who slighted the labors of Paul, and their fruit at Corinth; but as he had not entered on that field of his own will, so he had toiled in the face of difficulty and with signal blessing guaranteed for his encouragement from the first.

“We however will not boast as to things unmeasured, but according to the measure of the rule which God distributed to us, a measure to reach as far even as you. For we do not, as though not reaching unto you, overstretch ourselves, for even as far as you we advanced in the gospel of Christ, not boasting as to things unmeasured in another's toils, but having hope while your faith increaseth, to be enlarged among you according to our rule unto abundance, to preach the gospel unto the [quarters] beyond you, not to boast in another's rule as to things made ready. But he that boasteth, in the Lord let him boast; for not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.” (Vers. 13-18.)

The saving grace of God widely as it goes forth, even to all, falls nevertheless under the ordering hand of God who has His will about the sphere as well as the character of His service.

Others might boast immoderately. This is natural to the flesh, especially in vain minds. But the apostle labored as he lived in the fear of God. Not a thought crossed him of displaying abilities; he was a servant, a bondman, of Jesus Christ; and so to him it was no question of liking or disliking, but of doing the work assigned to him, “according to the measure of the rule which God distributed to us, a measure to reach even to you.”

In truth as all the Christian life is meant to be a matter of obedience, so in particular the work of the Lord; else will it speedily degenerate into vain glory or slighting others, and often better men than ourselves. So certainly it was here. The Lord had not called them as he did Paul to Corinth. They at their ease had followed where Paul had wrought with constant self-denial, and not outward labors only but deep exercise of soul; a labor in which grace alone could sustain by the Holy Ghost in continual dependence on the Lord. And the Lord had rejoiced his heart with much people, even in that corrupt city, brought to the knowledge of Himself. This was: a work of divine power and goodness, but some had risen up or entered in since the apostle's departure, whose worldly spirit depreciated the work, and claimed superior power. If Paul had begun, they were the men to finish. Was he not indeed too ready to begin and leave his work incomplete as he roved from place to place? For their part they preferred the chiefs who stayed and reared a statelier edifice, as in Jerusalem. This they now strove to do at Corinth.

Such vaporing the apostle simply and thoroughly disposes of by the great truth that God apportions the sphere of labor. Those who venture on an enterprise of the sort without God, must not wonder if their service be without His honor and blessing. Happy the man who is wont to look to God, not only for his soul and in his walk, but also in his work. Nor does God fail to vouchsafe

His guidance in this as in all things where His servants wait on Him. It was a new language doubtless to the self-exalting men of Corinth, jealous of the power and authority of the apostle. Power belongs to God, but He loves to use it in and by those who walk by faith, and now was the fitting time and place to make known the secret to the saints. It was “according to the measure of the rule which God dealt to us, a measure to reach as far even as you.” There was no overstraining in the apostolic word or work, as though not reaching to the Corinthians; “for even as far as you we advanced in the gospel of Christ.” None could deny this. The apostle had traversed many lands, planting the standard and proclaiming the good news of Christ in them all. He had done so as far as Corinth to the joy of many hearth. Let others boast then of lengths without measure; he and those like-minded would not boast of anything of the sort, more especially if it were taking advantage of other men's toils, which he was careful to avoid. “But having hope, while your faith increaseth, to be enlarged among you according to our rule unto abundance.”

Thus admirably does the apostle rise above the pettiness of human conceit or pride in divine things, nowhere more offensive than there, on the one hand laying bare those cheap pretensions which turned to selfish account the toil of others; on the other, cherishing confidence in the grace of God that the faith He had given would grow and thus afford him an opportunity of being enlarged as he says among them, instead of being chilled and straitened by having to deal with serious and growing evils. For thus would he be set free in fact and in spirit to preach the gospel unto the quarters beyond them, instead of boasting in another's rule as to things made ready. This his adversaries were doing, as we have seen, and as the apostle here says quietly, but none the less cuttingly.

But the Christian has a just ground of boasting. There is One in whom we may and ought to boast, not self, but the Lord. So said the prophet of old, when the Jews were either glorying in idols or distrustful in Jehovah, who was laying bare their vanity and punishing their departure from Himself. So repeats the apostle now to the saints at Corinth. To glory in the Lord is due to Him and good for us; to glory else where is a danger as well as a delusion. It connects more or less immediately with self; and not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Chapter 17

Notes on 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

The apostle loved to spend himself in the service of Christ or the saints, and begrudged a word about himself even when the occasion demanded it, at least when it might look like self-defense. His wisdom as his joy was to testify of Christ. To speak of himself even as His servant he counts “folly,” however needful. But it is part of the enemy's tactics to undermine and lower, and destroy if possible a true servant of the Lord, no less than to cry up those that serve their own belly and by their fair speech and speciousness deceive the hearts of the guileless. For can anything be more calculated to frustrate testimony to Christ than to blacken the bearer of it in his motives, ways, and aims? Hence, as thus the object of unceasing detraction to the saints at Corinth by self-seeking men who were really Satan's instruments in dishonoring Christ and corrupting the church, the apostle addresses himself, however reluctantly, to the necessary task of vindicating His name assailed in his own person and ministry.

“Would that ye might bear with me in some little folly; but even bear with me. For I am jealous as to you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craft, your thoughts should be corrupted from the simplicity that is towards Christ. For if indeed he that cometh preacheth another Jesus whom we preached not, or ye receive a different Spirit whom ye received not, or a different gospel which ye accepted not, ye might well bear with [it]. For I reckon that I am in nothing come short of those surpassingly apostles; but if even ordinary in speech, yet not in knowledge, but in every [way we were] made manifest [or, manifested it] in all things towards you. What! did I commit sin in humbling myself that ye might be exalted, because I gratuitously announced the gospel of God to you? Other churches I spoiled, receiving hire for service towards you. And when present with you and in want, I have not been a burden to any one (for my want the brethren on coming from Macedonia supplied); and in everything unburdensome to you I kept and will keep myself. There is Christ's truth in me that this boasting shall not be stopped unto me in the quarters of Achaia. Wherefore? Because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do I will also do that I may cut off the occasion of those desiring an occasion, that wherein they boast they may be found even as we. For such [are] false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ: and no wonder, for Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light: [it is] no great thing then if his servants also transform themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.” (Vers. 1-15.)

He apologizes first of all for having to speak, not of Christ only, but of himself. Yet if any one might be jealous over the Corinthian saints, he surely who betrothed them (such is his expressive figure) to one husband, to present in them a chaste maiden to Christ. Such is the destiny of the saints; they are loved, washed, sanctified, justified, in view of this intimate relationship to Christ, which was most real and sure to the apostle, not so to those who lowered the standard of future hope and present separateness and conscious nearness in love and holiness to Christ by allowance of ease in this life, and of association with the world in its objects and ways, its philosophy or even religion. It is not only that here have we no continuing city and seek the coming one, but that we

are now espoused to one husband even Christ, and are called to judge not conduct only but unsuitable thoughts and feelings. And as Paul had thus espoused the saints at Corinth, could he be otherwise than jealous at the creeping in of so much that was inconsistent with presenting them a chaste virgin to Christ?

For it was not merely failure through unwatchfulness: false principles were being instilled, and some relished the poison. So he continues, “I fear lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craft, your thoughts should be corrupted from the simplicity that is towards Christ.” In proportion as Christ is a living person to the soul, the reality of Satan's counter-working will be owned. Insensibility to the wiles of the enemy as a true and active adversary to be resisted is the awful indication of an unbelief common and growing in Christendom. How many Christians there are who think and talk slightingly enough of the Corinthian saints, yet more lax still, not in ways only, but in faith! Satan is to them scarce more than an abstraction, an ideal expression of the power of evil. So far were those addressed, poor as they might be spiritually, from such incredulity, that the apostle could refer without hesitation to the serpent beguiling Eve. The history of the fall in Genesis was as yet indisputable truth to all who called on the name of the Lord; even the manner of the tempter's approach proved no difficulty, as it has to many a soul since, and this to their no small loss. Scripture recorded the simple, sober, solemn truth, which all heathenism attests in a traditional form more or less molded into fable. And the latent enemy who employed the serpent is active still as ever, and now under Christianity in corrupting the thoughts of saints from the simplicity of the truth as to the Christ. For the merely professing mass the end will be the apostasy, and the man of sin revealed, whose coming is after the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish.

And what had they got to warrant slight or alienation? “For if indeed he that cometh preacheth another (■λλον) Jesus whom we preached not, or ye receive a different (■τερον) Spirit which ye received not, or a different gospel which ye accepted not, ye might well bear with [it].” For none of these blessings were they indebted to any but the apostle; yet him they had lightly esteemed whilst ready to honor the self-exalting men who had set up to teach on his foundation, crying up the twelve only to depreciate Paul. “For I reckon that I am in nothing come short of those surpassingly apostles; but if even ordinary in speech, yet not in knowledge, but in every way we manifested [it, or, were made manifest] in all things towards you.” They had all had the amplest experience of the apostle in everything; and as in power so in knowledge, they knew that he was behind none, however defective in the rhetoric of the schools which the Greek mind overvalued.

But low-minded men misunderstand and despise that lowliness and love of which they are themselves incapable; and some there were at Corinth who cringed to position and means as they were insensible to the apostle's grace in working with his own hands, or at least receiving no aid from rich Corinth. “Did I commit sin in humbling myself that ye might be exalted, because I gratuitously announced the gospel of God to you? Other churches I spoiled, receiving hire for service towards you. And when present with you and in want, I have not been a burden to any one (for my want the brethren on coming from Macedonia supplied); and in everything unburdensome to you I kept and will keep myself.” Ready to evangelize at all cost to himself everywhere, the apostle in some places felt free and happy to receive, not only from individuals but from assemblies, going on with God in grace and humility: when the world's spirit prevailed, he was reserved and would receive nothing. The general principle remained intact: “the laborer is worthy

of his hire;" "the Lord hath ordained that those that preach the gospel should live of the gospel." But the apostle whilst laying down what is right could and did go beyond it in grace, not using it for himself but for Christ wherever His glory called for it. From the poor Macedonian brethren he received; from the wealthy Corinthians nothing. O what a contrast is this day in Christendom Not did he thus speak to draw out their liberality in future, for as he had kept himself, so would he in future. "There is Christ's truth in me that this boasting shall not be stopped unto me in the quarters of Achaia." Was he disappointed and bitter now? "Wherefore? Because I love you not? God knoweth." It was indeed to deny his uniform life in Corinth and since.

His true motive he explains. "But what I do I will also do that I may cut off the occasion of those desiring an occasion that wherein they boast they may be found even as we"-a cheap boast where men have plenty and need no self-denying devotedness. "For such [are] false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ." The beginning of those evil ways was then at work which soon formed a clerical class, dispensing even with the claims to gift from Christ under the fabulous pretension to apostolic succession. Such men then opposed the apostle in person, as now they oppose his doctrine. Is this wonderful, when, as the apostle reminds us, "Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light? It is no great thing therefore if his servants also transform themselves as servants of righteousness," though he solemnly adds, their "end shall be according to their works."

Chapter 18

Notes on 2 Corinthians 11:16-21

Having turned aside to warn of pseudo-apostles, their high pretensions, and their tow realities, the apostle comes back again, reluctantly as we see, to speak of himself, his “folly” as he calls it. In truth no task could be to him more repulsive, for he loved to speak only of Christ and the wondrous grace of God in Him. But what he so much disliked was a necessity; and at length the duty is faced of confronting their pretensions with his own reality. If in the previous chapter he shrank from pressing on the rich care for the poor saints, still more did he shrink now from self-vindication. But the Lord's glory was concerned and the saints were endangered; and so he again takes up the disagreeable task.

“Again I say, let not one think me to be a fool; but if otherwise, even as a fool receive me, that I also may boast some little. What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord but as in folly, in this confidence of boasting. Since many boast according to flesh, I also will boast, For ye bear fools pleasantly, being wise. For ye bear if one bring you into bondage, if one devour you, if one receive, if one exalt himself, if one beat you on the face. As to dishonor I speak, as though we had been weak; but wherein any one is bold (I speak in folly) I also am bold.” (Vers. 16-21.)

It was impossible to treat the assailed ministry of Christ without speaking of himself and his service; and of these how could he speak to unfriendly ears without apparent boasting? So we have effort and apology and circuitous approach, all characteristic of the man, but the work done thoroughly and the word of God dealing with their consciences. Boasting was certainly not the way of the Lord; boasting in the Lord is what becomes every believer; and the apostle shrank perhaps more sensitively than any other man from boasting in aught else. But the false apostles were dishonoring the Lord and damaging the saints by putting forward their fleshly advantages; such as a fine personal presence, power of mind, play of fancy, readiness of speech, rhetorical artifices, independent fortune, family connection, social position, and the like. Therefore does he feel it necessary to put forward what God had wrought according to the ability He bestowed; and this not merely in positive spiritual power, but in every kind of labor and suffering for the Lord's sake. It is humbling yet instructive to contrast the apostle's pain at having thus to speak, and the too evident pleasure with which many a servant of Christ goes off into personal narratives, which seem to have no aim but to prove his own cleverness at the expense of poor Mr. This or Mr. That, the great sacrifices he has made for the truth, or the Surpassing excellence of his line of things in the testimony of Christ. Indeed it is well in these days of fleshly pretension, which claims high and exclusive spirituality, if our ears escape the deliberate effort to lower such as are resolved by grace to exalt Christ only and to love all that are His, abominating therefore all party-work, whether in leaders or in followers.

Still, he is instinctively averse to everything which might look like self-exaltation, and which necessarily involved speaking of himself or of his work. He deprecates their thinking him a fool, but if they would not concede this to him, “Receive me even as a fool, that I too may boast some little.” They, being deceitful workers, sought their own glory; the apostle, only to deliver the saints from

that which undermined the Lord and puffed up the flesh. Nevertheless it was not Christ; and not to be wholly occupied with Him was distasteful. “That which I speak, I speak not after the Lord, but as in folly, in this confidence of boasting.” He had ample matter and real substance; still it was not directly the Lord, and this tried him, however necessary it might be. This seems to be the true meaning; not at all that he was writing as an uninspired man, but that, by inspiration, he was writing what was painful to a heart wholly devoted to the Lord's glory, but indignant at the trickery of these spurious ministers, and at the ready ear given to their insinuations by many of the saints. And certainly the Corinthians who permitted and enjoyed the lofty talk of those who detracted from Paul had no right to complain of the rapid glance at his work and sufferings, as well as office.

“Since many boast according to flesh, I also will boast, for ye bear with fools pleasantly, being wise.” The false teachers without scruple flattered the saints, as they flattered themselves. The irony of the apostle is the most cutting reproof of self-complacency. Where the folly really lay was neither doubtful, nor far to seek. He who has Christ for his wisdom can afford to be counted, and to count himself, a fool; it is really the truest wisdom, which they wholly miss, who exalt a favorite teacher into the place of Christ, and claim the character of obedience for such abject and perilous folly. Among the Jews, to say “there is no God” was to be a fool, in the worst sense of the word; among Christians, to set the servant practically above the Master, to give the servant the homage due only to Him, is real folly, and commonly as at Corinth it is the acceptance of Satan's ministers to the disparagement of those who are truly serving Christ.

Nor can any sight be more remarkable than the way in which flesh displays itself in these circumstances. The same saints, who were restive under the authority of a true apostle, were all submission to those who were false. “For ye bear if one bring you into bondage, if one devour you, if one receive, if one exalt himself, if one beat you on the face.” Such was the degradation into which many at Corinth had fallen, hugging the chains which they saw not; for flesh is blind as well as foolish, and loves its own things, not those of Jesus Christ. It likes a director of faith and duty-not conscience in God's presence, subject to the word. It submits to bondage to man, if it be allowed sometimes license. It never really knows and enjoys liberty in the Spirit. It ignores and endures wrongs, through indulgence to its favorites, to the last degree of injury and insult, as if all this were a high degree of religious merit, instead of the lack of faith and power which must bow down to a human priest or pontiff. The history of Christendom is but the filling up of the sketch the apostle has drawn of what Satan had wrought to a certain extent at Corinth.

Now at length the apostle comes once again, however slowly, to himself and his ministry. “As to dishonor I speak as though we had been weak, but, wherein any one is bold (I speak in folly), I also am bold.” It was the apostle's glory to be weak that the power of Christ might rest upon him. This his adversaries turned to his reproach, and he bowed to it; he was far from affecting that high spirit which imposes on the vulgar used to it in the world, and is ever of price to the fleshly mind. But he apologizes for speaking folly, and he adds, “wherein any one is bold, I also am bold.” He was pained and ashamed to allude to his own things, however true and blessed; whilst they blazoned with the utmost vanity their advantages, however petty or really despicable in comparison.

Chapter 19

Notes on 2 Corinthians 11:22-33

The fleshly pretension of those who opposed the apostle prided itself on its Jewish extraction, as clericalism and ecclesiastical corruptions are apt to do virtually if not naturally as here. Knowing that the apostle turned every eye to Christ in heaven as dead and risen, they seem to have forgotten how easily he could dispose of such claims to superiority. “Are they Hebrews? I too. Are they Israelites? I too. Are they Abraham's seed? I too.” (Ver. 22.) It is a climax from the external designation of the chosen nation, through the internal name (clearly enough distinguished in such scripture, as 1 Sam. 13:19, 20, 3-7; 14:21-24), to the name in virtue of which they inherited the promises; yet each appropriated to himself with a curtness very galling to his vain-glorious rivals. It was low ground in comparison of Christ, and the apostle treating it with scant respect turns to a higher claim.

“Are they minister of Christ? (Beside myself I speak) I above measure; in labors very abundantly, in prisons very abundantly, in stripes exceedingly, in deaths often. From Jews five times I received forty [stripes] save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; by wayfarings often, by dangers of rivers, by dangers of robbers, by dangers from countrymen, by dangers from Gentiles, by dangers in town, by dangers in desert, by dangers at sea, by dangers among false brethren, by toil and trouble; in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Apart from things without [or, besides], my pressing care day by day, the concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I burn not? If I must boast, I will boast in the matters of my, infirmity. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he that is blessed forever, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the ethnarch [or, prefect] of Aretas the king garrisoned the Damascenes' city to seize me; and through a window I was let down in a basket by the wall and escaped his hands.” (Vers. 23-33.)

It is hardly exposition that is needed here, but thanksgiving for the grace bestowed of God on a man of like passions with ourselves, when the eye surveys such a roll of suffering labor for Christ, when the heart seeks to realize what it actually means so to be poured out as a libation, as he says to Philippi, where he could rejoice and rejoice in common with all the saints, not as here where the folly of the Corinthians wrung out of an outraged heart the reluctant tale, so profitable for us and all, which we should never otherwise have had recounted. We may well be humbled as we read that which puts our lukewarmness to shame.

Nevertheless, though the summary is as brief as it is plain in the main, the wounded modesty of the apostle, forced to withdraw the veil from a life of unequaled suffering, enters on the task with apologetic words which let out the pain it cost him to speak of his own things. He puts the question as to his adversaries, “Are they ministers of Christ?” and answers, not now as a fool (■φρων) but as raving, “I above measure.” The commentators, ancient and modern, will have it to be a comparison. This is the very thing he seems studiously to avoid by the use of the preposition used adverbially and by other means afterward. It is impossible to conceive an answer more spiritually

wise and conclusive. For he does not even notice here the extraordinary power which the Lord had given him in the Spirit to deal with disease, death, or demons; nor yet the immense range and success of his work in the gospel; but he turns from his very abundant labors to the excess of stripes which had befallen him, his very abundant imprisonments, and his frequent exposures to death. Those who sought to undermine him might boast of their learning or their originality, their logic or their imagination, their depth of thought or their piquancy of illustration. They might appeal to their adherents numerous or intelligent, to their high favor with women, to their popularity with men; for they sought above all to draw away the disciples after them. What did they care for the poor and despised? What for the interests of Christ and the church?

The phraseology of the apostle (as in ■π■ρ ■γ■, and also the sense of παρεκτ■ς) may be now and then difficult to seize or convey from the brevity and abruptness of one who could not bear to dwell on such a theme in view of unworthy adversaries who stood high in the esteem of many a saint. But he assuredly does not mean that any service here was more than the ministry of Christ, for this to him was the highest glory; and the Lord Himself had said that whosoever would be great among them should be their minister, and whosoever would be first should be slave of all. Nor would he merely intimate that he was more devoted and laborious than his detractors, as some have supposed. He was really comparing himself with none; but apologizing for so speaking as contrary to a sound mind, he could not but own himself Christ's minister beyond measure. No doubt the comparative occurs both with “labors” and with “prisons,” and even Bengal thought the false apostles experienced these like Paul, but less but it was overlooked that the Greek tongue often pea the comparative without any object of comparison in a merely intensitive sense, where we should employ the positive qualified by “very,” “rather” or the like, meaning (if we attempted to fill up the ellipsis) “more than usual,” or “ordinary,” &c.; and the context confirms this as well as the moral bearing. For μ■λλον, or πλ■ον would have been more natural to express comparative superiority, and ■περβαλλ■ντως and πολλ■κις just afterward oppose the idea. We see in chapter 10:12 what the apostle felt of comparing, which was their way, not his who was altogether above a habit so far beneath Christ or the Christian.

The apostle next glances at particulars thus far in his course, to which others had compelled him who can have little anticipated such an answer to their vain-glory. He puts them to shame with (not miracles but) sufferings. “From Jews five times I received forty [stripes] save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and day I have been in the deep.” This last danger was of course, like the three shipwrecks, previous to that which is so graphically described in Acts 27, though Grotius by a singular oversight speaks of it as if included. The one stoning at Lystra is related in Acts 14. Paley notices the remarkable accuracy of the inspired historian as compared with the apostle's statement. There is the nearest approach to a seeming contradiction without giving the least real ground for it. The same chapter which gives the case of stoning mentions at the beginning that an assault was made on Paul and Barnabas at Iconium, “to use them despitefully and to stone them; but they were ware of it and fled unto Lystra and Derbe.” “Now had the assault been completed; had the history related that a stone was thrown, as it relates that preparations were made by Jews and Gentiles to stone Paul and his companions; or even had the account of this transaction stopped, without going on to inform us that Paul and his companions were aware of their danger and fled, a contradiction between the history and the apostle would have ceased. Truth is necessarily consistent; but it is scarcely

possible that independent accounts, not having truth to guide them, should thus advance to the very brink of contradiction without falling into it." (Horse Pauline. Works, v. 120, 121, ed. vii.) In the Acts we have but one of the three beatings with rods, and not one of the five scourgings by Jews.

And what a picture of ceaseless, unselfish, suffering toils is dispatched in the next few words, before which the great deeds of earth's heroes grow pale with ineffectual light, attended as they were with heavy blows on others and clever schemes to screen themselves! "By wayfarings often, by dangers of rivers, by dangers of robbers, by dangers from countrymen, by dangers from Gentiles, by dangers in towns, by dangers in desert, by dangers at sea, by dangers among false brethren, by toil and trouble; in watching. often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Yet this is the man who deprecates it as "folly" to speak of himself, who practiced as he exhorted "but one thing!" "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Forget his failures, his sins, he did not; it is good and wholesome both for self-judgment and as a witness of sovereign grace and faithfulness on God's part. But his progress, his trials, his sufferings, others only by their folly constrained him to recall, in meekness setting right those who opposed, if God peradventure might sometime give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.

Yet it is not only the endurance of cruel usage from time to time from open enemies that tests the heart; it is down out yet more by the unwearied and constant going out, no matter what the labor and the danger, from country to country among strangers whom the Jews could readily influence when they themselves took fire at the gospel, added to the manifold trials of the way: "in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from countrymen, in perils from heathen, in perils in town, in perils in desert, in perils at sea, in perils among false brethren; in toil and trouble, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." How poor the lengthy tales of the most devoted laborers in ancient or modern times compared with these living strokes from the heart of the great apostle.

Nor was it by any means an exhaustive account. "Apart from the things besides" (παρεκτος, possibly "without," as in the Vulgate, Calvin, Beza, Authorized Version, &c.), "the pressure on me day by day, the concern for all the churches." There is little doubt that an early confusion crept into the text, and that the true word here is one signifying "urgent attention," as in Acts 24:12 it is rather one signifying "faction" or "tumultuous concourse," though the more ancient copies support the former word (■π■στασις, not ■πισ■στασις) in both; and they are followed in this by Lachmann, Tischendorf, Alford, and Tregelles. Mr. T. S. Green is one of those who fall into the opposite extreme of reading the latter word in both. It is one of the few instances where Scholz has in my opinion shown better judgment, reading "concourse" (■πισ■στασιν) in Acts and "pressure of attention" (■π■στασις) in the passage before us. Anxiety for all the assemblies is the appended explanation of that care day by day which pressed on the apostle. And of this he gives us a sample. "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I (emphatic) burn not?" If they were sorely troubled by scrupulosity, he could and did enter into their difficulties; if any one was stumbled by the unworthy bearing of others, his soul was on fire, filled with love for Christ and the saints, and abhorring selfishness and party with thorough hatred.

Was this self-praise? “If it is needful to boast, I will boast of the matters of my infirmity. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is blessed forever, knoweth that I lie not. At Damascus the prefect of Aretas the king garrisoned the Damascenes' city to seize me; and through a window in a basket was I let down by [or through] the wall, and escaped their hands.” No doubt, it was a remarkable escape at the beginning of his ministry; but it was just the last thing one who sought his own glory would have repeated and recorded forever. No angelic visitors opened the bars and bolts of massive doors, nor blinded the eyes of the garrison: the apostle was let down in a basket through a window in the city wall. Truly he gloried, not in the great deeds or sayings of his ministry, but in his weakness and the Lord's grace. It is the more remarkable from the way in which he proceeds immediately after to speak of his being caught up to the third heaven.

Chapter 20

Notes on 2 Corinthians 12:1-6

We have had the apostle glorying in what had no glory in men's eyes. Now he turns abruptly, from being let down in a basket to escape a Gentile governor, to being caught up to heaven for a vision of the Lord in paradise.

“I must needs boast, though not profitable; but I will come unto visions and revelations or [the] Lord. I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not: God knoweth), such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body or without [or apart from] the body, I know not: God knoweth), how that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which [it is] not lawful for a man to utter. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on mine own behalf I will not boast save in [my] weaknesses. For if I should desire to boast, I shall not be foolish, for I shall speak truth; but I forbear, lest any should account as to me above that which he seeth me or heareth of me.” (Vers. 1-6.)

The test is, from the conflict of readings, rather precarious. But the truth conveyed runs like a plowshare through all fleshly thought and feeling. Certainly in the boast of the apostle is not one thing palatable to nature, or exalting to himself or of profit humanly. Grace alone characterizes visions and revelations of the Lord, and to these he would come. Yet even though boast one must in the Lord, room for vain-glory is excluded. “I know a man in Christ:” not “I knew,” as the Authorized Version so strangely misunderstands. Still even in the form which the apostle employs to convey the former, personal boasting is sedulously avoided, so much so that even our translators appear to have conceived that he was speaking not of himself but of some other man.

How blessedly Christ meets self in its need and guilt and ruin in order to deliver from its power, not only by the judgment of the first man, but by identification with the Second! It is good to be indebted to another's grace: what is to be thus lost, if one may so say, in the blessedness of Christ! Undoubtedly Paul had the marvelous experience he so vividly alludes to; but he puts it in a way meant to convey to any “man in Christ” that it is his privilege substantially, as it was his in fact miraculously. In chapter 5 we were told that, if any man is in Christ, it is a new creation: the old things passed, all things made new, and all of the God who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. Here it is one caught up to the third heaven and in paradise hearing what it is not possible or permissible for man to tell-unspeakable words. The sphere he was introduced into, though the communications were beyond what could be conveyed now; but it was of great moment to have the certainty of all. And he whose province it was to make known the counsels of God as to Christ and His own for heaven was thus allowed to hear, that all in Christ should know their portion by such a chosen witness.

The entire allusion is as peculiar as wise and suited. “I know a man in Christ fourteen years ago.” Faith does not boast of visions and revelations of the Lord, any more than of its doings: of trials and sufferings one may speak if compelled, and so too of that which appertains to every man in Christ, though one alone got the vision. So David said not a word about the lion and the bear

which he was enabled to kill while engaged in his lowly task, till it was needful to allay the fears of others to God's glory; and the apostle only spoke many years after a wondrous experience which others less spiritual would have talked of everywhere for as many years or more. What would not the Corinthians or their misleaders have made of it?

Prophets of old have known what it is to look on scenes outside man's experience. So Isaiah, the year in which king Uzziah died, beheld the Lord on His throne with the Seraphim in attendance on His glory, that he might fittingly bear witness to the people of their evil but of the Virgin-born Jehovah-Messiah who should establish the kingdom and deliver the people from their sins to God's glory. Ezekiel too was lifted up between earth and heaven and transported to Jerusalem in the visions of God and the temple (chap. 11.), as afterward to Chaldea (ver. 24), and finally to the land of Israel (chaps. 40-48.) for the future temple and city and division of the land. Nor is it only in the great Apocalyptic prophecy of the New Testament that we trace the analogy of these ways of the Spirit, but we see His power in catching away Philip bodily to Azotus or Ashdod, from the neighborhood, one of the roads leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. As for the apostle, he says, “whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not: God knoweth), such an one caught up to the third heaven.” It was not dubious, but transcendent, knowledge, and God who gave it hid from the apostle whether it was in spirit only or in bodily presence also. Certainly, if caught up like Philip, there was left such a sense of the glory as was too deep and bright for human words or for present circumstances. Body there or not, he was not hindered from feeling the glory to be beyond the measure of man. There the glorified will be to enjoy all with Christ at His coming, in bodies like His own; and there the disembodied saint goes to be with Him; there too Paul as a man in Christ, but Paul actually as apostle and prophet that we might learn now, was taken up. “And I know such a man (whether in the body or apart from the body, I know not: God knoweth), how that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which [it is] not lawful for a man to utter.” In the mysteries of the old heathen there were “unspeakable words,” but they were strange forms of language to alarm and overawe the mind. Here the things forbade communication as rising completely in their nature above all that surrounds or is natural to us.

But the apostle does boast, not exactly “of” nor “in” but “on behalf of such a one.” God did not deal thus with His servant for no reason but worthily for Himself: and Paul was led by the Spirit in speaking of it fourteen years after the fact to meet the exigencies of the testimony of Christ. It was grace to give the privilege; it was grace not to boast of it for himself meanwhile; it was grace to write of it now, and to write it in the inspired word for all saints in all time. “On behalf of such an one I will boast, but on mine own behalf I will not boast save in my weaknesses.” These we have had in the preceding chapter; they were the suffering of love for Christ's sake in a weak body with all men and things opposed, which Satan was ever skillfully arraying against him. How beautiful are the feet of such heralds of good things! Yet philosophy and religion saw only what was despicable, as in the Master, so in the servant. Do we know what it is to live beyond the depreciation of our fellows? Let us look to it, however, that it be truly for Christ and His glory in those that are His. Nothing is more opposed to Christ, yet nothing more common among Christians than a pretentious self-asserting spirit, which will boast of the distinctive possession of the truth which we know, even though it most condemn us. God looks for reality in a world of shadows and untruth; he looks for the possession and reflection of His revealed light and truth where darkness reigns; He looks for divine love where only self is found, though in subtle forms; He looks for the faith which reckons on

Him according to His word in the face of all difficulties and dangers. Assuredly the apostle thus lived and labored: as it is for our profit to see in these two epistles how misunderstood is such a path even among saints, who are apt to welcome a high and self-exalting spirit, even though it indulge in sufficiently contumelious ways towards themselves. So the Israelites, who would have a king like the nations, received one after their own heart, who served himself, instead of ruling them in the fear of the Lord.

“For if I should desire to boast, I shall not be foolish, for I shall speak truth; but I forbear, lest any should account of me above that which he seeth me or heareth of me.” The servant was jealous of his Master's glory, and hence his reticence as to much which would have interested us in the highest degree. “To me,” he could say as none other since nor then nor before” to me to live is Christ;” and he was as vigilant as to this in public ministry as in private walk. “On behalf of a man in Christ” he had much to say, as he does say it elsewhere; and so he boasts here, for here all is of grace. “Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive, why dost thou glory as if thou didst not receive?” But even here, though speaking truth only, he forbears lest any should account of him beyond what he sees or hears of him. Such is the effect of a life spent in the faith of Christ and His love.

Chapter 21

Notes on 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

We have seen the spiritual power and tact with which the apostle handles his glorying, how he blends “the man in Christ” with that which was peculiar to himself so as to cut off all self or fleshly boasting, and yet afford every saint intelligent of his privileges the dame conscious privilege substantially as he had himself received miraculously. Now he turns to that counterpoise which the wisdom of the Lord had bound up with his own experience in order to hinder the misuse of it; for flesh was as bad in the apostle as in any other and needed His dealing no less than in the Corinthians, though differently as to form.

“And that I should not be uplifted by the exceeding greatness of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn [or stake] for the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I might not be uplifted overmuch. For this I thrice besought the Lord that it might depart from me; and he hath said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for [my] power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest on me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in straits for Christ; for when I am weak, then am I strong.” (Vers. 7-10.)

Here at least is no ambiguity, no studied mysteriousness of mention. Paul boasts of nothing here below but in his weaknesses, and indeed specifies one especial trial, or thorn if not “stake” for the flesh, sent to make nothing of him in the eyes of others, rendering him contemptible, it would seem from elsewhere in his preaching. With this goes an extraordinary irregularity in the very expression which it is easier to paraphrase than to translate with any smoothness, if we adopt with some δι■; “wherefore” after “revelations” and before “that.”

This the Revisers deal with ingeniously: “And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations-wherefore, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given,” &c. Otherwise, accepting the word, Lachmann was driven to make verse 6 a parenthesis, and to connect the first clause of verse 7 with the end of verse 5; and then the new sentence begins with δι■ ■να μ■ κ.τ.λ. which of course, if all allowed, yields a simple sense. In the text of Tregelles the insertion is beyond measure harsh; Alford brackets the word, and very oddly the last clause also, though repeatedly affirming its propriety for emphasis or solemnity; Tischendorf rejects it.

It will be observed that in the early part of the chapter the allusion is to what was communion with God's presence, not matter for communication to His children; and in that communion the body had no part. What he saw and heard was so outside its sphere that he knows not whether he were in the body or out of it. A man in Christ thus favored he knows, but whether in the body or apart from the body he knows not. Could anything make him feel more distinctly that all the power to enjoy is in God?

Yet flesh even in a saint might work in consequence and whisper that none before had ever been so caught up to the third heaven. Hence, lest by the excess of the revelations he should be uplifted, there was given him what was alike painful and humbling. What the thorn in the flesh was

in Paul's case is purposely left undetermined, even if one may gather more or less its nature; but its moral aim, its intended effect, cannot be doubted. Nor is the measure of reticence without a wise motive, for it is a general principle of divine dealing with a form suited to each person so dealt with. If we hear of a messenger of Satan on one side, we hear; of something given on the other. If the enemy take pleasure in the pain of God's servant or child, He assuredly works even by that which so distresses the flesh for the deeper blessing of the soul.

Lessons previously not learned at all or imperfectly are now taught. “For this I thrice besought the Lord that it might depart from me; and he hath said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for [my] power is perfected in weakness.” (Vers. 8, 9.) How it reminds us of what was still more wonderful, yea of absolute perfection, in that very Lord Himself when He prayed thrice that, if the Father would, the cup might pass from Him. Here it could not, ought not, to have been otherwise; for how could He who knew His love as the Son but deprecate unsparing judgment because of sin? The Lord, in that infinite suffering according to God's will and in doing it, was alone necessarily: but in the case before us we have as a principle what pertains to us and must be our position by grace, if indeed we are to be kept from the more humbling lesson of what the flesh is by a positive fall like Peter's. There are exceeding precious privileges given to the Christian. And it is not in the soul's entrance into or enjoyment of them that the danger lies, but in our natural reflection on their possession afterward. Hence God knows how to use in grace what Satan means for hurt as in Job's case. Only here it is far deeper and more triumphant, as it ought to be now that Christ is come and redemption accomplished. It is not only dependence on God exercised and maintained, nor is it mere resignation to inevitable trial, but the sufficiency of grace practically proved, and Christ's power perfected in weakness.

Thus he who felt as soberly and profoundly as any man ever did can say, “Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weakness, that the power of Christ may spread its tabernacle over me.” This is incalculably more than vanquishing mighty foes by faith and patience. It is taking pleasure in what is most trying and overwhelming to nature that Christ's strength may be manifested. Where flesh might rise, it is put down. In such dealing with us is the life of the Spirit; but Christ makes the bitter sweet, and His power can make its dwelling in us when we acquiesce in our nothingness and rejoice in it if it be but to His praise and glory. Practically there is nothing so profitable for the soul; and the apostle was ministering in the most effectual way while thus drawing forth from his own deep experience the true glorying of the saint as he knew it in his life before God and His ways with him day by day. What did they know of it, who were boasting of themselves or their leaders at Corinth and depreciating the true path of Christ to which the apostle clave faithfully? They would willingly have persuaded themselves into the idea that such devotedness and suffering were but the eccentricities of an ill-balanced mind, and a prejudice to the gospel rather than a true and acceptable testimony to Christ. But, bear or forbear, he will tell them and us undauntedly what it is to live Christ. “Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in straits for Christ; for when I am weak, then am I strong.” Practical Christianity is as truly of faith as deliverance. All is of grace, though the ways differ. In every respect Christ is all. Only in redemption He suffered for us; in the path of faith we suffer with and it may be for Him. And blessed are those who thus suffer now, whether for righteousness' sake or for His name.

Notes on 2 Corinthians 12:11-18

But was not the apostle speaking of himself, of what grace had given him to suffer? Was it not talking of what he calls weaknesses, insults, necessities, persecutions, and straits for Christ, but on his own part?

“I am become foolish, ye compelled me; for I ought to have been commended by you, for in nothing was I behind those surpassingly apostles if also I am nothing. The signs indeed of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by both signs and wonders and powers. For what is there wherein ye were made inferior to the other assemblies, unless that I myself pressed not heavily on you? Forgive me this wrong.” (Vers. 11-18.)

It is not irony, but the genuine and deep feeling of one whose heart burned with a divinely-given sense of what Christ is, and of love to the saints, forced to speak of himself by those who should have been prompt rather to have vindicated him and his service in love. It was the more painful, because he is treating, not of sin in man met by the righteousness of God in Christ, but of utter weakness in the Christian displaced by the strength of Christ. Even the saints in Corinth were as to this on ground like the world, the heathen world around them. They gloried in intellect, in learning, in eloquence briefly in man. They had never applied the cross of Christ practically to judge it, save so far as grace may have begun the work by the first epistle; and we need His glory on high, as this second epistle shows, to deal with fleshly pretensions thoroughly. (Cf. chaps. 4, 5.) The weakness with which some detractors reproached he was so far from denying that he himself insisted on it as the condition of the display of Christ's power.

It was real and culpable ignorance therefore to contrast him with those surpassingly apostles in this respect. Rather was it true that in nothing was he behind them, though as he says he was nothing, and quite content to be so. What his heart yearned for was Christ's glory, Christ's strength, not his own. As later in Phil. 3 his desire was to be found in Him, not having a righteousness of his own, that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; so here he would not be strong in himself if he could, but weak that he might be strong through Christ. He would glory of a man in Christ, but in himself of nothing but his infirmities.

Natural power indeed is as offensive in the service of Christ as is one's own righteousness in justification: the latter denies Christ for us, the former denies Christ in us, or rather His power resting on us in our own felt weakness, yea, nothingness. Nothing can be more opposed to the feeling and the reasoning of flesh and blood. Human nature dislikes what is humiliating and painful; it loves ease or honor. To go on in difficulties, dependent on nothing but the Lord, is most trying, not delivered but enduring, that He may be glorified and we may prove the sufficiency of His grace. Such is the true pathway of power, and Paul trod it as none other since, in whom the first man is apt to be strong, the confusion or perplexities of others being only the greater where the Second man seems also strong, and the consequence serious for those who accept the activity of the two Adams as the right and desirable thing, to be admired in the Christian and the service of

Christ. How different was his experience who took pleasure in all that made him for Christ's sake despised before others, and crushed in himself, when weak then strong!

Yet had he far rather have not said a word of himself, even when speaking only of this suffering trying path, and absolutely silent as to himself, his family, his acquirements, or his doings. It was the Corinthians who compelled him to speak out for their own profit, even though it took the shape of reproof. Neither was Paul behind the apostles, however exalted any might be; and none the less but the more, though (and because) he was nothing; nor were the Corinthians inferior to the assemblies, save in Paul being no burden to them. And as he shows that the apostolic signs were wrought among them in all patience by both signs and wonders and powers, so he asks them to forgive him the wrong of never accepting support or favors from that rich assembly. It is calm, dignified, loving but overwhelming, in its exposure and reprimand of their fleshly conceit, as well as of their readiness to take up insinuations against him whom they ought rather to have defended when impugned.

“Behold, this third time I am ready to come unto you, and I will not press heavily, for I seek not yours but you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents but the parents for the children. And I most gladly will spend and be spent for your souls, if even more abundantly loving you I am less loved.” (Vers. 14, 15.)

The servant would still (if now at length he revisited Corinth) cherish the portion of his Master, and give rather than receive: though entitled to live of the gospel and be cared for by the assembly, he would forego his title in the midst of those who might misuse or misunderstand it to Christ's dishonor. He would be like a parent in unselfish affection to his children. He would fare as He whose love was the more as others hated, however pained to find the saints so like the world. How singularly close was Paul's “imitation” of Christ!

“But be it so: I did not myself burden you, but crafty as I am I caught you with guile. Did I make a gain of any of them whom I sent unto you? I exhorted Titus and sent the brother with [him]: did Titus make any gain of you? Walked they not in the same spirit [and] not in the same steps?” (Vers. 16-18.)

Here the apostle obviates the cunningly mischievous insinuation of any who might charge him with reaping advantage indirectly through his friends. Such dishonor he repudiates. Guile like that was far from his soul, though the accusers seemed by no means above it if they suspected him; for what will not malice in the heart dare to think and say? They well knew that Titus and his companion walked in their midst with a self-abnegation kindred to his own. No wonder this unwearied witness of Christ's glory abhorred from the bottom of his heart the sickening compulsion which drew forth such words from his pen; but we should profit by it all no less than those primarily addressed. There are many saints like those in Corinth: where the servant like him who thus pleads for Christ and like Christ?

Notes on 2 Corinthians 12:19-21

Nothing can be conceived more untrue than the impressions which the Corinthians had received of the one to whom they were so deeply indebted; and this from the rivalry of men who boasted much, and as usual with little or nothing really to boast. So it was even in these early days, so often halcyon days in superficial estimation, unless indeed for eyes yet more superficial, which, misled by theory only, look for progress in Christendom, degrading the past to exalt the present and speculate on the future. Positive and weighty and even notorious facts were utterly opposed to the misrepresentation of his adversaries; and none ought to have known better than the Corinthians how unfounded was all this detraction. It would be unintelligible if one did not know the natural weakness of the mass to fall under high-sounding words, and the subtle activity of the enemy to take advantage of the flesh in order to ruin the church and make it an instrument to the Lord's shame, instead of a witness in grace to His glory. Therefore did the apostle stoop to refute this miserable trash. But he was jealous lest this too should be misinterpreted, and he next proceeds to guard even this brief notice of his slanderers.

“Ye long ago think that we excuse ourselves to you. Before God in Christ we speak, but all things, beloved, for your building up. For I fear lest by any means on coming I find you not such as I wish, and I be found by [or for] you such as ye wish not; lest by any means [there be] strife jealousy, wraths, feuds, slanderings, whisperings, swellings, confusions; lest on my coming again my God humble me among [or before] you, and bewail many of those that have sinned heretofore and not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and indecency which they committed.” (Vers. 19-21.)

There need be no question, I think, as to the reading in verse 19. It is not “again” as in the Authorized Version, but “this long time,” which does not suit the interrogative form. If others sought self-justification, not so the apostle, whatever their surmisings. For those who are not occupied with Christ readily conceive of others what fills their own minds. He whom they misjudged turns to the presence of God and in His sight speaks in Christ. His speech was not only in the consciousness of the divine presence, but characterized by Christ, not by the natural man. In His name does not seem the thought, nor yet conformably to His doctrine. He stood consciously over against the highest tribunal, and spoke in Christ accordingly, not in the flesh; as he thus disposed of any self-complacency on their part in judging him, so he disclaims as carefully all thought of self-interest or fear: “but all things, beloved, for your building up.” Love never fails, and it builds up. For this he spoke and toiled and suffered.

And the more because he could not but have the gravest apprehensions of not a few in Corinth, whatever his comforting hopes of the rest. “For I fear, lest by any means on coming I find you not such as I wish, and I be found by you such as ye wish not.” It was the dread of their state and its consequences for themselves and to his own heart which had hindered his going when he had intended; and the delay had exposed him to evil tongues long since. And he still feared that the work of restoring grace meanwhile was not so complete, but that much which was amiss remained feebly if at all judged in many. For rather would he come in love and a spirit of meekness, than with

a rod which their condition might demand. If he found any failing not in grace merely but in righteousness, those who were thus putting the Lord to shame must be as unwelcome to His servants, as he must prove to them in vindication of His name. The evils he hints at as still at work are those which he had so unsparingly rebuked in his first epistle; strife and jealousy, outbursts of angry passion and cabals, outspoken slanderings and privy whisperings, manifestations of proud insolence, and open disorders. It is a long list of sad evils; but how soon these might characterize true believers, where there is a party or parties to take up and spread and give effect to the word of leaders!

Some see it hard to reconcile the warm expressions of loving confidence found elsewhere, especially in the central part of the Epistle, with these forebodings. They even venture to conjecture that the latter portion from chapter 10 formed another letter written at a different epoch, and under circumstances widely differing from those supposed in the preceding part; or at least that a considerable period elapsed between the writings of the former and the latter parts. But there is really no special difficulty, as the apostle does not here speak of all, but of many; and the attentive reader will not fail to discern, even in the earliest chapters of the first portion, quite enough to prepare him for the solemn anxieties which press on the apostle's spirit before he closes the Epistle with his parting appeals.

Indeed, it has been pre-eminently remarked of this very chapter with truth that it contains the most striking contrasts among those that bear the name of the Lord. There is, on the one hand, the man in Christ, viewed in an extraordinary measure of enjoying the privileges of a Christian; there is, on the other, the most distressing exhibition of the worst possible state of the saints practically in both violence and corruption; and there is between these extremes the way of the saint, in being made nothing of, that the power of Christ might rest on him. Thus there is really no difficulty for those who accept God's word in simplicity; and the intellectual activity which musters objections is spiritually as infirm and unintelligent, as it also dishonors the Lord.

Verse 21 seems naturally inconsistent with the notion of a second visit as yet, though it is admitted on all hands that the apostle had intended ere this to have paid it. “Again” goes with coming, not with “humble,” though some prefer giving it to the entire clause. What an expression of love lurks in the apostle's words! To find saints thus in sin was God humbling him in their presence, not them in his, as it looked as a fact. But he felt as he spoke “in Christ.” It was God humbling him at the evil condition of his saints, and what it rendered necessary. And what does he say as he thinks of the grossest forms of it? “And I bewail many of those who have sinned beforehand, and not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and indecency which they committed.” It is not that his hand would fail to wield the rod, but it was surely with a wounded heart which bled because of shameless evil among those who called on the name of the Lord. Doubtless the corruptions were, characteristic of heathen Corinth; and old habits soon revive, even in young converts, when the heart turns from Christ to other objects. But what a tale is told of feeble faith? For faith it is that overcomes; and they were overcome with evil, not overcoming it with good. Nature is an important fact for the enemy; but the Holy Spirit lifts above all hindrances, forming, exercising, and strengthening the new life we have in Christ our Lord.

Chapter 24

Notes on 2 Corinthians 13:1-5

The apostle reverts to his intention of visiting the Corinthian saints once more, and in such a way as to give a solemn force to the visit when it should be accomplished.

“This third [time] I am coming unto you. At [the] mouth of two witnesses and three shall every word [or, matter] be established. I have foretold and foretell, as if present the second [time] and now absent, to them that have sinned before and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare. Since ye seek a proof of the Christ speaking in me (who toward you is not weak, but is powerful in you, for although he was crucified in weakness, yet he liveth by God's power; for indeed we are weak in him, but shall live with him by God's power toward you), try your own selves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves. Or recognize ye not as to your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed ye be reprobate?” (Vers. 1-5.)

It had been already explained why the second visit had fallen through. It was to spare them he had not come. When he should revisit them, they must not expect such forbearance. His patience had been misconstrued by some, if others had profited. But this third time he was coming; and when he did, everything should be established with due evidence. The previous warnings he had given, not only to those that had sinned heretofore but all the rest, only strengthened his resolve not to spare at his coming again. The language most naturally conveys that he had not gone to Corinth the time when he had intended his second visit. Hence he says, “I have foretold and foretell, as if present the second time and now absent, to them that have sinned before and to all the rest,” &c. There is no ground apparent to my mind that this was literally a third visit, rather on the contrary the Second in fact, though third in purpose.

It helps greatly to the understanding of what follows to see that, whether marked externally or not, there is a parenthesis after the first clause of the third verse which runs through the fourth also; so that the connection of the first clause of verse 8 is really with verse 5. “Since ye seek a proof of the Christ speaking in me,.... try your own selves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves.” It is a final notice of and answer to their unworthy questioning of Paul's apostleship. Did they demand a proof of Christ speaking in him? Were not they themselves proof enough? Had He not spoken to their souls in that servant of His who first caused His voice to be heard in Corinth? As surely as they were in the faith, which they did not at all question, he was an apostle-if not to others, assuredly to them. The many Corinthians who, hearing the apostle, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, were the last who ought to gainsay the messenger if they appreciated the message and Him who sent the messenger. If they were reprobate, having confessed Christ in vain, there was no force in the appeal, which derives all its power from their confidence that Christ was in them as the fruit of the apostle's preaching.

This also shows how baseless is the too common abuse of the passage, as well as of 1 Cor. 11:28, to sanction a doubting self-examination, as one often hears not only in the practical history of souls, but in the teaching of doctrinal schools otherwise opposed. Here, say they, we are taught to search ourselves and see that we be not too confident. Does not the apostle in the first Epistle

to the Corinthians call on each habitually to examine or prove himself before partaking of the Lord's Supper? and does he not pursue that special call by the general exhortation in the second Epistle to examine or try themselves whether they be in the faith? The truth is that an examination of the context in each case dispels the error as to both-an error which strikes directly at the peace of the believer, if not also the truth of the gospel. For the gospel is sent by God, founded on the personal glory and the work of His Son, to bring the believer into communion with the Father and the Son in full liberty of heart and with a purged conscience. These misinterpretations, under cover of jealousy for holiness, tend immediately to plunge the soul into doubt through questions about itself.

What then do the passages respectively teach? 1 Cor. 11:28-31, the duty, need, and value of each Christian testing himself by the solemn truth of the Lord's death expressed and confessed and enjoyed in His supper. How slur over sin of any kind, were it but levity in word or deed, in presence of that death in which it came under God's judgment unsparingly for our salvation? Nor is it enough to confess our faults to God or man, as the case may require; but as on the one hand we discern the body, the Lord's body, in that holy feast of which we are made free and which we can never neglect without dishonoring Him who thus died for us, so on the other hand are we called to discern ourselves, scrutinizing the inward springs and motives of all and not merely the wrong which appears to others. But this intimate self-searching, to which we are each called who partake of the Lord's Supper, is on the express ground of faith, and has no application whatever to an unbeliever. This last doubtless has been mischievously helped on by the error of “damnation” in the Authorized Version of verse 29, which verses 30-32 clearly refute, proving that the judgment in question is the discipline of sickness or death which the Lord wields over careless or faulty saints in positive contrast with the condemnation of. the world.-As for the passage in our chapter we have already seen that the argument derives all its force from the certainty that those appealed to were in the faith, not in the least that they were uncertain. That they were in the faith through Paul's preaching ought to have been an unanswerable proof that Christ spoke through him; if Christ was not in them, they were reprobate; and was it for such to question his apostleship? Scripture never calls a soul to doubt, always to believe. But self-judgment is ever a Christian's duty; and our privileges, we being in ourselves what we are, only deepen the importance, as representing Christ, of dealing with ourselves truly and intimately before God, as well as of reminding our souls habitually of the Lord's death and of its infinite and solemn import as celebrated in His Supper.

The parenthesis connects the apostle's ministry, Christ's speaking in him, with all he had laid down before as its true principle throughout the epistle, as well as in the preceding chapter. Christ certainly had shown Himself toward them not weak, but powerful in them. Let them only bethink themselves of the past, and weigh what His grace and truth had done for them. And if they found fault with the apostle as indifferent to, yea, as despising and abominating, fleshly power and worldly wisdom, let them think again of the Savior, who “was crucified in [lit. out of] weakness, yet he liveth by [lit. out of] God's power.” Let them judge then who was consistent with Christ, His cross and His resurrection-they with their natural thoughts; or the apostle with his ministry so despicable in the eyes of some? “For indeed we are weak in him, but shall live with him by God's power toward you.” Where was dependence in faith of the crucified One? Where real power, as became the witness of resurrection and glory on high? Where unselfish devotedness and practical grace answering to Him who loved the church and gave Himself for it?

Chapter 25

Notes on 2 Corinthians 13:6-14

Thus did the apostle turn the unworthy demand of some in Corinth as to his apostolate to their own souls' blessing as well as to the overthrow of their argument. So at the beginning of this epistle he had dealt with their imputation of fickle levity if not of untruthfulness by insisting on the immutable truth of what he preached of Christ, and the power of God in the Holy Ghost's blessing that confirmed it in the believers. Not less does he here overwhelm those who, in their anxiety to dishonor his commission from Christ, were bringing to naught their own title to Christ. Did they seek evidence of Christ that spoke in Paul, and that was not weak toward them but was mighty in them? Let them try their own selves whether they were in the faith. The apostle was content with no better evidence than his Corinthian converts, unless indeed they were reprobate, which was far from the ground they took or he. He had far rather give them, and that they required, no proof of his apostolic power in severe discipline.

“But I hope ye shall know that we are not reprobate. But we pray unto God that ye may do nothing evil, not that we may appear approved, but that ye may do the right though we be as reprobate. For we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth. For we rejoice when we are weak and ye are strong: this also we pray for, your perfecting. For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present deal severely according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for casting down.”

It is impossible to conceive a more admirable dealing with a state of mind which must have been as grievous as it was humiliating to the apostle. Their high-minded ingratitude and short-sightedness only brought out an answer complete and withering, yet dignified, lowly and loving. His heart was occupied with their further blessing, more than with his apostolic office, which he asserted for their sakes more than his own. To stand in doubt of him might jeopardize their own faith rather than his apostleship, which was there to be exercised if need were in vindication of the Lord against their evil, as it had already been by grace in their conversion. But he prayed that they might give no such occasion, not that the validity of his claim might appear, but that they might do that which became saints, even though he might lack such proofs or be ever so depreciated. There would then be no occasion for the display of power, as their honorable walk would testify for the truth; and as for the apostle, he could say “we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we rejoice when we are weak and ye are strong.” And he prayed for this too, their perfecting.

It was reserved for the anti-church to claim irrevocable authority along with immunity from error. Where difference exists among the faithful, it is folly to claim a character which attaches only to their agreement in the power of the Spirit. And the apostle disclaims what the Roman pontiff arrogates, that clave errante the decision binds. The inevitable effect, soon or late, will be destruction, not edification. It is not Christ, but human assumption, not to say presumption.

Whether it be an individual's assumption or an assembly's, or whether as in one notable theory it be the chief along with that which represents the church as a whole, such a claim is fictitious and

destructive of the Lord's glory. The promise is strictly conditional, not absolute; and never was there an apparent failure save when the condition was broken, and then in very faithfulness the Lord gave not His sanction. To be unconditionally true, there ought also to have been infallibility, which belongs not even to an apostle but to God alone. The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way; and this now in the church by His own guaranteed presence and leading, though nothing seem harder to conceive where the several wills of so many would naturally act diversely. But He is there in the midst to make good His gracious power when truly waited on, with subjection in the Spirit to the written word which casts its divine light on facts and persons; that all without force or fraud may act as one in the fear of God, or those who dissent may be manifested in their self-will, whether they be few or many.

But the taking for granted that a given sentence is irrevocable, because it is the opinion of a majority or even of a whole assembly, in the face of facts which overthrow its truth or righteousness, is not only fanatical (I do not say illogical only) but wicked fighting against God. In such a case, humbling as it is, most humbling for an assembly to judge itself hasty and mistaken in pretending to the mind of the Lord, where it was only the illusive influence of prejudiced leaders or the weakness of the mass who prefer general quiet in floating with the stream at all cost, or both causes or others also, the only course at all pleasing to the Lord is, that the error when known be confessed and renounced as publicly as it was committed, being due to Him and to the church, as well as to the individuals or company, if there be such, more immediately concerned. To keep up appearances in deference to men however respected if mistaken and misleading, to give expression to high-sounding terms or to vague begging the question of truth and right, in order to cloak an evident miscarriage of justice, is unworthy of Christ or of His servants. This was far from the apostle, who, as at the beginning of this epistle he disclaimed lording it over the faith of the saints, at the end proves his sincere desire, even when grievously slighted, to avoid if possible sharp dealing with those who had afforded grave occasion, and to use the authority which the Lord gave him for building up and not for casting down.

“For the rest, brethren, rejoice [or, farewell], be perfected, be encouraged, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit [be] with you all.”

May our souls be corrected and strengthened and refreshed by so benignant a conclusion! It well befits the epistle of restorative grace. The work of bringing back the saints in Corinth to meet thoughts in the Lord as to themselves and His servants, and the apostle especially, was only begun. Much remained to be done, both in fulfilling obedience and in avenging all disobedience. But the apostle was encouraged of God, and would comfort them on his part. He bids them, not merely farewell, but rejoice; he wishes what was lacking supplied, what was awry adjusted; he desires them to be not discouraged by or in occupation with themselves, but cheered on as they looked at his exhortation to the Lord; he would have them cultivate, not crotchety points of difference, but the same mind; he calls them, not to indulge in questions gendering strife, but to live in peace; and he assures them that the God of love and peace, as one combined blessing in the power of His presence, should be with them. What a spring of consolation for those who in the measure of deepening self-judgment might otherwise have been cast down! Nor was it only of that divine source of blessedness he assures them, but he calls on the expression to one another of

mutual and holy love, as he sends it from all the saints in that part of Macedonia whence he wrote.

The benediction that closes all has the same suitability which we see in each epistle, admirably adapted to the state of the Corinthian saints, and of course not only to all others in similar experience but instructive and wholesome for all that believe. Yet for this very reason one feels the unintelligence which turns such words of blessed point into a standing invariable form for all sorts of different occasions, as if we were reduced to one such mode of dismissal, or that it was of the Spirit of God to select that which might seem the most comprehensive and comforting. As God gives no license to confusion in the assemblies, so does He not sanction those who walk in pride and passion, in self-will, railing, and contention, however graciously He may act, when they begin to judge themselves. We need, not the word of God only, but His Spirit to apply it aright: else we may unwittingly pervert even that word to real mischief, with cheer where reproof is rather called for, and rebuke where consolation would be more seasonable. But what grace is told out in this inspired servant sending under all the circumstances such a parting message to all the saints in Corinth “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” Poor, weak, unworthy, what can saints lack to help them when this is made good? and what-simple soul among the faithful would doubt it on such a warrant? or desire less or different for himself and his brethren? The free and full favor of Him who for us died and rose; the love of that God against whom we had without cause sinned to our utter ruin, yet who sent the Savior to redeem us; the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, the power and seal of this infinite blessing, who gives us a common and abiding share in it all, yea, with the Father and the Son: what a portion to be with us all, and assured forever.

Chapter 26

Brief Words on 2 Corinthians 11-12

Christ's care of the church does not flow from prerogative only, but His care and tenderness are exercised over it. Christ nourishes and cherishes the church. The love we have to learn is not supremacy in love, but caring, as it were, for Himself. (Eph. v. 29) “No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ the church.”

The union of Christ with His body is the great secret of the church standing altogether. No man ever hated his own flesh. Hence we may as much reckon on His loving us under all circumstances, if we may so speak, as His loving Himself-it makes us understand the ground of the apostle's jealousy that we do nothing to grieve Christ. “I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy.” Think of Eve representing the church. It was Eve going out into new thoughts, &c., that led her astray. It is not by remaining ignorant of anything that is in Christ that gives us strength, but knowing all that is in Him.

Whatever is of the Spirit, that is to be learned: the great thing is to have the Spirit so in the soul that the superstructure will be borne. There are two ways to remedy it-by a foundation of deep grace, and by not building what can be shaken.

Verse 4. Or, “if ye receive another spirit.” They had received the Spirit. Where the glory of Jesus is, and the work of Jesus, there the Spirit is received: another Jesus means another gospel. There seems a great difference between Jesus as an object and the work of Jesus; for instance, my resurrection is not Jesus, my being pardoned by the Father is not Jesus, but it is by virtue of what Jesus has done or spoken. Now the Spirit is dwelling in us. And the Spirit of God makes us know His own mind, and be patient as to results; but I do find the immense importance of “another spirit.” It is the Spirit not only that acts on the believer, but he is possessed of it. Forasmuch as we are united to Christ, the Spirit must dwell in us; for union with Christ implies that His Spirit deigns to dwell there. It involves immense responsibility that the Spirit dwells in us. In Rom. 8 it is the work of the Spirit in us all through.

John 4. It is in him there shall be a spring, not showers on him; and then it shall flow out, because the well is there. It is not only looking for refreshing, but having the Spirit dwelling in us, the well in ourselves. We see two persons decided Christians: the one having the objects of faith before his eyes, and another living on his experience; the one is little advantage to the church, in the other there is great danger to himself. It requires a mind very rightly exercised to have both these things brought out. You will see where the Spirit of God is there will be much experience. “Search me, and try me.” I am convinced that the responsibilities of religion are not enough thought of. The life of Christ was an invariable life of responsibility. In measure, as we are in grace, we shall be in constant responsibility. “I was with you in much fear.” In proportion as we are in fear, we shall be blessed in our testimony. If we were more in the Spirit, we should feel the world more against us, and this would bring us into fear. It makes religion a personal thing, Jesus who is preached.

When the children of Israel had only two cities, they listened to all the curses and blessings, they did not wait till they got to Mounts Gerizim and Ebal. It is exactly the ground we should be on, only that the curse they had we have not-Christ having taken the curse. It is an unsanctified intellect that is the ground of all heresies. “When I am weak, then I am strong,” shows such complete identity with Christ. It is said that here is a prayer not given to his importunity. No; but an answer was given: “My grace is sufficient for thee.” I had rather have a buffet, and the Lord's grace. It is remarkable how a person that is spiritual judges himself-responsibility with the exercise of all love to the church. The Apostle Paul could not have gone through all these things unless he had a knowledge of paradise.

There is a positive evil in talking much of experience or thinking of self; it ought to be what is seen in us, or told of us, by others. We may occasionally glory for others' profit, but it is only some necessity in others that makes it allowable. The strength of the Christian comes from the privacy of communion with the Lord. To exercise itself with God is the thing in which the soul should be exercised; then what it has to speak of is God-His strength; but telling it for the sake of telling is breaking the intimacy of the soul with God, though there may be an unhealthful feeling of concealment in the mind.

Acts 13:9

The secret of power and joy in service is to be in the line of the present work of God by the Spirit. We need to judge the energy by which we are walking or serving. Sometimes people judge themselves about the act, the object, and the motive, but do not judge the energy by which they are acting; but if it is only natural energy, it soon falls down into the world or the flesh, and all the peace and joy and power will be gone. The basis may be right, object all right, but the energy that of nature instead of the Holy Ghost. The way of the Spirit is through death and resurrection.

Chapter 28

Psalm 84

This psalm is the expression of the desires of those who had long been deprived of the joy of being in the courts of Jehovah during the captivity. It is the expression of the joy of seeing them again, and of taking the road which leads there even by the valley of weeping, of Baca. The church also moves forward toward the tabernacle of God, but it is that which is not made by human hands.

The subject of each psalm is ordinarily expressed at the beginning in the first verses. The tabernacles of Jehovah are His house. The faithful soul is there at home in his rest. One cannot find oneself at rest when the object of the heart is still beyond the point we have reached, even were that place we have stopped at the most desirable in the world. The first thing which is here presented to us is that the house of Jehovah is the Israelite's abiding-place. (Vers. 1-4.) “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee.”

But blessed also is “the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways,” that is, the ways to Jehovah's house. Verse 4 contains our joy in hope; verse 5 contains actual experience along the way. Passing through Baca, they make it a spring; “the rain also filleth the pools [or, with blessings]. They go from strength to strength, appearing [each] in Zion before God.” When we begin our course here below, we know God, and we learn also more to know Him; it is a feeling which grows and strengthens by communion. God has thereby bound the hearts of Christians. It is the manifestation and accomplishment of His love. The more I know the perfectness of God, the more I know His love, the more also I feel how precious He is to my soul. If my knowledge of God is separated from the knowledge of the love of God, I have not the life of God. The highest perfection of God is manifested to the heart by the first visit He makes to the heart of sinners, and in this respect it cannot be known more by the most advanced child. Here below the heart of man does not answer to the praise of God. One could not praise Him in the streets of a town: the heart of man is enmity against God. The children of God together enjoy God and prepare to go into a world without an echo to raise the voice of the gospel. It is the desire of the converted heart that God may be praised; and he will be fully satisfied in the house of God. Impossible to find repose of soul till God is praised unceasingly by those that surround Him.

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee.” If I have a difficulty, I in my feebleness have need of strength to sustain me in patient endurance. Peter without this strength denied Jesus. We may be weary when we act in our strength, for what is the strength of the flesh? When we act in the power of God, it is impossible. No creature can separate us from the power of God or the love of God: what is stronger? Jesus ever dependent was the strongest, and overcame the world. God has set our rest at the end of a path that we are treading; and it is good for us in order that we may make the experience of our own heart. It is the persons already redeemed who are on the road toward the rest of God. The word of God renders the thing surer than any other testimony could. It is a defile to pass on the other side of which is the glory. Into this defile we must go down. One may there lose sight of the glory; and the way may be difficult; but we have the certainty that it is

the road to the glory. God has told us that in this road we shall be despised by the world and in conflict with Satan. He has told us these things before; that, when they do come, we might believe His testimony to be true.

Here below we find not the rest but the way; but the way should be in our heart. Thus the valley of Baca, a ruined earth, is changed into a fountain. If we are in communion with God, every difficulty becomes the occasion for the display of the glory of God. (2 Thess. 1) The timid child finds joy in the assurance of its mother's love when some danger presents itself. We are often overwhelmed because our strength is not in God, who would have His grace sufficient for us; which is more precious than the removal of the thorn in the flesh. “The rain also filleth the pools.” It comes not from the earth, but from heaven, to which we should be attached and whence we may expect everything. There is no such sense of refreshment here below, that I may know that God takes extra care of me, to give me water and manna and strength, and in a word everything. It is a blessing that we should be thus brought low: He has not done so either to the Egyptians or to the Canaanites. We ought to live on that word which comes out of the mouth of God. (Deut. 8: 2-5.)

The effect of these things is to make us “go from strength to strength.” The difficulties are meant to make us know new strength on God's part. We are not actually capable of enjoying all that there is in God. Also all is not yet given us. God gets more place in our hearts. The empty or hard places of the heart are manifested; and God has to fill or clear them. The Lord God of hosts, that is to say, the God who governs all things, He who is faithful to His promises and who has all things at His disposal, the God of His people, God ever the same, God presents Himself in three different ways: Jehovah or the Eternal, God of Jacob, and God of hosts. “Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.” There is the assurance, the pledge of divine favor. God regards us in Christ; and all that we ask of Him in the name of Jesus He will do. Better be a doorkeeper in the house of God than dwell in the courts of the world. If our confidence is in man, we shall find ourselves sooner or later where man will fail us; and there is what Satan waits for in order to sift us. To trust in God is the hardest thing, as it lays the flesh under our feet and flesh can gain nothing by it; but it is inexpressible joy for the heart.

Chapter 29

Another Gospel Which Is Not Another

There is, and there can be, but one gospel; God has given one gospel alone for the salvation of sinners.

Through His infinite grace, and His grace alone, He gave His only-begotten Son to become a man and to die for us. The only source of all was His love: no one suggested it to Him, or persuaded Him thus to have compassion upon sinners. None could feel it divinely but God Himself, none but a divine person could accomplish what was needful. The Father prepared a body for Him, and He, the Son, came to fulfill His will to save. Thanks be to God, the Son has fulfilled the work that was entrusted to Him, and the Holy Ghost has announced this gospel-that the love of God has been manifested in the gift of His Son, and that He, having finished His work, sits as Man at the right hand of God; and with this gospel He leads souls to repentance.

God Himself has not, and cannot, have another gospel. He cannot forget the work of His Son, in which He has found complete satisfaction, in which He has been fully glorified. He cannot set forth another gospel, or add something on man's part, as though the work of Christ were imperfect, and lacked something to complete it. Christ, as Man, sits at God's right hand, because He has accomplished the work of salvation for all believers, having by Himself purged their sins. And when He had sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, the work which saves us was announced to be finished. And then all teaching that requires anything else, that assumes to add something of man to complete it, denies the perfection of the work of Christ, that is to say, denies that He has completed the work of redemption. That the Spirit of God works in the heart to produce in us the sense of our guilt before Him, and our need of the sacrifice of Christ, that we need to be born of God in order to enter into His kingdom, and further that the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the Christian, brings forth the fruits which suit the new life in which we participate through grace-all that is true; but for the work of redemption, for the putting away of sin, and cleansing us from it, for making us divine righteousness in Christ, God will have nothing else but the death of Christ. God has, shown that He has accepted His death, in that He has raised up Christ from among the dead, and has set Him as Man at His right hand in the glory which He had before the world was. He will not allow man to add anything to that work; whatever it might be, it would deny, in so far, the sufficiency of the work of Christ.

These heretics do not say that Christ has not finished the work; nor did the false Judaizing teachers among the Galatians say it. But they insisted that man must on his part add his works, the law, circumcision. They said God had done His part, and now it remained for man to do his. This is always the way of a man who does not know himself, does not own that in himself he is but a miserable lost sinner who ought to have kept the law, who was responsible to do it, but that he has failed, and his flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Man feels his responsibility; but (instead of saying, Alas! I have failed, I am lost and guilty, I cannot satisfy the demands of the law) he seeks to work out a righteousness when it is too late. False teachers who know not the grace of God, or the value of the work of Christ, use the law for

self-righteousness. As conscience cannot be pure, satisfied and quiet before God, nor make itself so, men have invented various means which man can accomplish, in order to quiet the conscience, without cleansing it. Thus they do the devil's work, hindering conscience from feeling the depth of that sin to which man has been accustomed, and which reigns in the flesh. This is always done by means of ordinances. These man can fulfill; but make the flesh holy he cannot. A new life is received from God in Christ, who came that we might live through Him. But man likes to do his own pleasure and will, not to submit himself in heart to Christ. He feels his responsibility, and in order to quiet his conscience, he accepts these means at the hands of men, who pretend that these human expedients come from God, and have His authority, while they only seek, as the apostle says, to glory in the flesh of those who listen to them, and for their own advantage to hold them under their authority.

Zealous and ardent (if you believe them) for the glory of God, and for the authority of His commandments, they take possession of that authority through the rules they impose upon others, wielding it at pleasure over the conscience, and thus over the man himself; as the Lord Jesus said, “they annul the commandment of God by their tradition.” Thus did the Pharisees, who were so strongly condemned by the Lord. Thus also do those who in this day follow not the word of God, who will not allow Christians to be taught by the word, the scriptures, which are addressed to them by God Himself, and which therefore they are bound to obey; they would not, I say, that others, humbly learning by the help of the Spirit of God, which belongs to all believers, should follow the precepts of that word, and enjoy the blessing which is found in the pure faith there presented to us.

They always place souls under the law, to which they add traditions, which, together with the interpretation of the word of God, they hold in their own hands; and thus they can teach what they like. Let believers remember that if a master-and God is master over every conscience-had given commandments and directions to his servants, or a father to his children, and another prevents those commandments or directions from reaching the servants or children directly, and as they were given, he would hinder the exercise of the master's or father's authority, and moreover would deprive the servants or children of their rights.

Now the whole scriptures are in fact addressed either to the Jewish people, or (if we except three short epistles) to believers who are now sons of God by faith; and no one has the right to prevent those to whom they are written from knowing what revelations have been made to them, and what precepts have been addressed to them. He who does so opposes himself to the authority of God, who has made these revelations and has placed all His own under obligation to obey the precepts contained in them.

God can give gifts for the purpose of helping believers to follow His precepts. Paul was thus helping them in this very epistle; but the true servants of God have never sought to take from His children's hands His word which He has given them, which is their blessing and their light, and by which He Himself speaks to their souls, showing that in His infinite grace He has desired to speak to them, and to communicate to them, amid the darkness of this world, the knowledge of His love and of His will, to show them the path in which they may walk in simplicity, in spite of the enemy of their souls, and enjoy immense happiness-the love of God and the light of His countenance. What unbounded grace, that God should deign in such a world to communicate to us His own thoughts, divine light in the darkness; and how terrible to take away these divine communications, and hide

them from the eyes of His own! Alas! man is but too readily disposed to neglect them, yet to take them from souls who desire to have them is iniquity, it is open opposition to the sovereign grace of God which has given them. Those who seek to rule over souls in God's stead take from them the revelation He has made to them. They are then free to preach and teach what is not according to the word of God, and to impose the yoke of the law and traditions, as well as their own authority, upon the necks of man.

The forms of this departure from the truth may differ, but the principle is always the same; that is, the law and human traditions, imposed upon souls, and the authority of men. Here among the Galatians it was openly the Jewish law and Circumcision, by which they were held to observe the whole Jewish system, and to submit to the authority and tradition of the scribes and Pharisees. In this day it is still the law and traditions of men and their clerical authority, and that in place of the direct authority of the word of God.

But it will be said, were there not men appointed of God to teach others? Yes. God has by the Holy Spirit given various gifts, the evangelist, the teacher, and the pastor; and these gifts are exercised through the grace of the Holy Spirit, under the authority of the Lord Jesus. The difference between the various gifts of God and the clergy is this: the gifts which are really of God are exercised by applying the word of God to the conscience, and the word always retains its supreme and absolute authority over the soul. Everything is referred to that authority. The clergy place themselves between the soul and God, as if possessing His authority; the word of God disappears, and does not act directly on the part of God; the soul does not go to God, is not subject immediately to Him, but to man, God's own light does not shine into it, the conscience does not find itself in the holy presence of God, the heart is not irradiated by the beams of His love. Servile fear takes the place of confidence and joy. God is not a Savior and a Father for the heart, but a God of judgment who exacts the last farthing. The grace of God is unknown, the law is unfulfilled, and the heart, full of terror, submits to a poor sinner like itself. Man degrades himself, instead of being at once elevated and humbled by the presence of God, and by communion with Him. If he commits sin, his conscience is quieted by a human being, without being cleansed, and at last, disgusted with everything, he neglects and entirely abandons religion and the fear God.

The gospel of grace to every creature under heaven had been committed especially to Paul by the Lord Himself, as was the gospel among the Jews to Peter, Paul maintained this gospel in its purity as being of God Himself. An angel even had no tight to alter it; and he pronounces an anathema and curse noon any who might have preached a different gospel. How shall we know what he taught? The answer is simple. Read what he has written, which, remark, he addressed to the whole Christian people, even as to those who were forsaking the truth.

The ardent words of the apostle are very remarkable. The Holy Ghost has given us God's own testimony, that if an angel came to teach what the apostle had not taught, he would be under the malediction of God—he would be anathema. It little mattered who he might be, if he contradicted the testimony of God. Paul well knew that he had received it from God Himself, and he who opposed or falsified it opposed the authority of God, and the truth which He in His grace made known.

Let Christians take heed to the solemn words of the apostle. We possess them in this Epistle, as well as in others which he wrote. They are the touchstone for all teaching; and we need to study

them in order to know if he who speaks tells us the truth of God. So solemn was this point, so deeply was it felt by the apostle, that he again repeats what he had before said-that whoever should preach any other gospel, than that which the Galatians had received from himself, should be anathema. He did not seek to please men in what he announced, or to satisfy man. If he sought to please men, he would not be the servant of Jesus Christ. It was He, and He alone, whom he ought to seek to please; to abandon the gospel would not be the way to do it.

Chapter 30

An Address to My Brethren and Follow-Members of the Church Which Is Christ's Body, Known by Whatever Name—1

Brethren,-The test of even an apostle's message was the truth that he brought. Even the signs of an apostle, wrought before men's eyes “in signs and wonders and mighty deeds,” were never sufficient of themselves to accredit to his hearers the word he carried. The truth was its own commendation, and needed no other. Our Lord's own appeal was, “If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” And our Lord's own assertion is, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.”

This is my comfort in addressing you, who personally have no claim or title to be heard. If the voice be Christ's, you will recognize it. If your will is to “do Christ's will,” you will “know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” Neither claiming nor desiring anything upon my own account, if I bring you God's word, your responsibility is to Him as to how you hear it.

Nearly eighteen hundred years ago an apostle wrote that it was “the last time,” and gave this sign of it, that there were “many antichrists.” (1 John 2:18.) “Many antichrists” were then, for the apostle, a sign of the last time, and more, that the “last time” had already come.

In men's thoughts these are the fresh first days of the church's history. The vigor of youth was still upon her. In the memory of him who wrote the words before us, Pentecost yet lived. And on every side around him, as he wrote, the word of God was growing and multiplying. More than two centuries of struggles and of triumphs were yet to precede its conquest of the whole Roman world. Yet here, before the very earliest “antiquity” to which men so fondly now look back, before the canon of scripture yet was closed, or the last apostle had passed away, the words of that surviving apostle himself (inspired words, scripture which “cannot be broken") assure us that even then the end, morally, had already come for the professing church; not triumph (alas!) nor a millennium-” the last time” and “many antichrists.”

Already had the apostle Peter uttered a warning as to the same thing. That there should be false teachers among Christians, privily bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and that many should follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth should be evil spoken of. (2 Peter 2)

To which Jude could add, when he wrote, that these men were already there; so that it was needful for him to write, exhorting earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. “For,” he says, “there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” There was no remedy for all this; the Lord was coming to execute judgment upon them. “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all.”

Quick work of ruin, brethren, in what had been once so fair. Apostles even yet in the church and the canon of scripture not completed. Yet there, in that church, were the objects of judgment, and the Lord coming to execute it!

But we may go back farther still, and put the testimony of another inspired writer side by side with Peter, Jude and John. In Paul's address to the Ephesian elders, mingled with the sorrow of his own departure from them, was the sadder foreboding of evil which should quickly follow to the church of God. “For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” And this so soon began, so rapidly developed, that in his Second Epistle to Timothy he writes as of a notorious fact: “This thou knowest, that all they which be in Asia are turned away from me.”

Asia, the scene of so many labors! Was Europe better? From Rome he writes to the Philippians, and he days, “All seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ.” “Many walk, of whom I have told you before, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.”

Thus East and West were together departing from the Lord. And how does the apostle-no man of gloomy views or narrow mind he at least-how does he look at the future of that church declined, and yet declining, from its primitive faith and love? “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” “Preach the word.... for the time will come that they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables.” “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves.... lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness and denying the power thereof.”

This is the apostolic picture with no room for a millennium in it, no prospect of general revival or recovery, but the reverse. “The mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit (or breath) of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming.” Thus there is not a break in the darkness up to the coming of the Lord. The last days are the perilous ones. The last time is known by the “many antichrists.” And that time, however, God's long-suffering has protracted it unto the present, had morally already come when John the apostle wrote.

Brethren, if this be so, where are we? As surely as the word of God is true and reliable, the general church is far gone on the path of decline towards the full apostasy that yet shall be. (2 Thess. 2) A form of godliness there may be, and yet “perilous times.” Dangerous work to be floating with the tide, accepting things because our fathers did; dreaming, after eighteen centuries of sad and miserable failure, that even now we are to undo these centuries of wrong-doing, and do, after all, what yet was never done! Was there not energy and faith and love of old? Were not apostles equal to you in every natural and supernatural qualification for the work they gave their lives to? Does it nowise daunt you that the apostle Paul should have to say of places where all the signs of an apostle, no whit behind the chiefest, had been done among them-"All that are in Asia have departed from me?"-or will you convince him of his error in predicting only an increase in evil, and the last days worst?

But you say you have God's promise and assurance that you shall convert the world. For He has said “that righteousness shall even fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.” True, He has said this. But He has not said you are the ones to do it, but the reverse. “Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the earth with fruit.” Is that the Christian church? Indeed there is nothing plainer in the word than that it is not. If you will listen to one who says he speaks to the Gentiles as the apostle of the Gentiles, he tells you plainly that just as the casting away of the Jews was the reconciling of the world, so the receiving of them back shall be life from the dead. (Rom. 11:15.) Moreover, he bids you as Gentiles “be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.” “Behold, therefore,” says he, “the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell (the Jews) severity; but toward thee (the Gentile church) goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

Brethren, have we continued in God's goodness? Why, then, talk of revival, if there has been no decline? But there has been, as even the scriptures themselves show; which show, too, there will be no general recovery. What is the alternative, then? Cutting off. Yet God's purposes shall be accomplished. “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so ALL Israel (the nation, not merely individuals) shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

Mark the definiteness of all this. Israel nationally blinded, till God has His complete number of Gentiles gathered in, then all Israel saved; and how? By the gospel? No; but by the Deliverer coming out of Zion. And it is distinctly added, “As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes,” treated as such; their own distinctive promises held in abeyance, that God may gather the Gentiles into the church; “but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” Words how often quoted, but how seldom applied as the Spirit of God applies them here, to the calling and promises of the nation of Israel!

Thus, if the receiving of Israel be life from the dead for the nations of the world, the “gospel” is not the means of their reception; but as long as it goes on, they are enemies for your sake. When the fullness of the Gentiles is brought into the church, the dispensation will change, the Lord come, and Israel received as a nation be life to the nations of the world. Till the Lord come, then, there is no millennium, no conversion of the world by the church. On the contrary, the expectation of it is the denial of the shame and failure of eighteen centuries, the proud self-assertion of Laodicea, “rich and increased with goods, and needing nothing,” not knowing that she is “wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” and that the Lord is saying, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

Beloved brethren, for this fatal and disappointing dream of the world's conversion by your means, you have given up the practical hope of the Lord's coming. Persuading yourselves things are going in the main right, you are accepting, with little scrutiny, the ways and means and associations by which you imagine the end you have in view is promoted. Yet the Lord is just ready to judge the whole scene, and your own individual part in it. Yes, judgment is to close the scene which just now may seem so full of promise-Judgment at the coming of the Lord. For that coming we are taught to watch, because we know not when the time is. This is the answer at once to the mistakes of those

who set times, near or remote, for His coming; and, on the other hand, to those who would put it off to the end of the millennium. You know not when the time is; therefore the Lord says, Watch. You cannot watch for what you know will not come for a hundred years; how much less a thousand?

Nor can you say that the coming of the Lord bids us watch for is not a real and personal one, except by such a mode of interpretation as would throw all scripture into confusion, and all ordinary language too. For the Lord tells us it is a coming in the clouds of heaven with the angels, when all the tribes of the earth shall mourn to see, because it shall be in judgment like the flood; a day when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, and all the nations be gathered before Him; and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. (Matt. 24; 25) Yourselves apply these last words to the time of His real advent, and it is quite evident it is the same coming throughout both these chapters. Thus for this coming it is you have to watch, because you know not when the time is.

Yet, brethren, how many of you give ear to the exhortation? You have suffered Satan to rob you both of the comfort and the admonition of your Lord and Savior's words. And hence a multitude of errors, and of what He will judge as evil and dishonoring ways.

1. You lower the authority of scripture by attributing to it human exaggeration, and therefore falsehood. How could a man, not led of your interpreters, suppose that that coming spoken of in the terms of Matt. 24, was either death, or high-flown language for the simple destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans long ago? If it be so, why should there be any real coming of the Lord at all? Why should not all the passages about it mean something else than they so plainly say? No wonder it should be thought that prophecy can only be clearly interpreted by its fulfillment, if these are really its interpretations! But our inheritance, brethren, our “exceeding great and precious promises"-what about them? Are they not fulfilled prophecy? What if in result all these should dwindle down proportionately; just as the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven has dwindled down into the sacking of a Jewish city?

Alas! infidelity thanks you for the lesson which it has not been Blow to learn; but the simple and ignorant man, whom you have delivered blindfold into the hands of your interpreters, will scarcely thank you for the proof, that the grand and blessed word of his God is but as to much of it a more than half deception-and how much he cannot know.

From hence a wide uncertainty results. The wise and learned differ, it is found; how then shall the unlearned be sure? And “charity” is invoked to cover all mistakes, by asserting-save as to some fundamental points (that is, some points believed to be essential to men's salvation)-the humility of universal doubt. Indeed the Lord has said that “whosoever will do God's will shall know of the doctrine;” but then you must not say you do “know.” You have your opinion; I have mine. Between the two the authority of the word is gone. The Bible is God's word, no doubt; but it is scarcely, “what saith the scripture” any longer. It is “What say your doctors?” And in despite of His own word, His sheep cannot know Christ's voice from the voice of strangers.

But another thing. The scripture says, “The whole world lieth in wickedness.” That applies, you think, only fully to the past; Christianity is rapidly changing that. As we progress towards the millennium the world must certainly be growing better. “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must

suffer persecution," says the apostle. But that has ceased to be. Doubtless it was of such a change already begun at Corinth that he wrote: "Now ye are full, now ye, are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us; we are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised." It is very true we get on better with the world in these days. And times so changed make it difficult to understand how we "are not of the world." All its harmless pleasures we partake of; all its honors we aspire to and obtain; we find it our positive duty to "get on" in it, and do good to ourselves, that men may speak well of us; we do not believe that Satan is the "prince of this world," for we are its soldiers, its magistrates, its politicians.

Brethren, where are we? Is this progress, or is it deterioration? Is the "offense of the cross ceased," or have we ceased to bear it? And are these words "hard sayings," which we cannot bear even from the lips of our Lord and Master? "But woe unto you that are rich, for we have received your consolation. Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers of the false prophets."

But the church, too-the church it is that all the nations are to flow to yet. Kings are to be its nursing fathers, and queens its nursing mothers. It is the heir of all Jewish promises, the divinely appointed successor to Israel's place and portion. Nay, it is but one and the same church all through, that Jewish and this Gentile. Its law is ours: its union of church and state, its earthly head, its priestly order, its ceremonial services, and its worldly sanctuary; its earthly blessings and dignities, contended for and maintained by carnal weapons: all, all, are ours. Points of detail may be changed without disturbing the essential unity. The church, Jewish or Christian, is all one. So you maintain; with what result it is not difficult to see.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 31

An Address to My Brethren and Follow-Members of the Church Which Is Christ's Body, Known by Whatever Name—2

Brethren, the Jewish nation, or church-for the nation was the church-was no pilgrim or stranger upon earth assuredly. “Days long in the land;” “blessings in casket and in store;” “to be the head only, and not the tail” among the nations, and their enemies smitten before their faces; these were the things plainly, though conditionally, promised them. If you are successors to all these, who are the successors to the apostles and the primitive witnesses for Christ?-” fools,” and “weak,” and “despised;” and “hungry,” and “thirsty,” and “naked,” and “buffeted,” and “having no certain dwelling-place;” blessing when reviled; persecuted and suffering it?

The law is your rule of life, and holy, and just, and good it is, though as many as are of its works-upon that principle-are under the curse; as the apostle says. But whose is the “rule” of being a “new creature in Christ Jesus,” crucified to the world by His cross, and glorying in it? (Gal. 6:14-16.) You find no pilgrim or strangership in your rule, and that may suit you; but you find no glories of the new creation in it either; nor does it speak to you as a heavenly people, sanctified, and sent into the world as the Father sent His Son. All this is nowhere; the Christian's place no higher than the Jews; the standard of walk no different; for, of course, if the law is your rule, and was the Jews', there cannot, and ought not, to be any difference between your walk and his; your place in Christ and its responsibility are gone, for of this the Jew knew nothing.

But “if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” Brethren, what does this mean: “a new creature;” a new sort of creature, as the word implies? Do you go back to Adam, the pure and innocent man in the garden which God set him in to dress and keep? Nay, that would be no creature new in kind. Adam, even pure and good before his fall, was yet “of the earth, earthy.” Is Christ but the first man set up afresh? Nay, verily, he “is the second man, the Lord from heaven.” Let men cavil as they please, He is a heavenly man; a second, another sort; a “last Adam,” head of a new race, beginning of a new creation. And you and I, who believe, are “in Him,” seen and accepted before God, in the Beloved.” “As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” The image of it we have not yet, true. That will be ours in the day of His coming. The thing we are.

“Heavenly” and “in Christ:” oh, brethren, think you we realize our place and portion? “Old things passed away, and all things become new?” Do you and I know what it is to look up into those heavens, where the Son of God sits in glory all His own, and see and recognize in Him what we are before God: “as He is,” even “in this world"? Can we say quite confidently, each for himself, “Yes, we are identified with Him who represents us there before the eye of God; as He is, in whom no spot was ever found, nor can be, but perfectness, after God's own heart wholly"? That it is to be in Christ, a new creature. Our rule is to “walk in Him,” as being what we really are: heavenly, citizens of heaven, pilgrims and strangers upon earth.

All the rest the cross has ended for us. We have died with Christ out of our old Adam condition; our old man is crucified with Christ. The flesh is in us still, indeed, but in us a foreign thing; and we are not in it before God, nor identified with it in anywise, but with Him in whom it was never found. We are in Him, as He is.

Brethren, can we own this, and seek to get on in world that crucified the Lord; whose prince and God is Satan; and friendship with which is enmity against God? Can we claim rights where we are dead? Can we take up carnal weapons, where He has bidden not to resist evil? Can we take the law with others, where God has shown us grace ourselves? Can we be magistrates and politicians, where Satan is really prince? Can we find ease and enjoyment, where every step of His way led Him on to a death by wicked hands, even the death of the crass?

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven, but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword..... He that loseth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. . . And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

“Sell that ye hath, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come forth and serve them.”

4. The effects of not watching have been in every way disastrous. You are waiting for death and judgment rather than for Him who has conquered death and borne judgment for you. These are indeed the common portion of men as such. “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.” And you have forgotten so the distinctness of your own portion, that you account it enthusiasm for a man to say with the apostle, “We shall not all die,” and almost heresy to affirm, as the Lord does, that” whosoever heareth his words, and believeth in him that sent him, shall not come into judgment." Yet both are simple scripture statements, which the holding fast the Lord's coming gives to the soul in full and unclouded reality. For those who are watching for Him, what more simple than the apostle's language, “we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord"? Is death to these a necessity, a thing “appointed"? And as for judgment-though we shall all give account of ourselves to God-when “the Lord cometh to execute judgment upon all,” even Enoch tells us, “He cometh with ten thousands of his saints” (Jude 14), or, as Paul says (Col. 3:4), “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.”

“For this we say unto you by the word of God, that we which are ALIVE AND REMAIN unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17.) That is our portion who are His, living or dead, when He comes: “Every man in his own

order; Christ, the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Mark that! Not everybody at His coming; but "they that are Christ's at his coming." This is the divine "order." "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (tile living) shall be changed." Thus shall we go up to meet the Lord. It is the fulfillment of His own promise: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

Blessed, blessed words! Are they a call to judgment, think you, reader? Do you expect a sentry and a challenge at the door of the Father's house? or to be put on trial, and judged according to your works, to see if you have title to enter there?

Does He not, then, "know them that are his"? May there be in the company of those "raised in glory," or "changed," and having "put on the image of the heavenly," one who perchance may yet have no title to be there? And the "dead in Christ," who have been many of them more than a millennium "absent from the body, and present with the Lord"-will you put them on trial too, to see if they were indeed rightly there?

No, it is all forgetfulness of the place we have with Him-of His love, and of the value of His work. We have forgotten, that if it be true-as it is-that "God shall judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained;" it is written no less, that we "are not of the world, even as he is not of the world," and that "as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and"-blessed alternative of man's natural portion-" to them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

This is our hope, beloved brethren, to be with Himself before He comes to execute judgment, and when He does appear for that, we know that we also shall appear with Him.

The common doctrine is a cloud upon this precious hope, and no indirect question of the very certainty of salvation itself. If the day of judgment is to decide who are the saved ones, it is no wonder if many think they cannot be sure even as to themselves before. And if we are to be judged then according to our works who but must shrink from the thought of it! The result is, on the one side, legality seeking to rest on its own performances in view of the day of judgment; and, on the other, the lack of comfort and assurance because on, this very ground. How different the believer's position as stated in Rom. 5, where, being "justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God! "How different a thing it is to be seeking to make oneself fit to pass the judgment, and recognizing the grace which has already given me a place in Christ in the day of grace and of salvation! "Herein is love made perfect with us (see margin), that we should have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is"-as Christ in glory is-" so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17.) The day of judgment will not upset the confidence of the day of grace, for we shall be with Him and like Him, the Judge, before that day comes. We are now as He is. When He shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory.

Bear with me a little yet, beloved brethren; and suffer a further question. We have spoken of that church, so dear to Christ, for which He gave Himself. If I turn to the picture of it which I have, in its first bright days, it is impossible not to ask of that church which is the body of Christ, united

together and to Him by that Spirit by which we are all baptized into that one body (1 Cor. 12)-where is that church now? It still remains, you say, scattered throughout the various bodies of Christendom. Well, this is true, no doubt. But then, what scattered it? And, more, what keeps it scattered? Was it an evil for it to be scattered? And is it not as great an evil for it to continue scattered?

You may say, “We neither scattered, nor can bring it together again.” That is true too: neither you nor I can undo what has been done. But we can surely own the evil, and ourselves cease from it. And this we are called and bound to do.

And then, what about these various bodies of Christendom, among which you say the true church is scattered? Plainly they are not the true church themselves, for the very reason, that the true church is scattered amongst them. If, then, they are not the true church, what are they? Do they even represent the true church, as far as an outward visible body may?

They do not, for they are not one body, even professedly, but many; and, by the very fact of what they are, to be a member of any one of them is to be not a member of the rest. Thus these bodies do not even represent the church of God. They are societies of people who are associated together upon the ground, not of membership in the body of Christ, but of holding certain views which distinguish them from other Christians. And that (suffer me to say it, brethren-the appeal is to scripture in the matter), that is true sectarianism, “schism” in the Bible sense, “schism in the body” (of Christ).

Mark it, then, brethren; it is no schism to be outside these bodies. It is a duty; for by the very fact of being united to them, I separate myself so far from all those who, though true and devoted Christians, cannot give in their adhesion to the creed or to the regulations of the sect.

The moment I get the true thought of the church of God, I see it to be a body into which Christ, the Head admits, and He alone, for He alone baptizes with the Holy Ghost, and by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. Scripture owns no other membership than this-the being members of Christ-of His body. If you and I are such, we belong already to the church, and have to receive one another, as Christ received us, “to the glory of God.” He who imposes conditions is guilty of dividing the body of Christ, not he who cannot in conscience come under the conditions. That discipline is to be maintained is, of course, true, but this is not in question here. Aside from this, the gathering together of Christians as such, apart from all denominational distinctions, is the only “assembling of ourselves together” that the scripture knows.

Do you say, “Well, but that assembly of Christians, as such, must be subject to the order which Christ has instituted for His church"? I answer, Surely so; but this is too small a loophole to admit all or any of the ecclesiastical systems of the day. Tested by the word of God, these all founder upon this, that they put into men's hands the power which alone belongs to Christ, give Him nominal headship but not actual, and subject the conscience thus to men and not to God.

All human regulations, however wise and expedient in their design, yet as regulations necessarily do this. Who has power to regulate in the church of Christ but Christ? Not the whole church together, much less any class or section in it. Are not the scriptures able to furnish thoroughly to every good work? What want we more? Are all your creeds, confessions, canons, and what not, clearer and more forcible than the word itself? Are your liturgies the supply of a deficiency which

the Head of the church has not provided for? Alas! is it not all sheer dishonor done to Him, and in reality a subtle form of unbelief in His only authoritative word?

But again, I read that Christ has given gifts to His church: some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. The apostles and prophets remain as the foundation (Eph. 2:20); the others carry on the building to this day. Evangelists labor in the world outside; pastors and teachers in the church inside. The possession of the gift entailed the responsibility of using it (1 Peter 4:10); for He who gave it could not have made a mistake in giving it. Now, once more, suffer me to ask-and if it be folly, bear with me in my folly-whence did men get the control they exercise over the gifts of Christ? Who gave them power to ordain, or appoint, or choose, or send out, or locate and settle the servants of another master? Is it no interference, think you, with Himself, that He has given the gift to use, but you are to give the authority to use it?

I ask for scripture to show that men were ever ordained to teach or preach at all. It is too scanty a foundation for it to adduce that Paul and Barnabas were separated to a special work among the heathen, by the imposition of the hands of prophets and teachers. (Acts 13) In the first place, Paul certainly was not ordained then, for to some of the very people to whom he was then sent, he declares that he was “an apostle, not of men, nor by man.” (Gal. 1:1.) Secondly, the work they were set apart to was simply a definite mission among the Gentiles, which chapter xiv. 26 tells us was “fulfilled;” but Paul's apostleship did not end with that. Thirdly, they were prophets as well as teachers who acted in the matter. And, lastly, “the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul,” not, See if Barnabas and Saul are proper persons to be separated. In other words, He pointed out to them directly those whom He would have sent, not gave them authority to choose and send.

Then Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every city. And afterward Timothy and Titus, as apostolic delegates, did the same. But though an elder should be “apt to teach,” his vocation as an elder was not to teach but to “oversee.” It is well known that the word “bishop,” the elder's official title, means “overseer,” and is so translated. (Acts 20:28.) They were elderly grave men, fathers of families, who could show, by the careful training of their own families, that they knew how to take care of the church of God. They tended-were shepherds to, as the word translated “feed” means (Acts 20:28 Peter 5:2)-the church of God. If they had gift, they labored in the word and doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17), but they might rule well without that. Not that they were separate classes of elders, for which there is no scripture at all; but if they had gift, they used it, yet it was not confined to them.

These elders never ordained. Apostles did and could depute others. In Timothy's case, who was no elder, when a spiritual gift was given to him by prophecy, it was accompanied with the imposition of the elders' hands. That is the whole scripture on the subject. As for the successors of apostles, or of Timothy and Titus, they exist in the fables of tradition-nowhere else. Scripture speaks only of a wide-spread ruin of the church, beginning in the apostles' days, and these commend us to the word of God in their own absence, not to successors. (Acts 20:32 Peter 1:15.)

Why do I speak of this? I would gladly be spared having to do so, and have been thus brief, as desiring to call attention to the subject, rather than pretending to make all plain. But the evils resulting from the common view and practice are great and many, and would justify a much longer notice. When I turn from the blessed word of God and its teachings-from its free and simple ministry, in love, to all and anywhere, of whatsoever any one might have for the common good of

all-when, I say, I turn from this to the narrow systems of men, where hired preachers have each their little circle in which their voice is alone entitled to be heard; when I see the sheep of Christ ofttimes clinging to those who cannot feed them (even if they teach no positive heresy, and are themselves Christian men), just because they have the commission of men, and refuse other teachers who have not, or are not their ministers, as they would say; what can I think, beloved brethren? And this is one grand evil of the system, that by maintaining the need of an external commission from those who are supposed to have authority to give it, the commission is as the result made the test of the truth. The truth ceases to have entire authority. Christ is made to commission men who do not preach it, nay, often men who are not His at all. And yet they say there would be confusion from allowing Christians to act simply upon their own conscience to God, and that men would not know whom in that case to listen to or believe. Is not this as much as saying that Christ's sheep do not hear His voice, and that they will hear the voice of strangers?

Brethren, there is still, thank God, a living acting Head to the church, His body-One who cares for His own as tenderly as ever, yea, as when He laid down His life for His sheep-One who, Himself at God's right hand, has sent down in His own absence “another comforter,” to abide with us forever. The Holy Spirit is really present with us in that place of infallible Guide and Director in the church of God, which is falsely and blasphemously claimed by the Roman pope. Alas are Protestants conscious of His presence, and of what the fact of His presence involves? For if He be here, must He not be Sovereign? Once He did act, and was acknowledged: set apart men to their several spheres of service, as well as gave capacity to serve; sent men hither and thither at His will; and the whole church, in its coming together, could be trusted to His guidance, without prayer-book, priest, or president-each man left to his own conscience before God; all “a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” The rule was, as to worship, “in spirit and in truth;” the rule, as to ministry, “all things to edification.” In the public assembly, the women were to be silent. (1 Cor. 14) The one exception shows how large is the liberty for all else.

But I close, though having scantily uttered what was on my mind. But, oh, for a heart rightly to feel all the deep dishonor we have done to Him in the ruin we have brought in everywhere. Repair it we never can; but we can judge ourselves about it, “cease to do evil, learn to do well.” Our resource and hope is in the Lord Himself coming to end it all, and in the bliss of His own presence for the feeblest and most failing of His own. May we be waiting for Him!

F. W. G.

Chapter 32

Burnt-Offering Compared With Those of Atonement Day

The burnt-offering was for the acceptance of the offerer (translated in the Authorized Version, “of his own voluntary will"), but was meeting the judgment of sin for God's glory, though of a perfect sweet savor in itself. The LORD'S lot (Lev. 16) was a sin-offering, but not for personal acceptance. The blood was sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat, and in the sanctuary; and afterward on the altar of incense, and the holy place, God's habitation, and where man approached. It was because of the iniquities of the children of Israel among whom He dwelt; but it was, not for the people but for God's dwelling-place because of them. Then the sins were taken away by the scapegoat identified with it. There was no scape-bullock; the sins are seen as of people outside. 2 Corinthians 5:21 was a larger thing than bearing our tins; still it was for us He stood there in that character, though not as for the confessed sins committed; still it was ■π■ρ ■μ■ν that we might become God's righteousness in Him. In this aspect it may be confined to the burnt-offering. John 1:29 is taking it all (sin) away out of God's sight, never fulfilled in result till the new heavens and new earth. Heb. 9:26 is the same thing, and contrasted with bearing the sins of many in verse 28. The LORD'S lot is the ground, I apprehend, of the gospel towards the world, presenting the adequate glorifying of God when sin was there. The burnt-offering was the measure of the worshipper's acceptance (in righteousness) when sin was there, as with Abel.

There is no forgiveness of sin in the flesh, but it was condemned in Christ; and so we, dying in Him, are set free: state more than guilt is in question. Still it is condemnation, though not sins in act.

Chapter 33

Foundation of Christianity (Fragment)

The foundation of Christianity is that I pass through death. If I held myself always for dead, Satan would have no hold on me. Why have you sinned? You have let the flesh act; you have acted as a child of Adam. A child of God sinneth not.

Chapter 34

Christ's Burial Supper

A little but most affecting scene is here brought out, Christ at His burial supper; for now the Lord let in His thought and mind upon the path He was treading, that we may see in Him the meekness of the prepared Lamb; and this last circumstance brought out in the treachery of Judas casting its shadows before. He well knew what He was entering on, but this was wrapt deep in secrecy; we do not dwell on it, nor would Christ. “If it were an open enemy that had done me this wrong, I could have borne it.” Oh, it was a sad hour! (See ver. 13.) We dwell on the circumstances. It was the place where Lazarus was-that Lazarus who was dead, whom Jesus raised from the dead. There He was called to supper. Strange scene! The Lord in a sense of what He was, and Lazarus were sitting there. Martha served, willing, but according to her custom. Oh, keep as near the Lord in heart our service.

Mary anointed, the memory of whose love is as fragrant as the burial ointment of the Lord, in the remembrance of His disciples, filling the house, for love to Him does fill the house: even now it is very precious. This ointment, this grace of love, all is on Jesus; she, however poorly, could thus express it, and she anointed His feet with it, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Strange to many, but the Lord, the perfect Lord, knew where it was applied-yea, He knew whence it came-the sweet savor of the Father's witness of love. The beauty of the pearl of great price was in it; He was a skilful Merchant to know His Father's love was there; it was balm of love poured of God the Father into the heart of this poor woman, that it might reach the heart of Christ in the wounding of the house of His friends, and the love was suited here—it was the return of new nature. Treachery for the moment lost its baseness; that is, it was so soothed in the balm of His love, the wound lost its power. “Let her alone” with Me; and then He was occupied, not with Judas only (for indeed, but for saving grace, they were all in the same state, and He is now before us as generally deserted, even by His disciples), but He speaks as driven into His own grace.

Note also how, when there is simple love and devotedness, how the Lord directs into conduct, which, from its perfect suitableness of affection, He recognizes as the expression of the sympathetic thoughtfulness of love. “She hath kept it for my burial.” More, she had had it a long time. There she might and, even assured, was willing to now spend it on Jesus, but the Lord ordered she should keep it until that fitting moment when it was, in effect, the soothing expression of thoughtful expression now graciously ordered. “It was that Mary,” says the beloved disciple. Now Martha loved Him, and the Lord loved her. She served before, and she served now, but this was not what fervent affection called for now, though accepted unto this. Mary was led in knowledge-nay, but by the Lord of knowledge-though by affection, and the Lord interpreted according to its real value from the Lord upon her; and so are we, and shall be, led when there is this suitableness of affection, by the Spirit into right acts of suitable affection, when we wait upon the Lord, for He directs unseen every step.

“She hath kept this,” she could have spent it on Him before, and it might have gone. His heart would not have spared it to the poor, but the Father's love in her-she in the estimation of God.

Nothing can be more exquisitely beautiful. Be at rest. “The poor ye have always with you,” says the blessed Redeemer. Lord, may we bow at Thy feet, and show the odor of our love to Thee, that whilst we think of Thee the bowels of Thy saints may be refreshed by it; and then, such is the balm for evil in the world, Christ's comfort in apostasy-” she hath done what she could.” This opened the scene of deliberate apostasy-the touching scone of Christ's comfort in it-not from His disciples, though no traitors through His grace.

Chapter 35

Communion

1 John speaks of communion with the Father and Son. This is interrupted by any sin, and Christ is our Advocate with the Father to restore it. Hebrews is occupied with access to God within the veil, the conscience being perfect, and we with boldness. Hence, failure and restoration are not in question; and the Father is not spoken of. In John it is communion, and the actual state of the soul is in question.

Chapter 36

The Conflict in Ephesians 6

One great thing in Christianity is that it brings us back to God; not only that we have mercies from God, providential and the like, but we are brought to God. Towards the Jew God put a veil before His face, and He said, “I dwell in the thick darkness;” and once a year, on the day of atonement, the blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat; but now, once and forever, sin is condemned in the sacrifice of Christ, and we are brought into the very presence of God. Good and evil being known, the question between good and evil had to be settled before God. The redemption of the cross brings us out of the evil-from all evil to Himself. God's Son suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. The consequence of this is that the whole life of the Christian is to go on with God, every day becoming better acquainted with God, everything going on in the presence of God. All our ways are elevated by this. If but a servant, he not only serves his master but Christ; and therefore, if he has a froward master, he can serve him just the same, because it is Christ he serves. All the life of the Christian is perfect liberty, because he is in the presence of God. It is liberty from sin, from fear, from wrath. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. The commonest things in life are raised in their character through service to Christ. The parent must not allow evil in the children, but “train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;” and the master to the servant “must forbear threatening.” In virtue of our place before God, our liberty and happiness are as perfect and blessed now as they will be hereafter; only the body will be set right then.

Verse 10. After speaking of the common details of life, the apostle rises up to speak of the proper position of the Christian as such, free in all things, but also to be “strong in the Lord and in the power of his might;” and goes on to speak of the “whole armor of God.” We are supposed, though in conflict, to be in our, proper position of blessing with God, standing in the power of redemption, not having to get there. The warfare is to stand when there, and Satan's aim is to get us out of that place. There can be no conflict between us and God, but between us and the power of evil. There we are as being God's army. We are naturally under Satan's power, but redemption brings us into God's army. This was the position of Israel when warring with Amalek. They were on God's side, and He said He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

Christ's conflict in Gethsemane was quite another thing. He was enduring, but before accomplishing redemption. We have it through Christ, and now have to stand. God can never use our flesh, but Satan always can: there is the difference. The new nature Satan never can touch, but unjudged and undetected flesh he can, and cause one to fall. The first and last thing, that is, all through, as a question of power, is entire dependence. Satan will come in all manner of ways-worship, &c.-and if the flesh is not judged, he will deceive us by it. The thing is, we want the evil of the flesh detected by the word of God, and not by temptation. “The word of God is quick and powerful,” &c. There is no good in the flesh. This, when I see how bad my flesh is, casts me only on God, making me feel the need of dependence. With our Lord Jesus there was entire dependence, and this is the perfection of a man. With us how different it is! You know how many things you do of your own suggestion, not perhaps knowingly or willingly, but you are betrayed into

it. “To stand against the wiles of the devil"-such is the use of the armor of God.

Christ has overcome, and therefore we have only to resist the devil, and he will flee. If we resist him, he knows he has met Christ, who has all strength against him, for he has vanquished him. The devil can never touch Christ in you, only the flesh; so, if there is a fall, it is a proof you were walking in the flesh. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood,” &c. The contrast here is between the conflict with men that Joshua led the children of Israel against: flesh and blood as man, not sinful flesh, is meant here. Now we are not fighting with men, but we are men, and fighting with all these mighty beings whose subtlety we are apt not to detect, because they are so elevated-against “principalities and powers, against the world-rulers” of this darkness; and Satan can easily overcome a man with his wiles if we are not found in the strength of Christ. I must have God's armor; man's armor, intellect, or power is nothing in conflict with Satan. Satan used his wiles to Christ, but He answered him with the word of God, and there was no power against that.

We must have the whole complete armor. If I have a breastplate but no helmet for my head, I am assailable at that point. If it is only a matter of theory with me, I shall forget my helmet; but if I am in the place of dependence, I shall feel my need of it, and take care to have it on. Independence makes us careless. If Satan can get a Christian to give an un-Christian testimony to the world, he is satisfied. If he can dim the heavenly testimony for Christ here, his object is gained. Christ was God's testimony here; we ought to be so now, and what Satan is striving at now is to dim it. “That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day,” &c. All this time is an evil day. Though there is darkness in the world, we ought to be light in it. There are peculiar days of evil heresy, infidelity, &c.; so to an individual there are peculiar season's of buffetings, tossings, exercises, evil days; but to stand is the great thing. We are sitting in unchangeable blessedness before God, but our position in this world is standing. So David sat before the Lord; yet he had to fight the battles of the Lord. Our salvation is complete and perfect, for we are set clown with Him who has by “one offering perfected for over them that are sanctified;” but we are standing in conflict, just as the poor man, out of whom Legion was cast, was sent back to his house to tell them how great things the Lord had done for him. His house (Gadarenes) would not have Him; and the world will not have us, but we are to be God's army in this world, and a witness to Him, though they will not have us.

It is a question of struggling against Satan, while having the flesh in us; therefore we need the “loins girt about with truth,” that is, the affections girt up by the power of truth, and not to have all hanging loosely about. It is not merely having and knowing truth that will do. If the loins are girt about with truth, if the heavenly calling has power over you, you cannot follow the world, your affections will be in heaven, and Satan can have no power with you. The “loins” are the reins, inward thoughts and feelings and affections of the man; all that is going on in the mind needs to be exercised in the truth, so as to be girt with it. I can never use truth but in the presence of God, because truth is light, and light makes manifest darkness. Man on a sick bed will show what is in his heart; there is reality, sincerity there, when brought into the presence of God, and abstracted from other things. There may have been much profession before, but nothing but what is real stands before God.

All the perfection of divine life in man we get in Christ, and He is our example. In having on the armor of God, we have on what Christ was and had: e.g., the “breastplate of righteousness.” All these things, which are ours in Christ, are to be applied to us. Take truth-Christ is the truth;

righteousness-He is my righteousness; and it is here to be used for conflict against Satan, not for God but for practical power. I must have it before God first, or I shall not be able to contend with Satan. I am made righteous before God-that is a settled thing; and now I want all that Christ is and has been for my power against the enemy. If a man has a bad conscience, there can be no power against Satan; there must be “the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” The loins must be girt with truth first, and then a man will walk as in the presence of God. There will be a savor of Christ's ways in his character. What a difference there is between a man walking before God, and one walking before men! What a trouble there is for a man walking before men to keep things straight! While one who is walking before God, though in the presence of men, can leave things quietly to God. The real difference between a mere profession of Christ and a Christian is just this.

“Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” This is not only having peace with God, but walking in the spirit of peace. There is sure to be peace in the spirit of a man who is girt about with truth, and walking in the power of true righteous ness. A man who has been walking with God many years will be more gentle with others than one who has just begun to know Him. He will not be raving and irritated at evil in another, for his own soul has tasted what the peace of God is, in walking with God in the power of it. Then suppose a man has all this on, there is the need of dependence. Independence is sin, and there is need, therefore, of always being in conflict, and having the undeviating confidence that God is for me.

The thing wanted, then, is the “shield of faith.” Satan comes and tempts me. Is God for you? How do you know? There are, of course, different kinds of temptations (not lusts, but) questions whether God is for me, come what will. Then the shield of faith is needed. Christ was in an agony in the garden, but He could say, “Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee"-on the cross, when He said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” “But thou art holy.” God has this place, come what will: we are not to be afraid with any amazement. If Satan succeeds in terrifying a man, he flies, and there is no armor for the back. Of Saul David said, “the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away” (amongst the Philistines)-” the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” To Christ he threw a fiery dart when he said, “Cast thyself down;” are you quite sure God is for you? Cast yourself down, and try. No, Christ says, I know God is for me; I need not try. “It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” The dart is quenched by the word of God. If the dart of doubt or fear, &c., gets in, you have no power at all. The moment the heart gets troubled, remember, “if God be for us, who can be against us?” If thoughts arise about yourself, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” God is for us through all, even chastening. If there is an Achan in the camp, God says, I will not go out with you, and they are beaten by a very little city; but if God be for us, &c. The “shield of faith” is mentioned after the others, because there cannot be this lively faith (not the certainty of salvation here meant, but practical faith) if sin is allowed, and if the loins are not girt about with truth.

Recognize yourselves as a people connected with God in respect to this power that is in Him, that is faith. Moses might have reckoned on God through all the murmurings of the people, &c. All this is defensive armor, the “helmet of salvation” also. There is not a single blow aimed by the Christian warrior yet. What is the helmet? God has saved me, and will save me. “Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell,” &c. It is a general, broad, full apprehension that through all God will be with me and for me-not only faith in the particular thing, and at the

particular time, but as expressed in Romans 8, “Nothing can separate me from the love of God,” &c. Therefore I may lift up my head with joy.

Now I can use the word of God as the “sword of the Spirit;” now I can fight. We ought to be able to confound every enemy, not with man's wisdom, intellect, or understanding, but in the power of the Spirit. If men do not believe in it, I am not going to give up the sword of the Spirit because you do not think it will cut. I know it will cut, and therefore use it. There is a power and authority felt by the person who uses it. There must be a sense of dependence for this; and therefore prayer, the sense of dependence expressed, is needed-praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. Of one it was said that he “labored earnestly in prayer for the saints.” This was because of the sense of the conflict from Satan going on with the saints; therefore is labor needed, “watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” If other things come in, I have no power to turn everything into prayer; therefore watching is needed. “Give yourselves to prayer,” you are in God's interests, connected with all saints, therefore pray for all saints. There is nowhere that conflict is so much felt as in prayer; that is where Satan desires to come in.

Verse 19. We want to be bold for God in such a world as this.

How far are you identified with Christ in the world? And are you careful to avoid everything that dishonors Christ? Whatever destroys Christ's character before men is really a fall; it may not be positively gross sin.

Chapter 37

Conversion and Sealing

Is a man, convinced of sin, and believing in the Lord Jesus as the alone and perfect Savior, who had finished the work committed to Him by the Father, can, from the bottom of his heart, say, “Abba, Father,” such an one possesses the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6.) Not only does he see the truth in the word, and accept it, but in the presence of God he enjoys liberty, and possesses the consciousness of his relationship with God. He will have much to learn, much perhaps to correct, much to forget, much to alter in his spiritual condition; but he possesses the consciousness of his relationship with God. This is not simply conversion: a sinner, as a sinner, cannot be sealed. God cannot put His seal upon sin; but when a man has been cleansed by the blood of Christ, then the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in him.

We see the difference in the case of the prodigal son. He had come to himself, had owned his sin, and that he was ready to perish. He arose, and set off to return to his father. He was acting aright; he was truly converted; but as yet he had not on the best robe, nor the ring on his hand, nor shoes on his feet; as yet he had not met his father; he knew well that kindness and happiness were to be found in his father's house, but he knew not if he might enter there, he knew not if he would be received. He had not the sense of being a son, though he was such: he says, “I am no more worthy to be called thy son.” This is not the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.”

How many sincere and truly converted souls are in this state! They are not sealed. I do not say one must be able to explain how one cries Abba; nor to explain the doctrine of the presence of the Holy Ghost-acquaintance with the word is needed for this. But we must have the Spirit to be able in truth to cry, Abba. There are many souls who, from bad teaching, fear to say they are children of God; but when in the presence of God, they unhesitatingly, and from the bottom of their hearts, cry, Abba. In such a case, the lack of liberty and of power to say, “I am a child of God,” is the result of bad teaching; but if the soul has been sealed, when it finds itself in God's presence speaking to Him, it well knows that He is its Father, it has the sense of relationship with Him. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is,” says the apostle, “there is liberty"-liberty in the presence of God, and also from the law and the power of sin.

We can now look for a moment at that which the Holy Spirit gives when He dwells in us. First, He is not a spirit of bondage, but of adoption: we know that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Marvelous and ineffable privileges! though to be thus in relationship with God and with Christ is still more than the inheritance, which is but the consequence of that relationship.

Moreover, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. A simple expression, but how precious! We dwell in love, the love of God, for God, who is love, dwells in us. The proof of the love is that God gave His only-begotten Son for us, and that He died, giving up His life for us. But we enjoy this love through the presence of the Holy Ghost; by that presence the love is shed abroad in our hearts.

The apostle John speaks thus; “No man hath seen God at any time: if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in God, and He in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” And to show that this belongs, without question, to all Christians, he says, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” (1 John 4:12-15.)

It is difficult for one who does not walk with God to believe that we can dwell in God, and God in us. But it is clearly said, “If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” He dwells in us, and the soul that walks in communion with God enjoys this, rejoicing in it with humility and gratitude.

The presence of God never makes us proud. He is too great for us to be anything before Him. It was not when Paul was in the third heaven that he was in danger of being exalted above measure, but when he came down again. Moreover, the Holy Spirit gives us to know that we are in Christ, and Christ in us. (1 John 5:20.) There is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. Not only are our sins forgiven, but we are made acceptable to God in Him who is the Beloved, accepted in Christ (according to the preciousness of Christ Himself, who is our righteousness) and loved as He is loved.

Here, again, we see the believer's perfect acceptance, as also his responsibility. Before God I am perfectly accepted in Christ. But if I am in Christ, Christ is in me as life and power, and I am responsible to manifest this life before the world. Christ is for us before God, and we are for Christ before the world.

We know, then, by the Holy Spirit that we are in Christ, and Christ in us. What a magnificent fact, that the Spirit of God dwells in us! the effect of the perfect redemption accomplished by Christ. But what a responsibility likewise for the Christian! God did not dwell with Adam innocent, even in the garden of Eden. He did not dwell with Abraham; but as soon as ever the external redemption of Israel was accomplished, He comes to dwell in believers individually, and in His people gathered by the Holy Ghost. His presence is more than conversion. The converts washed in the blood of Jesus become the habitation of God, sealed thus for glory by means of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Chapter 38

David and Solomon: Part 1

“And they made Solomon, the son of David, king the second time; and anointed him unto the LORD to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest. Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king, instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.” (1 Chron. 29:22, 23.)

It is both for the glory of the Lord Himself, and for the comfort of the soul of the believer, to know how all the purposes of God were laid in Christ before the foundation of the world. Christ was, as one has said, the foundation of all the divine counsels-the first idea, if I may so speak, in the mind of God-the Alpha, the Beginning of the ways of Jehovah. (Prov. 8:22.) He was given, it is true, in due time for the church, but the church from everlasting had been given to Him, and not He to the church. “The man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man” (1 Cor. 8); and therefore we hear Him saying (if the application be allowed), “Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them.” (Psa. 139:16.) So also we read of “the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord;” and again, of “His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began;” and many like passages. So, as to the Savior Himself, His sorrows and glories were all prepared of old. His sorrows, as the Lamb of God, were written “in the volume of the book;” and it was by “the everlasting covenant” that all His glories were secured; for by it, as the pledge of them all, was He brought from the dead, the Great Shepherd of the sheep. (Psa. 40:7; Heb. 10:7; 13:20.)

But these, His sorrows and glories, were not only thus in covenant from the beginning ordered and secured, but they were also presented in types and shadows before the faith of His elect, when ages and dispensations had begun their course, and as they were rolling onward. Thus the sacrifices which have been offered continually since the fall of man, as is commonly known, set forth His sufferings. The tabernacle and temple, with their furniture and services, variously exhibited Him. There was no speech or language in them, but faith heard in all the wondrous tale. And it was this which made “the house of the Lord” the scene of the ancient believer's sweetest joy; for he there beheld, as in a glass darkly, “the beauty of the Lord.” (Psa. 27:4.) In the temple he inquired after Jesus.

But not only in things like these was He set forth, but persons, from time to time, were raised up of God to present Him in different features.

In Eden, Adam, as lord of the creation, as the sleeping man, as the husband of the woman, set Him forth variously. After the transgression and loss of Eden, the promise of the Seed of the woman made Him known in a general way as the great object of faith and hope; and then the different glories which were prepared for Him as this Seed, this Bruiser of the serpent, were gradually and successively unfolded in various persons.

But I would here turn aside for a moment to inquire how we are to trace out and search for the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God, in the scriptures. We know He is to be found there abundantly, and indeed this is the formal reason for searching them: as He says Himself, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me.” (John 5:39.) “The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.” “He wrote of me,” says the Lord, speaking of Moses; and again, in company with two of His disciples, “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” The scriptures, as the Jews judged, were the depository of life (John 5:39); and in this they judged rightly. Their error was, that they mistook the place in the scriptures where the life lay; they thought that it lay in the law which had been given to them, so that life was theirs exclusively. (Rom. 9:31.) But we know that it rather lay in “the testimony of Jesus,” who is the Life. (John 5:40; 17:3 2 Cor. 3:17.)

Where, then, it may be asked, in the scriptures are we to find Jesus? By what rule are we to trace Him? To this I would say, there is a special gift to teach conferred on some (Acts 13:1; Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11), and their duty is to stir up that gift for the common profit. But besides this, the scriptures are given for the learning of all the saints, and the mind that is most spiritually exercised will be the ablest and most skilful in searching them, and Jesus in them, so as neither to lose a trace of Himself, nor to mistake any other for Him. (Heb. 5:11-14.) I would say also, we are not told beforehand in every place where He is, but are commanded to search; but we are told beforehand in some places where He is, that our further search may in some measure he graciously and divinely directed. And, above all, we should remember that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a single eye, the surest pledge of a successful search (1 Cor. 3:1-3, 14:20; 1 Peter 2:1); for he that does the will shall know of the doctrine, and “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.”

But let us know this first, that God the Spirit, the witness of Jesus, must be trusted supremely in the search to keep our feet and guide our eye. When a sight of the distant land was given to Moses, it was given to him by the Lord Himself, from the mount to which the Lord Himself had previously led him. He neither chose his point of observation, nor directed his own eye-it was the Lord who did it. (Deut. 32:49, 34:1.) And so with us now, through the Spirit; He it is who shows us things to come; His guidance of our feet, His direction of our eye are needed, while in spirit we search out and survey the great and excellent things concerning Jesus and His glory in all the scriptures. Had Moses stood on lower ground than Pisgah, where God had guided him, he would not have seen all the land; had not God Himself directed his eye, he would not have distinguished Gilead from Judah, or the city of pales-trees from Zoar; and so, as the Lord the Spirit now graciously leads and teaches us, in such measure shall we, to the profit of our souls, behold the glory of the Lord in the scriptures. (2 Cor. 3)

“To look upon the works of nature, and to look into the ways of nature, are very different things.” So, to take up merely the materials of scripture, and to enter into its hidden wisdom, are different; the law has its shadows, prophecy its spirit-the mysteries their wisdom, and history its allegories; but we may miss these things. Moses looking from Pisgah on the distant land, would not have looked on it aright, had he not seen it as the inheritance of Israel, though it was really then the possession of the Gentiles: as to its condition at that time, it was the Amorite's land, but in the counsels of God it was Immanuel's land, and so Moses surveyed it, and so is scripture to be surveyed. To the eye of faith the victories of David and throne of Solomon are the victories and

throne of Christ. “The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.”

It is little to say to Him, “The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.” We can know but little of the sweetness of that true honeycomb, should it cost our soul an effort to join in that utterance with the psalmist. But we should learn also to say, May thy testimonies, O Lord, be my counselor, as well as my delight! By these may thy servant be warned, and in the keeping of them find great reward!

For my present purpose, then, in searching out the glories of the Lord in the scriptures, I would begin with Noah, who manifestly was His type in one very glorious character. The prophecy that went before upon Noah was this-” This shall comfort us concerning our word and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.” (Gen. 5:29.) This introduced Him as the remover of the curse from a corrupted earth, and as the rest, consequently, of those who had been doomed, with pain of sorrow and sweat of brow, to eat of it and to till it. Now what sweet unfoldings, by way of type, of the still hidden glory of Christ have we here! Here is shown to us a pattern of beautiful things yet to come, but which in their day shall be fashioned accordingly. Here we see Christ, the true Noah, Heir of the new earth, when, as we read, “there shall be no more curse,” having all things therein delivered into his hand-the cattle upon a thousand hills; the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea owning Him as Lord, and His name as Governor made excellent through all the earth. For thus it is to be when the gates lift up their heads to Him, and the earth and its fullness shall be His. (See Psa. 24)

(To be continued.)

Chapter 39

David and Solomon: Part 2

Again, in further process of time, it pleased Him to make another of His glories known. In the person of the patriarch Abraham, we have him before us as the father of the household of God; as it is written, “Behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations, neither shall thy name any more he called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee.” Now this promise was to Abraham's Seed, that is, to Christ, as we learn from the Epistle to the Galatians. Is not the Lord Jesus Christ really too the Father of the many nations? And so the time will be when He shall be manifested in this character, when He will gather His households around Him like flocks of sheep, when He shall be revealed “the Father of the everlasting age,” and when those to whom He has given life shall he with Him, and He shall say, “Behold I, and the children whom God hath given me.”

Thus in Noah we see Jesus as Lord and Heir of the earth and its fullness, and in Abraham as Head and Father of the whole family of God-two bright dawnings of His predestinated glory and kingdom, when a rich demesne shall be spread out beneath Him, owning His Lordship, and happy households shall be gathered about Him, knowing His Fatherhood. But we are still to look for more characteristic glories in the midst of all this. These we shall find in the combined dignities of the King and the Priest, two personages which are therefore made very familiar to us in scripture. Moses and Aaron were united in order to present them together; as they were afterward, though in feebler lines (for the memorials of Christ were much effaced through the world's increasing evil), in Zerubbabel and Joshua.

But a striking expression of Christ's priestly dignity is given to us in the person of Phinehas, and that of His royal honors in Solomon.

Phinehas stood in an evil day. Israel had joined himself to Baalpeor, and the heads of the people must be slain, ere the anger of the Lord that was then kindled could be turned away. Phinehas rose up from among the congregation, and executed the judgment, and thus made atonement for the people. The Lord then spake to Moses, saying, “Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel (while he was zealous for my sake among them), that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy; wherefore say, Behold I give unto him my covenant of peace, and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.” (Num. 25:11-13.) So also Christ, the true Phinehas, was glorified to be made an High Priest by Him who said unto Him, “Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.” He took not this honor unto Himself, He rather learned obedience by the things that He suffered, through which, as Phinehas, He made atonement, and turned away wrath; but He has been “called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.” He is the Priest of the Most Highs God, the only Mediator between God and man. Levi is nothing, and Aaron is nothing, and Phinehas is nothing—Jesus is the Priest; in His hand alone the blessing is laid, and by Him it is ministered.

But while He is thus the Priest, He is King also: “a Priest upon his throne"-the true Melchisedec; and Solomon, as we have observed, sets Him forth the most brightly in His royal honors. Unto Solomon the whole earth sought, and brought every man his present; and so all nations whom He has made shall come and worship before Jesus, when He shall take the dominion under the whole heaven, and a kingdom that shall break in pieces every other kingdom, standing forever.

But here we desire to be somewhat more particular, and to take a closer view of the “King in his beauty.” Would that the sight were more transforming even now, through the power of faith! But surely we can at least say, that we do long to see the Man of sorrows thus; we do desire to see those days of His wherein He, that once bore the curse for us, shall bear the glory, and that forever and ever.

In order fully to see in Solomon the type of Jesus the King, we must previously meditate on his father David, and David and Solomon thus combined will constitute a very full and beautiful typo of Him “with whom we have to do.” And while I write these words, I taste something of the sweetness of them; what marvel is it, beloved brethren, that we can speak of Jesus, the Son of God, as of Him with whom we have to do But so it is, grace has made it so; and we may therefore well take leave of all thoughts and desires that are not associated with Him.

There is one feature in the character of David which marks him in every scene through which he passes, from the time that we see him as the shepherd in Bethlehem, to the time of his delivering up of the throne of Israel to his son, Solomon. He was at all times and in all scenes the servant. It mattered not with him what the sphere of labor might be, this was his character. As a suitable introduction of him as such, we find him, in the beginning of his history, slighted and forgotten, even his father esteeming him not. He was the youngest of his father's sons, and (scarcely putting him among his children, but rather treating him as a servant) his father says of him to Samuel, “Behold, he keepeth the sheep.” (1 Sam. 16:11.) From this place of scorn and neglect, however, he is drawn forth by the signal favor of God, and anointed to the throne of Israel; but the virtue of this anointing was still in everything to keep him as the servant. Whatever in his conduct is opposed to this is properly not of himself. It is this which gives him throughout his character, not doing his own will, or seeking his own glory.

Thus, as soon as he was anointed, this grace at once manifests itself in him. He is called up to the royal city to wait on king Saul, and as the wise charmer, by the charming of his harp, to allay the evil spirit that had visited the king from the Lord. (1 Sam. 16:23.) From this service we find him returned to the care of his sheep at Bethlehem (1 Sam. 17:15); and when again called forth, it was only in like manner to be the minister of others. It was not, as his brother injuriously judged, that the pride and naughtiness of his heart led him to the battle with Goliath and the Philistines in the plain of Elah; he went at the bidding of his father to carry provisions to his brothers in the camp, the servant of their necessities; but when he arrived there, occasion showing itself to him, he at once offers himself as the servant of Israel's necessities and of Jehovah's glory. The Lord had been dishonored, and His people threatened, and this was “the cause” that moved David to say to Saul, “Thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” The promised honors and riches that were to be his who killed Goliath were not that which moved him; for after the victory we do not find him claiming them, flattering and splendid as they wore (the very things for one who sought to glorify himself), but we hear him saying, “Who am I, and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel,

that I should be son-in-law to the king?" and we see him becoming again the king's harper; thus, instead of seeking his own glory, ministering to others in the humblest service that might be appointed him. (1 Sam. 18:10-18.)

Again, in all his sufferings at the hand of Saul we discern nothing but the same spirit of submission, that never sought its own rights or avenged its own wrongs. He yields to the enmity of the king. He retires from court, and dwells in dens and caves of the earth. He willingly loses sight of himself altogether, doing service if called on as the soldier of Israel and the king, but leaving all the profit and honor of his service to them. He would not dare to harbor the thought of avenging himself upon his persecutor. Rather than touch the Lord's anointed, he would be "a partridge in the mountains" all his days. Though conscious that he had been appointed to the throne of Israel, he would make what promises, enter into what covenants, the rival house of his enemy pleased, careless how this might tend to exalt them, and abase himself. (See 1 Sam. 20:17; 23:18; 24:22.) And when his enemy fell, and his own sorrows were thus to end, and the way to the throne was made plain before him, he had no heart to rejoice in those his own advantages-he looked not on his own things, and knew nothing but grief at the fall and dishonor of the Lord's anointed. "Tell it not in Gath," says he, "publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." (2 Sam. 1:20.) The messenger of the tidings did not understand David. He judged that he brought joy to David, and that he should have received a reward for his pains; but David is filled only with the sad vision of Israel's dishonor, and the sin of this Amalekite in lifting his hand against the anointed of the Lord. "The world knoweth us not," says one, speaking as the elect of God; and this was now illustrated in David and this Amalekite; their griefs are not our griefs, nor their joss our joys.

But we have to trace the servant-character of David still further, for no change of scene or circumstance has power to work a change in the character of the energy of the Spirit of God that was in him; scenes and circumstances, change as they may, serve only to set forth this character more brightly. And indeed, beloved in the Lord, this is that which alone can end in the reward of the kingdom. Nothing but service here shall be honored hereafter; as it is written, "Whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister, and whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all." And again, "If any man serve me, him shall my Father honor."

We find David, then, on the throne; having received it, however, not at his own will, but called to it by the Lord Himself. But what was the way of David now? Why, just what it had been before; just what had signalized him when his hand bore the shepherd's crook, the harp, or the warrior-sling; just that which had marked him in the caves and holds of the wilderness, now marks him seated on the throne of Israel. He is still, and that only, the servant, doing Jehovah's pleasure alone, and seeking only His glory. He gives himself no rest. He does not pause in His course till the enemies of the Lord and of His people submit themselves; he pursued and destroyed, and turned not again until he had consumed them. (2 Sam. 22:38.)

And the time of peace, as well as the time of war, was the time of service with king David; at home or abroad he is the same; and therefore not only in the field is he seen pursuing the enemy, but in the city we hear him saying, "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed, I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." (Psa. 132:3.) Accordingly he makes

preparation, and brings up the ark of the Lord God, which had lain neglected in the days of Saul (1 Chron. 13:3), to its place in the midst of the tabernacle, which he had pitched for it. He waits on it himself-he offers his burnt-offerings and his peace-offerings there. He blesses the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, and, as a girded servant, he makes them to sit down to meat, and serves them. (2 Sam. 6:19.) He dances before the ark in the joy of one who knew only the joy of ministering to the praise of another; and he would be more vile than thus, and base in his own sight, and willingly be put among the objects, so that he might but duly fulfill his service as the minister of the glory of Jehovah, and of the joy of His people. And in the end unwearied in serving as at the beginning, he purposes to build an house for this ark of the Lord. See now," he says to Nathan, "that I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." His zeal in this was somewhat without knowledge, but it was the zeal of one who desired to serve fully.

And when forbidden to build the house (for reasons which we shall consider presently), in his trouble be prepares for it (1 Chron. 22:14) gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, timber also, and stone; and provides and hires all manner of cunning men for every manner of work. And not only this, but he gives patterns of all things to Solomon, patterns of the cherubim, the courts, and the treasuries. He numbers and distributes the Levites into courses for the service of the house, and settles the order of the sons of Aaron. He appoints the offices of the singers instructed in the songs of the Lord; he settles the divisions of the porters, the officers, and the judges, the captains of the several months, and the princes of the tribes.

And when all his service is ended, and nothing remains but to reap the fruit of it, and the glory and kingdom for the which all these things had been prepared, he retires, ceasing to be, when he must cease to serve. The throne of Jerusalem was no more to him than his shepherd-tent at Bethlehem; in both all his desire was to fill as an hireling his day. And now, having come to the evening of his day (for "man goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the evening"), he retires. He will not glorify himself. "Take with you," says he to his officers, "the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon, and let Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, anoint him there king over Israel, and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon: then shall ye come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne, for he shall be king in my stead, and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah." (1 Kings 1:33-35.) He gives up the throne which his hands had established, and all the honors of it; these were nothing in his account-he had finished his work and service, and this was everything to him.

Thus, the moment that all was ready for the full display of the glory, he disappears; he had sown, and would have another now reap; he had labored, and was willing that another should now enter into his labors. He made Solomon his son king over Israel. In the assembly of the princes and the captains, with the officers and mighty men at Jerusalem, Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah as king, instead of David his father, and all Israel obeyed him, and all the princes and mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David submitted themselves to Solomon the king. (1 Chron. 29:24.)

Thus have we in this blessed man the perfect pattern of a servant; he was the servant who would not go out free, but would serve forever. (Ex. 21:1-6.) Such was David; but in Solomon we see another thing altogether. Solomon was one who entered into another man's labors; he reaped

where another had sown; he enjoyed by inheritance the honors and the name which David in his trouble and service had gotten. In the sight of Israel Jehovah magnified Solomon exceedingly, and bestowed on him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him. He passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom, and all of them sought his presence, and God made the name of Solomon better than David's name, and his throne greater than David's throne. (1 Kings 1:47.) For David did the Lord call His servant, but Solomon He called His son, saying, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.” By inheritance he obtained a better name than his father. As heir of the fruit of David's toil, Solomon appears before us full of peace and prosperity; not as David had been, the scorn of others, but the boast and joy of his people, and the very center of the world's attraction, his fame going abroad into all the earth.

And with this better name was reserved for him the honor of building the house of God, for that work is to be regarded rather as honor than as service, an honor too great for David the servant, but reserved for Solomon the son, as God said to David, “Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.” (1 Chron. 28:6.) As before He had said to Nathan, “Go and tell David my servant, thus saith Jehovah, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in; I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons, and I will establish his kingdom; he shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne forever, and I will be his father, and he shall be my son.” (1 Chron. 17:4, 13.) Other reasons, it is true, appear in the mind of God for hindering David from being builder of the house. Thus, for instance, in David's time the children of Israel had not come to their rest, the kingdom was still unsettled, and the people were in the attitude of being girded for service, or harnessed for war, and the Lord refused to enter into His settled habitation while His people were thus. In all their afflictions He had been afflicted, and in their wanderings He had walked in a tent and in a tabernacle; and till He had planted them in their ordained place, He would Himself enter no house of cedar. (1 Chron. 17) Again, David had shed blood abundantly, wars had been about him on every side, but his son was to be “a man of rest,” rest was to be given him from his enemies round about; peace and quietness were to be unto Israel in his days; and then. But not till then, would the Lord arise into His dwelling-place. (1 Kings 5:3 Chron. 22:8-10; 28:3.) But besides all this, I say it was because Solomon was the son, as we have seen, that the building of the house was reserved for him. The house was the sign of constancy and abiding, as it is written, “The servant abideth not in the house forever, but the son abideth forever.”

Solomon's was the time of rest. No enemy remained for him to conquer, no preparations by trouble and toil were left for him to make; he sits down full of honors and peace. And his was the time of joy also. Then for the first time did songs break forth from the midst of the congregation of Israel. Moses of old had appointed sacrifices, but no songs had been heard in the tabernacle. David had ordained the singers, given them their charge, and settled them in their courses, but all this joy was prepared for Solomon; it was in the house that he had builded that the priests, the trumpeters, and the singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, with their sons and brethren, first awakened the praises of Jehovah in Israel. Above all days in Israel was that day joyous, when they began to sing to the Lord, “for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever.” (2 Chron. 5:13.) And glorious, we may say, above all was the cloud which then filled the temple. This was a sample of the Solomon days; nothing was there but joy and glory. The priests could not stand to do their usual service, for the glory had displaced them. No sacrifices could then be bound to the horns of

the altar, for nothing but the fruit of praise and joy was there, thanksgivings were heard, and the voice of melody only. And in this Jehovah rested-the joy of His Zion had now come, and He that inhabits the praises of Israel filled the place with His presence. (2 Chron. 5:12-14.)

Now these things which we have been tracing in David and Solomon are shadows of better things; “the body is of Christ.” Christ is the great ordinance of God; “the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy;” the promises made to Abraham were really to his seed, which is Christ. The exhibition of grace in David, and of glory in Solomon, in like manner, are really and fully all of Christ. (Gal. 3:16; Heb. 1:5.) And thus throughout, all these highly-favored ones were only witnesses of the things that should be found in Jesus. This was their joy, to wait, with their various testimony upon Him. (See John 3:29)

We have seen in David the servant-character fully exhibited. We have tracked him from the field of the shepherd to that of the conqueror, from the court of the king to the holds in the wilderness, and from thence up to the throne, and have marked this one character throughout. And so was it perfectly and throughout in the blessed Jesus, the true David. Before the foundation of the earth He gave Himself to service, as in the volume of the book is written of Him, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” While manifest in flesh, He ever was seen as having come forth, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. He could say at all times, “I seek not mine own glory.” He emptied Himself; and the form that He took was that of a servant. He refused to know Himself, saying, “My goodness extendeth not to thee;” and again, “Why callest thou me good?”

There was always (save when the testimony for which He stood on the earth would call on Him for a while to stand confessed in His divine glory) this hiding of Himself. Thus, when invited of His mother to display Himself at the marriage in Cana, He says to her, “Woman, what have I to do with thee, mine hour is not yet come?” When challenged by His brethren to show Himself to the world, He replies in like manner, “My time is not yet come.” (See John 2; 7) When He had been doing His wonted wonders of grace, and the people were astonished, His disciples, desirous that He should be magnified in the eyes of the world, say unto Him, “All men seek for thee;” but His only answer was that of a servant, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth.” And such was He on the earth throughout. A body had been prepared for Him, His ear was opened, and, like David, He had but to finish the work that was given Him to do.

And He was perfect in this through every stage. As a child, He was subject to His parents, fulfilling all righteousness as such; and when anointed of God, like David, He still came forth only to serve, whether it were the Father's glory, or our necessities. As towards the Father, whether in solitudes by night, or in labors by day, the Father might still pronounce upon Him, “Behold, my servant.” He fulfilled His day, ever working the work of Him that sent Him: the vows of His God were upon Him, and He did all, until He were entitled to say, “It is finished"-He was obedient unto death. And as towards us, He was always waiting on our necessities; He went about doing good: every sickness and every disease among the people, every city and every village in the land knew Him thus-none sought His help in vain.

And here we would turn aside for a moment to see this great sight, the necessity for all this humiliation of the blessed Son of God. Surely it was because He had to undo the mighty mischief which our pride had wrought, when we sought, being tempted, to be as God (Gen. 3:5, 6); and this

could be done only by the Highest emptying of Himself, and the Brightness of the glory of God being manifest in flesh, and veiling Himself in the form of a servant. Adam the creature had sought His own glory, but the Son of God emptied Himself of His. To be as God, though a creature of yesterday, was the daring design of the first man-to take the form of a servant, though in the form of God, was the willing humiliation of the Second; and thus the attempted dishonor to God by the one was abundantly repaired by the other.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 40

David and Solomon: Part 3

And this humiliation of the Son of God was marked not only through His life and ministry (as we have been noticing somewhat in detail), but in the person that He had previously assumed (being in the esteem of men nothing better than the “carpenter, the son of Mary"), and also very strikingly in His death, which He subsequently accomplished at Jerusalem, in all the circumstances of it, as well as in the fact itself. The demands made upon Him then were just what the fallen creature in his pride would naturally have made. “And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him.” (Matt. 27:39.) But these demands, such was the perfectness of His service and subjection, Jesus the Son of God utterly resisted. He had before this met the same temptation immediately from Satan himself, He met it now at the hand of man. Satan had sought to have Him glorify himself (Matt. 4:6); and man, moved by that pride that had been the old transgression in the garden, now sought the same; but He was found faultless, Satan and man came, and had nothing in Him. Thus was He “crucified through weakness.” Everything that the pride of the fallen creature would scorn and reject, and count as weakness, was in Him; but in this was God's delight and honor; for a Son of man thus, in the loss of reputation and life, in the cross and its shame, met all the rebukes and enmity of man's pride and apostasy: “For thy sake have I borne reproach,” might Jesus say to the Father: “the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.” And, oh, what a savor of rest with God must all this have given to His blood! The satisfaction of it we know (and this is our comfort) entered so deeply, that “Jehovah said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake.” (Gen. 8:21; Eph. 5:2.)

And thus also can He, a Son of man, hold glory and a kingdom in righteousness. In His person, throughout His life, and by His death, as we thus see, He has given its answer to all the pride and assumption of man; and He can therefore take the honor of dominion which man has forfeited, and hold it again in righteousness. He has loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; His throne shall therefore be forever and ever. He was once crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God now; and the kingdoms of the world shall be His hereafter. And should not we, beloved, be ready to be “weak in him,” accounted of the world vile, if it will, that our present life may be more in the power of the same God, and our coming glory, glory at the hand of our God, in company with the once-nay, the still-despised Jesus?

But not only was He thus the perfect Servant, both of the Father and of sinners, while here among us, even unto death, and all its circumstances, but now in heaven the Son of God is waiting on us; as He said, when leaving His church, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” How with them, but as using His title to all power for them? as it is written also in Mark, “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them.” But not only as working with them thus in their ministry, but He serves in the heavenly temple, continually making intercession

there for us, washing still His disciples' feet, till He presents them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. And even then, when He comes forth from this His sanctuary on high, commissioned to make His enemies His footstool, it will be as the servant of the glory of God that He will come forth. He will not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth. (Isa. 43:1-4.) And, more wondrous still, when this is done, and the enemy and the avenger are stilled, He will wait on those who shall then be found His faithful watching saints, for “He will gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” (Luke 12:37.) And at last, in the midst of the throne, He will forever feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters. (Rev. 7:17.)

Thus is He the true David, no change of scene or circumstances working any change in His character as the servant of Jehovah's glory and of His people's joy. The perfectness of all this could not have been duly set forth in David, had David hesitated for a moment to retire when the time for the revelation of the glory of His throne and kingdom had come. But, as we have seen, he did not; when David ceased to have service to do, David would be no more-his right hand knew no cunning but this. And so with Jesus, who emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant. He glorified not Himself; “Not my will, but thine be done,” was ever His word. But God has highly exalted Him as Solomon, and given Him a name which is above every name, in the which every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth. God has said to Him, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” He has crowned Him with glory and honor now, and will put all things under His feet hereafter. He will bring Him forth the second time into the world, and all the angels of God shall worship Him. On His thigh and on His vesture shall His name be written, “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” To Him whom men despised, to this servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, all nations shall call Him blessed. His throne shall be, forever and ever; the oil of gladness shall anoint Him above His fellows; and the God of the whole earth shall He be called.

The King shall be seen in His beauty then; He shall bless the people like Solomon, and sustain them in, all their necessities (2 Chron. 6), on His breast-plate and on His shoulders bearing their names continually. And like as Solomon builded cities, and fenced them with walls and bars, so that “all Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon,” so, says the King by His prophet, “My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings and in quiet resting-places.” (1 Kings 4:25 2 Chron. 8:4; Isa. 32:18.) The word of knowledge was with Solomon, and largeness of heart, (even as the sand that is on the sea-shore) was given to him, and the spirit of understanding to discern judgment; so upon the greater than Solomon shall the Spirit of the Lord rest, “the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.” (Isa. 11:2-4.) And Zion shall then be in her beauty also. King Solomon made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars as the sycamore-trees that are in the vale for abundance; but when the glory of Jehovah rises upon Zion, she shall shine in fullness of beauty-every land shall deck her forth-gold from Sheba, and incense, the treasures of Midian and Kedar, and the glory of Lebanon shall be there. “I will make the place of my feet glorious,” says the King; “for brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver.” (Isa. 60) And upon her citizens shall the blessing be again pronounced, “Happy is the people that is in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose

God is Jehovah." (2 Chron. 7; Psa. 144:15.)

Such, and far beyond the range of our thoughts, will be the Kingly glory of our Beloved; but these features of it we gather from the typical times of David and Solomon, upon which we have been now meditating, and which we would now, in closing, thus further and distinctly present.

First, it is to be the kingdom of the Son-it is the Son, and not the servant, who is to establish and inherit it; as we have already seen, the house was built by Solomon, and not by David. It is therefore to have the value of the Son upon it and about it, and this is everything to us; for this is the character of its stability and joy. Its stability, because it is not to be committed to the fallibility and weakness of a servant, as we, read, "The servant abideth not in the house forever;" but it is to be set in the strength of the Son, and shall therefore abide forever, for "the Son abideth ever." This kingdom cannot therefore be moved: "the earth and the inhabitants thereof are dissolved," says Jesus the King, "I bear up the pillars thereof;" and in token of this stability, the pillars of Solomon's house were called Jachin and Boaz. And we have spoken of its joy, because the full and unspeakable delight of the Father in the Son shall rest on the kingdom that is His; and in token of this joy, the Lord said of the house that Solomon had finished, "Mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually." And what must the repose of the creation be when thus dwelling in the light of the Father's favor—when the complacency which He has in the Son of His love-is thus beaming and resting on everything! As the precious ointment on the head went down to the skirts of the garments, and the light that from between the cherubim gladdened the high priest on his entrance into the holy place, fell with equal luster on the names of the twelve tribes which he bore upon his breastplate then.

But, secondly, throughout the kingdom there shall be a constant remembrance of "the man of sorrows;" as everything in the temple, the stones that fitly framed it together, the gold and the silver, the brass and the iron, all spake increasingly of David, for David in his trouble had prepared them all. (1 Chron. 2:14.) Psa. 132 is Solomon's pleading with Jehovah to arise into the rest which he had prepared for Him, and to fill it with glory and blessing, on the ground of his father's afflictions. "Lord, remember. David and all his afflictions," says he; and upon this ground he prays," Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength; let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy; for thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of thine Anointed." The afflictions of David were thus known amidst the glories of Solomon, and so the Lamb that was slain shall be in the midst of the throne. As our fallen earth bears upon it everywhere the trail of the serpent, so will the kingdom wear the traces of the blood of the Lamb, The tabernacle and all vessels of ministry were sprinkled with blood; and so the heaven and earth, the true tabernacle, or place of meeting, with all things that are therein, shall have the memorials of the crucified Jesus about them; for "blessing, and honor, and glory, and power unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb," shall be heard from the heaven, and the earth, and the sea together. (Rev. 5:12, 13.)

And, lastly, the kingdom shall be the place of thanksgiving and praise, and God, even our own God, shall accept this worship, and rest in it as His honor forever. As when the temple was finished, as we have already noticed, and the ark was in its place under the wings of the cherubim, and everything was in due order, "it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up

their voice with the trumpets, and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth forever, then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God" (2 Chron. 5:13, 14), so in the kingdom shall all be displaced to make room for the glory, all be silenced but the ceaseless unwearying song of joy and praise. Praise is now too much checked and hushed by our own thoughts upon God and His ways, faith not being at all times ready to interpret His works aright. But then the whole scene will awaken praise, for nothing will be seen, nothing heard, that can of itself hinder praise; our own thoughts will be forever silenced, and God, in the love of the Son, will be seen and heard all around, and everything shall therefore be then full of praise. And indeed this our faith should ever now anticipate; let faith displace our own thoughts, and we shall then, even now, be giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, and thus in spirit begin the praise in the joy of the kingdom. For praise from the heavens, and praise from the earth; praise by the angels in their hosts, and praise by the kings of the earth and all people; praise from the heaven of heavens, and praise from the mountains and hills, beasts and all cattle, shall gladden and surround Him whose name alone is excellent, and His saints who love Him, and His people who serve Him, shall be satisfied forever and ever.

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Chapter 41

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 1. The History of Faith

Nothing can be known of God, save as He is pleased to reveal. Man has projected an imaginary being, the creation of his own mind, the personification of the qualities he finds in himself-has clothed it with power beyond his own, has deified and worshipped it. In result he has worshipped himself, or a demon behind himself. The wisest among the old heathen could not go beyond himself, that is, he could not conceive other attributes than nature displayed. These were developed to perfection in his gods, but it was the perfection of sin. And if there were no other surer and better way, we could learn in measure what man is from the gods he has made and worshipped. Let the cunningly-devised fables of pagan idolatry bear testimony. The portraits of man's deities were sketched in his heart, and painted in the colors of a degraded imagination. Thus man is known from the character of his gods. His gods are the impersonation of his sin, the apotheosis of his vices. Man is not merely a sinner, but a worshipper of sin, a slave of Satan.

The effect of man's inability to go beyond himself is, that he never conceived the idea of an eternal God, though he ought to have apprehended through creation His eternal power and divinity. His gods may be called immortal, but be gave them a beginning, and put them under a superior power, whose decrees could not be set aside. So incapable was man to conceive the idea of self-existence, that he must have a fate to control his gods, and must hide his conscious ignorance in chaos.

The knowledge of God was given up. Men did not like to retain God in their knowledge. (Rom. 1) Never did the mind of man in itself conceive the truth of One infinite in power and wisdom, infinite in goodness and love. The cultured and the refined were as far from it as the rude untutored savage. The world by wisdom knew not God. He is only to be known from and by Himself-from His own word, and by His own Spirit. Nature, on which infidelity rests as the means of rising from the visible to a knowledge of the Invisible, fails to tell who and what God is. Nature was never intended to tell us. But even what nature, or rather creation, should have shown was reasoned away-His eternal power and divinity. The heavens declare His glory, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. But not even that glorious display of wisdom and power could tell more than that there must be God, not that God in His nature was essentially light and love.

Men pretend to see love in the present condition of the earth, and argue for the necessity of evil, misery, and death as the best, if not the only, means of bringing the human race to a state of perfection. This is a libel upon the character of God. With infidelity evil is not the result of sin, but the condition in which man was created. That which makes other eyes weep, and other hearts ache, is for the infidel the beneficent arrangement of a wise and mighty God, who brings in evil to obtain good!

The Bible alone accounts for the presence of evil, and its resultant misery and death. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. It is a righteous thing that misery and death, with all

their concomitant evils, should be the lot of man-the righteous dealings of a just and holy God with rebels; and, while sin remains, righteousness demands that all these evils-the fruit of sin-should also remain. Even God's saints, while here in the body, are exposed to the sorrows to which humanity is heir. The Lord Jesus Himself submitted, in grace truly, to all the consequences-sin excepted-of taking a place among men and specially the remnant of Israel, a thing wholly distinct from being made sin on the cross. To remove the sufferings while sin is present would be a denial of God's righteous government.

But is the present state of the world always to continue? Will there be no deliverance for a groaning creation? And if there be, when? and how? The Bible, in all the simplicity and majesty of truth, gives God's answer. There we learn His purpose before the world was made to manifest Himself, not only as a God that can create, and judge or destroy, but also as a God that can save. He who in Genesis is the Creator-God closes that wonderful book by declaring Himself the Savior-God in all its fullness. This is His declared purpose. The means of accomplishing it is by the Son appearing on earth in the guise of a man, and so meeting all the claims of divine righteousness, and expressing in the highest degree God's love for the lost. And this is the subject of God's book. Every doctrine contained in it, every fact therein recorded, each and all are subservient to this one great unchanging purpose. God will be a Savior-God. Creation could only bring out the fact of His eternal power and divinity. It displayed these divine attributes, but never could display His nature. God is light and love. There was a display of love in the circumstances and condition of the first man in the garden, as far as creation could show it; but that God is love, and could show it in the presence of sin, was not known, nor could be. Man's sin quickly brought out the fact that God is light, and no less quickly did death, the immediate offspring of sin, bring out the fact that God is love. And the cross is the divine proof of both. To be thus known and to receive the praises due from an intelligent responsible creature was His eternal purpose. Had there been no sin, with its resultant evils, we could not tell how He would have been worshipped as a Savior-God. The infinite depths of His love would not have had this sphere for its display. But God would be known to a redeemed creation, so that all that He is might be known, and bring forth praises which are His due and delight.

Was sin, then, a necessity for such a manifestation of what God is? We can only answer that this is the way in which He is known. God forbid the thought that He caused sin in order to display Himself. Infinite are the ways in which He could make Himself known to an intelligent creature in all the unfathomable depths of His nature. We cannot go beyond facts; and the two great facts of this world's history are, that sin has come into it, and God has used sin as the occasion to show Himself in all the infiniteness of love and grace. And so, if the first words of Genesis declare His glory as the Creator-God, the last words of the Revelation reveal Him as the Savior-God, full of grace and truth. The last words of His book are His invitation to the lost, weary soul to take freely of the water of life: “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” Not that this invitation is displayed till the end; the gracious words had long before been heard, uttered in anticipation of the glorious fact which alone is the ground of redemption-the cross. The same free grace, under the same figure, was preached by Isaiah years before eternal redemption was accomplished by Christ on the cross. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” There was wine, and milk, and honey beside: wine to cheer and make the heart glad, milk to nourish, honey to sweeten every trial throughout the pathway; but all without money and without price. It

was the message of Jehovah-God to the lost sheep of Israel. The Lord Jesus comes with the same, offer, the same grace brought palpably nearer in His own person. “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst...It shall be in him a fountain of water springing up unto everlasting life.” Fullness, freeness, and inexhaustibility are the attributes of this living water. And now, at the close of the book, the Spirit, by the pen of John, re-echoes the living invitation to all. The thirsty one, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Is not this to be a Savior-God? The whole Trinity is seen in the call. The one God in Israel; Jesus, the Son, sent of the Father in the gospel; the Holy Ghost in the revelation, as the continued expression of Him who, when in the world, had but the one word for the laboring and the heavy-laden-” Come, I will give, you rest;” “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.”

Thus we now know Him. Heaven could not show it. Hell is the place of judgment. Earth is the platform where the purposes of richest grace are wrought and morally accomplished. In His book we may mark it, step by step, unto the end.

In the Bible there are three distinct objects about which God has a purpose: first, the material world and man in general; secondly, Israel, as a chief and special people on and for the earth; and thirdly, the saints destined for heaven, including the church, of which Christ is the Head, and which is also the habitation of God by the Spirit. These are three different lines, yet connected, and converging to one point.

Praise to God will be the result of His work. Looking onward to the coming kingdom, how bright and varied the scene. Though not the full result, yet there will be peace on earth and glory to God. The curse will be removed, for Jesus will reign, and the efficacy of His cross be felt even by the earth. Israel, the chosen people, exalted as princes over all, while the church will be seen in heavenly glory. This is the time when all things will be headed up in Christ. In the holy mountain-Christ's kingdom by right of descent from David-there will be nothing to hurt or destroy; Israel be all taught of God; the whole earth-His by purchase will be full of His glory. The new Jerusalem will appear out of heaven in all the splendor of a bride adorned for her husband, in all the glory of her Bridegroom. Here are varying brightnesses of glory, but one immense fact is the basis of them all-the cross, the focus of glory. And He who once hung there in shame and sorrow, redemption's toil completed, is to sit upon His own throne, King of kings, and Lord of lords. And in eternity, when the new heavens and the new earth shall have been created, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all, when the last act of this wonderful drama shall have passed, and the session of the judgment before the great white throne shall have closed, then will the full and blessed accomplishment of His eternal counsel be celebrated, and there will be an intelligent and redeemed creation chanting the praises and the glories of a Savior-God. A word was sufficient to create; but to make a sinful yet an intelligent and responsible creature a worshipper, required the work and the blood of His own Son.

We find a process in the creation of the material earth before it became the theater of an intelligent creature. The word simply gives one or two facts. God created the heavens and the earth. Next the earth was without form, and void. Then we are brought down to the period when God began to prepare the earth for man. How long the earth was without form and void before the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, we are not told. Human science says there were ages between the first creative act and the appearance of man. Geology may be right in many of its

deductions, such as the countless years required for the different “formations” which, we are told, were successive. It is said that the earth gives evidence of different stages in its existence, from creation to the time when man was made; that each stage was characterized by different productions, and in different conditions, and endured for ages; and these, having served the purpose of the Creator, passed away, making room for a further stage of His power and wisdom in the formation of the present earth. But scripture, while leaving room for the deductions of science, does not affirm them. A forest, under certain conditions, after the lapse of ages, may become coal, or a piece of charcoal become a diamond. I would only remark that God was able by a word to have created all these appearances which seem to have required ages for their development. Still, there is no solid reason from scripture to doubt these successive changes. On the contrary, there is presumptive evidence of their truth, for the earth is not yet in its last stage. No small change was effected at the deluge, when the waters again covered the face of the earth, “whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” The breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, and the opening of the windows of heaven, suggest images of disruption which nevertheless may have been exceeded by other and preceding effects of divine power, and also indicative of greater future changes in the earth and surrounding atmosphere than were effected by the overflowing rush of the waters of the flood. For another change is coming, and of far greater importance to man than has ever yet taken place. Not only the earth, but the heavens also, shall pass away. “The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.” “We look for new heavens, and a new earth.” May we not say that the coming change is a presumptive proof that the inferences of geological researches are substantially correct?

But, admitting these long ages actually to have passed from the original creation of the heavens and the earth to the creation of man, what may we learn from it? That the platform on which God was about to display Himself, as not even heaven could, had a gradual preparation for it according to His wisdom. As if the mighty work to be done, and the dignity of the One who came to do it, required due solemnity and care in its preparation. We shall learn by-and-by, from the Creator Himself, all God's reasons (if I may so express it) for the way and manner of the operation of His creative power and skill. He who says that He has made known to us all that He heard of His Father, will at the right time tell us the history of His works. We know now, from the first verses in Genesis, that no immediate creation of something out of nothing would, according to His wisdom, be fitting for the habitation of man. So there was a process, most briefly expressed in a few short sentences. God created the heavens and the earth. Then the earth was without form and void, and enveloped in darkness. Then the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And it must have been necessary and wise, for it was God who did it.

But it was no moral process, There was no intelligent responsible creature before man. I speak of the earth. When the time came for his creation, God took five days to prepare the earth for him. Night and day were ordered, and lights were made to rule by day and by night, and to be for signs, seasons, days and years. The earth, air, and sea were peopled with living creatures. Why so much care to prepare man's habitation? Because man was to have dominion, and to be lord of all-to be the link between the Creator and His creation. But mark an important change in the manner of the creation of man, compared with that of all other creatures of this earth. Previously God had said, Be, and it was. It was the simple fiat of God. The habitation is ready, and furnished suitably to the

dignity of the coming inhabitant. But now the word is changed; not “Be,” but, “Let us make man.” There is the appearance of deliberation, as if such a creature in his formation required due care and consultation. Does God say, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” because Adam was to have dominion, and to be the intelligent and responsible head of creation, and because he was to be capable of having a knowledge of His Creator, and therefore of power to worship Him? Nay, these are rather the necessary consequences of being created in the image of God, and after His likeness. Man was the only creature so made, and it was impossible that he should be subordinated to any other creature. The creature who bears the image of God must be officially above all other creatures. What, then, is the divine reason for putting man in such an exalted position? May it not be because the Son was in due time to appear in the likeness of man? “A body hast thou prepared me.” That body was present to the mind of God from eternity; not, of course, prepared, created before time began, but sorely known. When prepared, He who took that creature form as His body was God. And when Adam was made, he was created in the image and likeness of the form the Son was in due time to assume. It is this which gives point and meaning to the words, “after his likeness." Not merely in the image of God, that may look only to the position of Adam as the head of the lower creation, and the representative of God to it. Likeness suggests another thought. The image of the Queen is stamped upon the coin, it is not her likeness. “God is a Spirit;” there was no form till “God was manifest in flesh,” and there could have been no likeness till Jesus, THE MAN, appeared. The Son was to come upon the earth, and His form was to be man. That form must be endowed with all the qualities and prerogatives befitting Him as man. It was in view of the coming Man that we have the form of consultation when God made Adam. He, the Son, left the dwelling-place of His glory, and humbled Himself to assume the form of a creature, to be a man of flesh and blood. Hence the pattern after which man was created-” after his likeness.” Hence the care (apparently) in his formation-” Let us make.” Hence the various powers of man-his capacity for acquiring knowledge, his power of ranging in thought outside his own, existence and his own wants, an imagination that can soar beyond the sight of his eyes, and, having reached the uttermost limit of known creation, boldly leap the boundary, and travel through illimitable space. Hence all the wondrous faculties of his mind. Above all else, that of being able to apprehend the being of a God when revealed, and to whom he owes obedience, adding thus a moral faculty to his intellectual and physical. It is this moral faculty, with a sense of his responsibility to His Creator, which places an impassable gulf between him and every other creature of this earth. No other animal, however sagacious, is a moral and responsible creature. However close their approach to reason, even if other creatures can reason, none but man can have a conscience, and be morally accountable to God. True, it was sin that caused conscience; had there been no sin, there could have been no conscience. But the material was there, the necessary moral faculties of which it is formed. For conscience implies knowledge of God's will, and therefore the capacity of receiving it. It also implies the consciousness of having disobeyed, and of having done wrong in disobeying. These together make conscience. Therefore conscience is the effect of sin.

This at once stamps as being most absurd and disgusting the modern theory, dignified with the name of philosophy, that man is but the development (not yet perfect, perhaps) of some primeval immature creature. These, are soi-disant philosophers who will not even admit that man is an improved monkey, but refer backwards and find his origin in a jelly-fish, and attempt to trace from that source the various steps of development to man such as we see him now. What a

blasphemous libel upon Him who said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"! As before said Adam was made in the likeness of that body which was ever present to the eye of God, and which the Son took when He came. Nor does nature itself fail to exhibit the falseness and absurdity of this notion. For, even if the progressive development theory were true in a physical sense-that is, the higher order of animals the produce of the lower, in other words, the effect greater than the cause-how can they account for the change in the same line of descent from an irresponsible parent to a responsible offspring? There must have been a “fiat” from the Creator to produce this. Has the monkey-to take the stage immediately preceding that of mane moral perception of the being of a God? Of one to whom it owes obedience and is accountable for its actions? This faculty inherent in man, savage or civilized, when did this immense change occur? I do not say that man has now a true idea of God even as a Creator, although the visible things of creation are before his eyes, leaving him without excuse, but that man in his rudest condition has the instinctive perception of a Being above him, more or less controlling him, and noting his actions, though in every case a Being he fears, never loves. But in the process from monkey to man when was this faculty acquired, or given? Was it synchronous with the excision of his caudal appendage? To say that the faculty was developed is sheer nonsense, for development implies the previous existence of the germ of that which is developed. If the development theory be true there must have been a moral element in the constitution of the original jelly-fish! These philosophers object to the “fiats” of the Creator, because it disturbs their theory of progressive development, and what they are pleased to call the order of nature. They do not deny that God originally made the world, but they imagine it to be a clever machine endowed with perpetual motion and which can work out perfection for itself, and by itself, apart from the care and sustaining power of God. It is a direct denial of providence. They exclude God from His own creation, and will not allow Him to have anything to do with it save when and how they please. In effect they say, There is no God. The absurdity of this theory is only equaled by its horrible infidelity, and is repellant to every sober mind.

But wild and baseless as it is, it gives evidence of mental power, though it be most perverted, but it places man quite above the category of a mere animal. Could a monkey become an infidel, a fool and say, “No God “? That is, the theory is its own refutation. And the man who degraded himself by inventing it, only proves by it the height whence he fell. Man was made by God and endowed with faculties and capabilities such as we know him to possess. And this in view of the Man who was not only man but God manifest in flesh.

Scripture then leaves room for successive stages between creation and the appearance of man, but contains enough evidence, and more than enough to convict modern philosophers wandering, upon the dark mountains of Darwinism, or groping among the vestiges of creation, of grossest folly, and that in spite of knowledge. Even the reason of nature blushes at the degradation of such an origin, and rejects the proposed ancestral honors with scorn.

Some may call the intervening periods development, but not accurately. The evidence afforded by different strata seem to point not to a gradual passing away by almost imperceptible changes from one stage to another, as “development” suggests, but rather to violent disruption at different epochs, the upheaval of what was beneath. This could only be by the “fiat” of the Creator. In fact, in creation there is no such thing as infidelity called development. Upon this present earth there are orders and classes of animals each endowed with intelligence, but varied as to degree. We

call it instinct. It remains essentially the same now as when animals were first created. The process from tadpole to frog is cited as proof, or illustration of this theory. But tadpole and frog remain now the same as at the beginning. The frog never becomes an ox. The modern infidel's development is younger sister to the metempsychosis of a by-gone age. Both the offspring of a darkened mind. Perhaps its refuge from the just tribunal of an offended Judge, the dread of whose anger lay heavy upon the guilty conscience.

With man God's moral processes begin. There were none before the fall. Adam was placed as the center of the system on the earth, and lord of all. But he quickly fell from his exalted position. One act of sin, and immediately all was changed. Ruined, banished, sin and death at work in his nature, his condition on the earth and his relationship to his Creator became altogether different. Labor and sorrow are now his lot, and the fair body which God pronounced good, after a few years to be resolved into dust, out of which it was made.

But the fall permitted, not caused, became the occasion for the declaration of God's eternal purpose, or of that which must be the sure and only foundation upon which the accomplishment of His purpose is based. “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.” The bruising of the heel of the Seed is only the divine way by which the serpent's head must be crushed. And here we may exclaim, how wonderful and past finding out are the ways of God. Was there no other way of bruising the serpent's head than by bruising the Deliverer's heel? No; or the Blessed One would never have been bruised. Then how brightly shine His wisdom, power and love! With whom took He counsel, or who hath known the mind of the Lord? None knew His mind then, but He has now declared it, and in these earliest words we read His purpose. We can only adore in silent wonder. Man fallen must be displayed in all his depths of corruption, in all his subjection to the power of Satan, that the victory of the coming Man, the Son of God, might be complete and perfect in every way.

Chapter 42

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 2. The History of Faith

Soon the evidence appeared of the change in the nature of man; from being good, it has become bad-utterly bad. The sin of Adam shows itself in distrust and disobedience, in lust, in disbelief of His love and truth, in guilty distance and self-justification. Fallen nature showed itself in the jealousy and murderous hate of Cain. The fratricide is banished, and becomes a vagabond. Yet the heavier curse which rested on Cain and his family did not hinder the mental activity, or dull the inventive power, of his descendants. Some of the useful and of the fine arts were discovered by them. They would be called benefactors of their race by man, but they were the children of a murderer. God had cursed the serpent, had cursed the ground for Adam's sake, but did not pronounce a curse on him, nor on Eve. Sorrow was the lot of both man and woman. But now the first human blood is spilled, and the man, Cain, is cursed. “And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.” (Gen. 4:11.) It is as if the earth itself cursed the murderer, and, because it had drunk the blood of his brother, would never yield her strength to Cain when he tilled. To Adam it should bring forth thorns and thistles, but when Adam tilled, the earth did not withhold her strength, it was yielded though by the sweat of his face. But to Cain God says, “When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength.” However great his toil might be, no adequate return would the earth yield to him as the fruit and reward of his labor. “Cursed from the earth.” And this is the condition of the earth so soon after its creation-cursed through Adam's sin, cursing through Cain's! How quickly its best beauty faded away! A fitting arena now for Satan's power. The stain of human blood was on it, the blood of one whom God calls righteous (Heb. 9), slain by a brother's hand, and in bate of God. This is Satan's work, and he gloried in it. He is allowed for a time to enslave the human race by his corrupting power. A still more awful effect of it, and of the accelerating steps of man in the paths of violence and corruption, is given in very few words, but how pregnant in meaning the “sons of God” took wives of the daughters of men. In the Old Testament, “sons of God” is a name found also in Job 1, 2, and 38, and from these scriptures we learn that they were angels, and the name given to them as such; not because they were holy, but in reference to their nature as distinct from the lower creation, and perhaps indicative of their order among the creatures of God.

Job 38:7 is most conclusive as to this, for Jehovah asks, “Where wast thou.... when the sons of God shouted for joy?” This is not merely to Job as an individual, but implies, “Where was man when the foundations of the earth were laid?” Man was not made till the earth was completed and made ready for him. But the “sons of God” were present, and shouted for joy when “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Men may use the same words to denote things widely different. Not so in the word of God. There we find the strictest accuracy as to the use of words, and a divine certainty as to their meaning. So that, if through ignorance we fail to seize the meaning in one place, God, in His grace, has used the same word or words in other places where there cannot be any hesitancy as to the meaning. Whatever doubt might arise as to who the “sons of God” were in Genesis is removed by Job 38. For I utterly reject the thought that God speaks of

angels in Job, and of men in Genesis. Such an indefinite use of words would lower God's book to the level of man's writings. Interpretation like this, applied generally, would destroy the certainty of divine truth, tending to sap the foundation of faith, and to take away the assurance of salvation.

In the Old Testament “sons of God” invariably, I believe, refer to angels. In the New Testament the title is bestowed upon believers, and is expressive of honor rather than of relationship like “child.” For angels are never called children of God. “Child” and “son” do not express exactly the same thought. God never uses two words to denote precisely the same thing, any more than to denote two different things by the same word. “Child” tells of family ties, intimacy of communion, freedom of access to the Father. “As many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God.” (John 1:12.) “Son” tells of the honor He puts upon His children, and of the rank the believer holds in the universe of God. It is in contrast with “servant,” with non-age, and being under tutors, and is so used in Gal. 3:25. “But faith having come, we are no longer under a tutor; for ye are all God's sons [sons here, not children] by faith in Christ Jesus.” Every child of God is a son, but every son is not a child. Angels are sons, not children. One of the brightest of Old Testament saints is called a “friend of God;” with another God spoke face to face; and though they and others were doubtless born of God, I do not know that they were ever called children. But we are certain they never were called sons; for we are sons by faith in Christ Jesus. No saint could be called a son of God before Christ came. Faith in Him is the necessary qualification for man now to receive that title. If angels have that title, they are at the same time ministering servants to the heirs of salvation, and must give place to those whom they serve, for unto the angels He hath not put in subjection the world to come. But we shall reign with Christ. But we are sons of God in a higher and more blessed way than, they, or than Adam when created. They are such by creation, and we by redemption and faith in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus as man was THE Sox of God, and not only in reference to His Godhead. (Luke 1:35.) Grace gives the name of sons to those who believe in His name. He was the first man that had that name. It was His preeminently, in a way in which no creature could have it. Still, He must first be manifested as such before it could be even subordinately given to the believer. In all things, as Man, He must have the pre-eminence.

To return to Genesis. There were giants born in those days, a progeny half-human, half-angelic; hence the name “giants.” What is the effect before God? He saw the wickedness was very great, and destroyed them. Such a mongrel race caused the deluge. The earth must be cleared, or there can be no redemption. Adam's race are the objects of God's salvation, but it must be free from all demoniacal taint. Man, with the system of which he is the first link of all that which through him became subject to vanity (Rom. 8), is alone the object of the deliverance resulting from the bruising of the serpent's head, and of the Deliverer's heel. Hence the deluge, hence a new beginning of the human family with Noah. The fallen angels who caused the sin are not roving the earth, but kept in everlasting chains of darkness unto the great day of judgment. (Jude 6.) “For verily he took not up the angels.” (Heb. 2:16.) Redemption is for man. Noah found grace in His sight, and so was preserved from the universal corruption. Jehovah said to him, “Come thou and all thy house into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me in all this generation.” (Gen. 7:1.) “Thee!"-only one man! Not even his sons are called righteous, but they were preserved with him-doubtless kept from the corruption by his authority; but God's commendation is to Noah alone. The righteousness of the bead brings blessing to the whole family: an important principle, which marks God's government even now. But what a proof we have here of the complete subjugation of

man through sin to the power of Satan-only one righteous man in a whole world! And what a proof, too, of God's grace and of His determinate counsel to perform the great work of His salvation, spite of sin and the opposition of the devil. One man is kept, so that the promised Seed might come to destroy the works of the devil, and exalt God as a Savior-God. On the other hand, had the corrupt antediluvian race continued, how could a free salvation be offered to all? How could it be “unto all,” if some were found on the earth contaminated with “strange flesh” For all such are outside the pale of redemption. Had there been no deluge, could there have been God's righteousness to all? The coming of the promised Seed to be exalted in the midst of a loving and intelligent creation-the eternal purpose of God-necessitated the destruction of the old world. Therefore the deluge is not merely an instance of God's judgment, but a necessity for the display of God's glory in Christ, and also a merciful interposition for man, that the platform whereon God would show Himself in boundless grace as the Savior-God might be purged from all that could stand in the way.

A new era began with Noah. Man had been hitherto without a divinely authorized government. Unrestrained violence and corruption led to the deluge. But God did not then put the sword into the hand of man. Cain feared that man would take vengeance upon him. God threatened sevenfold vengeance upon the man who dared to unsheath the sword of justice without His authority. If ever crime called for immediate punishment, it was this most cruel murder of a brother. Abel's blood cried to God for vengeance. Why was Cain screened from human justice? Because it was a part, and the preliminary part, of God's processes with man, that the evil of his nature should be developed en masse, and also the immense power that Satan had acquired over him. This was the first trial of the world, when without government, as well as without law. It proved the necessity of government, and that with the sword, if man is to be kept in decent order. Accordingly the sword is put into Noah's hand, with all its duties and responsibilities. In the present day man-such his opposition to God, even as to the first principles of moral order-would take the sword away from the hand of justice; be would abrogate the first law of God for restraining evil. But God's word stands yet with all its obligatory force, “Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”

Man fails with government as well as without it—not the governed only, but the governor. Noah, that is, man, is made manifest as utterly incapable of wielding the sword in righteousness before God; for he who governs must first know how to rule himself. But Noah got drunk. And so another point is brought out; man must have a ruler, and it is seen that he cannot be his own master. To demonstrate this is part of God's purpose, to show the absolute necessity for the advent of the Man of His right hand to rule the earth. For “man, being in honor, abideth not.” But when God's Man comes, “with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked; and righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.” (Isa. 11:4, 5.)

The descendants of Noah soon gave proof that the power of Satan, though not allowed to break out in the same evil as before the flood, was not annulled. Their first effort recorded is evidently Satan's suggestion. They wanted to have a name in the earth, and a rallying-point. So they began to build the tower of Babel. “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” (Gen. 11:4.) Why did they fear being scattered? Did they fear the curse spoken by

Noah upon Canaan, and foresee scattering and enmity in the servitude of that branch of the family? If so, how soon they set themselves in opposition to God's word As yet the whole earth was of one language, and to this they would add another bond. A city, and a tower whose top should reach unto heaven, should be their central point, and the place of re-union, if any difference arose between them. It was Satan's work, his attempt to render null the purpose of God who will head up all things in Christ. It was his aim to center all things in himself. But Christ is to be the center to whom all men shall turn, not the city and tower of Babel, but the city of Jerusalem and Zion where He is. This ere long will be the rallying-point for all nations, one given by God, and the name and the praise of JESUS shall resound through the earth. “Let us make us a name,” they said. There is no name worthy but His among men. His is the only enduring name. Other names may glitter for a day, but are soon forgotten and lost in the dark grave, or at best but a shadowy remembrance. If man had made a name, it would have been opposed to the name of Jesus. God frustrates their intention by confounding their language. At the right time He will give Jesus to be the rallying point, and the center of union for the world. No fear of being scattered then. “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me"-in grace now, in power then.

Jehovah came down to see what man was doing, and His judgment of their capabilities is surprising. “Behold the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do.” (Gen. 11:6.) This is remarkable testimony as to what united man can do. Though fallen, and some faculties impaired by sin, yet, if let alone, nothing will be restrained from them. One purpose even now, spite of dissensions, binds men together, and gives them generally a common front against all opposition if led by one master mind, and one aim presented: union makes strong. God bears testimony to what the great power would be if all were knit together by the tie of one language-” nothing would be restrained from them.” Why prevent this? Why does God say, “Let us go down, and there confound their language"? Because sin was there, and the increase of power would be the increase of sin; but chiefly, I apprehend, because the purpose of God, as seen later in Israel, separating them from all others (who, divided into nations and languages, exhibited the various and divergent ways in which fallen nature wandered from the knowledge of the true God), necessitated, according to His wisdom, the division of man into diverse nations, and through sin hostile to each other.

It was mercy to confound their language. God would still, by His restraining power, keep the surge of evil in check. In nothing restrained, what would man be? What has he shown himself, spite of many restraints? The time is coming when, for a brief moment, all restraint will be removed, and man, led by Satan, will be manifested in his utmost power of evil. But if there was mercy in restraining evil, there was also lodgment in confounding their language. Their thought and deed was rebellion against God. Both mercy and judgment are seen in the confusion of tongues. “Lest we be scattered,” they said. What they feared comes upon them-they are scattered. Henceforward divisions, hatred, and war mark the history of man. Yet there is in man a yearning for unity. The great conquerors of history have sought to unite nations under their own sway. The religious world in our own time aims at it. Such a union could only be by the delusion and power of Satan. It is the dream of modern infidelity; not that there is any thought of Satan's power—it is ignored. One of the leading spirits of the day (V. Hugo) speaks grandiloquently of the coming century, when national barriers will be thrown down, and mankind, as one family, live together in peace; when

government and priestcraft shall be driven from the earth, and there will be an universal republic of happy men Alas, in this forecast of man's future an important element is left out, namely, SIN. God, the Judge of sin, is unknown. Those who talk so hopefully of the future are willingly ignorant that man has been already, in that condition, when without the restraining power of the sword each one did that which was right in his own eyes, followed his own will. The result was universal violence and corruption, and the deluge.

The time is coming when there will be almost, if not quite, such a combination of men; not indeed a happy republic, but men under the fearful power and tyranny of Satan. The dragon will give great authority and power to the beast, bringing down the vials of God's wrath; tribulation and anguish, wars and rumors of wars. What a waking up for the world from its present dream of future peace! Then will be the rising up of all nations of the earth, of all save the elect, against the authority and rights of the Man of God's right hand, the Seed of the woman. “These shall make war with the Lamb.” Then nothing will be restrained from them; they will reach the climax of wickedness. But at this first attempt-the building of Babel-the earth was not ripe for that development of evil. God prepares the way first for the accomplishment of His purpose. After that He will permit for a brief hour the union of the west under Satan's rule.

Now at this second intervention of God in judgment they are dispersed abroad, and though violence and corruption may be somewhat kept in check by the sword, yet idolatry-a new form of evil-is added to the black catalog of their sins. It is a religious sin, if such an epithet may be used. It is the power of evil working upon the religious element of fallen nature. For man must have a religion of some sort. Whatever atheists may say, this is a necessity of his psychological nature. It may be asked why there is no record of idolatry before the flood. Because the instincts of mere human nature, fallen and strong in sin, and as ready for idolatry then as now, were over-weighted by the presence of a nature and a will stronger than their own. The religious element was not then (apparently) worked upon by Satan. Violence and corruption, not idolatry, filled the whole earth.

Then all were so much under demoniacal power-such as has never been known since—that Satan had no need to drag men, into the debasing systems of idolatry and world's religion. Now it is his most successful means of ruining souls. Man's religion is nothing but the embodiment of his own evil thoughts and imagination; and the reflex image of his gods, whether mental or material, falls upon his soul with a deeper darker dye. This faculty with which God endowed man, that he might be able to worship Him, became through sin and corruption the means of his greatest debasement. Man became a worshipper of idols, and so thoroughly ruined through this very faculty that now nothing less than the sovereign power of God in grace can bring him back to be a worshipper of God. His religion made him worse morally. The more religions, the more immoral. Before the flood Satan's power was seen in the universal corruption; after, in idolatry, Not that corruption ceased, but idolatry was added, and perhaps the more dominant.

The first moral lesson as to idols was given in Egypt. It was there that God first nationally judged idolatry. No system more debasing than theirs. The Egyptians were the first nation that rose to prominence, and there was the platform whereon God demonstrated His power against idolatry. Apart from His purpose of delivering Israel from Egyptian slavery, He would execute judgment upon all the gods of Egypt. (Ex. 12:2.) The first miracle was a striking proof. It was not so much a judgment upon the people as upon their gods. God revealed Himself by His servants Moses and

Aaron as supreme. It was a word of warning, a call to forsake their evil worship and to acknowledge the true God. Else: His power, against which, their gods were nothing, would be exercised against them. But they had no heart to understand the mighty power of Him against whom they dared to rebel, and impiously challenged Jehovah to do His utmost. “Who is Jehovah?” said the haughty king. Pharaoh learned who He was, in the overflowing waters of the Red Sea. Then it was too late for him. But it was a solemn lesson for Israel,

The serpent was an object of greatest adoration among the Egyptians. God began with the serpent as the representative of their whole system. By His power when Moses cast down His rod in presence of the king and the magi, it became a serpent. The magicians accustomed to the power of Satan were not affrighted, and essayed the same with their rods. God permits that their rods should likewise become serpents. But the rods of the magicians becoming serpents proves the direct agency of Satan, who had a brief moment to show his power and to strengthen man in opposition to God. He put his power in direct antagonism to God. He dared to dispute with Jehovah the place of being the object of worship, and imitates the miracle which was to prove the sovereignty of God. Before the eyes of Pharaoh the powers of darkness came into collision with the true God, and in a manner perfectly intelligible to Pharaoh. It was well; it gave irrefragable evidence, and left him without excuse. There was but one rod on the side of God, there were many on Satan's aide. “But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.” How conclusive this should have been to Pharaoh that the serpent which he worshipped was no god! There was demon power under its form. “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils.” (1 Cor. 10:20.) Man has stupidly bowed down to a creature lower than himself, and Satan clothes himself with that appearance. He did it in the garden of Eden to tempt, in Egypt to receive the homage of man. He succeeded in both. If the Egyptians could only have learned the lesson the forbearance of God was teaching! They worshipped the serpent-what was become of their god? Swallowed up. Only Aaron's rod left. Aaron put forth his hand to take his rod, the magicians had none to take. All this took place that the Egyptians might know that “I am Jehovah.” There was no form of idolatry, so widely spread, as that of the serpent. Can there be a more complete condemnation of the whole system than here in its representative? This first miracle stands by itself in this, that it was not a plague, it was simply Jehovah executing judgment upon the gods of Egypt. The last miracle, the destruction of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea, was not so much judgment upon the false gods as upon their worshippers. The other miracles partake of both characters, that is, both judgment upon the gods of Egypt and a plague upon the Egyptians. A plague because the truth taught by the first miracle was not received, nor the command obeyed of Him whose supremacy had been so clearly proved. Israel was still retained in bondage. Yet, by Pharaoh's obstinacy, God was accomplishing His purpose of judgment against all the gods of Egypt. And to make His judgment more manifest, and man's persistency in opposition to the true God, the magicians were allowed to imitate the earlier miracles, until, no longer permitted to imitate, Satan's power stopped, the magicians exclaiming, “This is the finger of God.” It is Satan compelled to own God's supremacy; as afterward demons could not but own the Godhead of the Lord Jesus, forced to say, “The holy One of God.”

All their gods became a source of shame and misery.

Thus in the very first plague, we see the river become blood. They worshipped the Nile. The magicians did the same with their enchantments, so that if by them other water than the river

became blood, they were but extending and intensifying the judgment of God. The river brings forth frogs; their god tormented them. At the fourth miracle the magicians attempted the same, but could not. At the fifth, God expressly severs His people from the Egyptians. This seems to imply that Israel suffered in common with them from the previous plagues. And if so, justly; for Joshua in later times tells them they had served the gods of Egypt. And they must learn experimentally the sin and folly of idolatry. But now having taught His people that the gods of Egypt were no gods, God puts a difference between them and their oppressors. They are not tormented with flies; they have light in their dwellings; their cattle died not; there was no hail in the land of Goshen. In the death of the first-born we see retributive judgment upon the Egyptians, whose king had sought to destroy all the male children of Israel by commanding them to be cast into the river. The measure they had meted is now re-meted to themselves. The angel of death passed through the land, and the cry from every house of Egypt told how the God of Israel took vengeance upon them and their cruel king.

An important moral lesson was also taught Israel-and us-besides being a judgment upon the Egyptians. God must judge sin, though in grace He provides a way of escape. But being grace it could not be confined to Israel. And so the means are appointed by which he who, believing, acted on it could keep the destroying angel from entering his dwelling. Judgment had just before put a difference between Israel and Egypt, but grace-God's delight-is unlimited.

Thus early did God foreshadow the way in which alone He can pass over sin. Whatever the love of God for poor lost sinners, the claims of righteousness must first be met. And the primary question for grace is how to keep the Judge outside. The yearnings of mercy can have no place till the righteous demands of a sin-avenging God are satisfactorily paid. There cannot be a passing over of sin without an atonement made by blood. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” And God's mercy does not set aside the irreversible sentence. Mercy in order to have its way must provide blood to meet the claims of justice, and to turn aside the sword from the guilty. God, the righteous Judge, turns His sword away from the guilty and repentant sinner, and bids it “Awake, against the man that is my fellow.” Himself provides a victim upon whom the whole cup of judgment was poured. And the believer is saved from the wrath to come. Here, in type, a lamb is killed, and the blood put upon the door post. Faith puts it there, and God answers to the faith. “When I see the blood I will pass over.” That is, God the Judge is kept outside, the sprinkled blood hinders His entering the house. This is the first need of the soul—to be sheltered from judgment. Not the feeding upon the roast lamb preserved alive the firstborn, but the blood sprinkled outside upon the doorpost ready to meet the eye of the avenger of God's righteousness. So, whatever our joy in feeding upon Christ, it does not secure us from judgment. Nothing but the blood as presented to God, making atonement, does that. God does not say, When I see you eating the lamb, but “when I see the blood I will pass over.” Israel feasted in peace and security because the blood was outside to meet the eye of God. Not the work of the Spirit in us makes us accepted. The Spirit's power working in us, producing fruit unto holiness, makes us acceptable, or well pleasing to God (we being believers), and so like Enoch of old God gives us the testimony that we please Him, for the Spirit leads us to walk with God: It is wondrous testimony to the grace of God, and to His power in us. But we are accepted in Christ before any fruit is produced pleasing to Him-accepted first, by the sprinkled blood, then made acceptable by the Spirit given to and working in us.

Chapter 43

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 3. The History of Faith

When the power of imitation was denied to Satan, the sovereignty of mercy was declared toward Israel. This alone made the difference between Israel and Egypt: no merit or worth in Israel; only grace, and the purposes of grace. “I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy.” (Rom. 9.15.) Where all are sinners, the sovereignty of mercy chooses its objects. Unless grace be sovereign, none could escape condemnation. God works in saving power from motives found only in Himself. “So it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” This difference of mercy was seen in that night when from every house of Egypt the wail of death was heard, the Israelites were kept in peace. “But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that Jehovah doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.” (Ex. 11:7.) Again, how manifestly the difference is seen in the last miracle! Israel passed through the Red Sea with Jehovah as their rearguard. The cloud of His presence came between them and their enemies. The cloud was darkness to Egypt, light to Israel. For Israel the power of the Creator-God held up the waters as a wall on each side, and the Canaan shore of the Red Sea was reached under His guidance and protection. To Egyptians the Red Sea was death. It was another solemn night of judgment to be remembered. The king and his army attempted to go through the waters of death, armed against Jehovah. After repeated proofs of His power, and of the impotency of their idols, they dared the mighty God to the conflict. Israel, weak and terrified, might be an easy prey; but God who had called them was there, and He looked through the pillar of fire and of cloud, He troubled the Egyptian host, He took off their chariot-wheels, and the vaunted king and his army, affrighted, were again compelled to own the power of the God of Israel. “Let us flee from the face of Israel, for Jehovah fighteth for them against the Egyptians.” Too late. No sooner is the last Israelite safe on the shore than God withdraws His restraining hand, and the seething waters engulf the Egyptian host. The morning saw their dead bodies on the sea-shore. The glory and the power of the defiant king was destroyed. His gods could not save him. The demons that stood behind their idols, and received homage through them, are vanquished by the judgment of Jehovah. “He hath triumphed gloriously.”

Such were the first tremendous and solemn lessons of God against idolatry. Ought it not to have been sufficient to have banished idolatry from the earth forever? Alas for man no. The very people who had beheld this stupendous intervention of God on their behalf, and His judgment upon the false gods of Egypt and their worshippers, did themselves become the insane votaries of Baal, when another display of Jehovah's supremacy was made. Those who had seen Him executing judgment upon the idols of Egypt provoked Him to jealousy. Though the scene with Elijah and the prophets of Baal be on a smaller scale morally, it is equally grand and magnificent. In a moment the prayer of Jehovah's prophet is answered, and God's fire descends, and offering, wood, stones, water, all are consumed, and the guilty, idolatrous people are constrained to shout, “Jehovah, he is God.” True, the active abettors and agents of Baal's worship were slain; but how largely mercy is

here mingled with judgment! At the Red Sea it was judgment for the Egyptians without mercy. God's forbearance had been despised till there was no remedy.

If the chosen people fell into the snare of idolatry, the Gentile nations were also enslaved by it. The form and the visible object of man's worship might vary according to the different condition, physical and intellectual, of the nations, and also influenced by climate and country. But the same demons were there behind; sometimes they hid themselves beneath the form of beasts, or, meeting the evil imagination of man, were shrouded in mental imagery, with which they of old were wont to people Elysium; though, even then, there must be a tangible symbol, for man must see something. The wisdom and cunning of the old serpent did not limit itself to the presenting of images made of gold and silver-this might suffice for the “profanum vulgus,” but for the cultivated and the intellectual, he provided the impersonation of an idea (always evil), and thus, if possible, was relatively nearer the wise and the great than to the vulgar crowd, who only saw the image. In times later than Egyptian, Satan served himself with the religious element of man's nature, by drawing upon his imagination, and the tradition of the giants who lived before the flood, amplified and exaggerated by the devilish and sensual fecundity of the human mind, furnished the material for another kind of idolatry than the stupid worship of the reptiles and river of Egypt. There indeed we see degradation, not surpassed perhaps anywhere; but corruption was as prevalent in the most esthetical systems found in Greece and Rome. Indeed the invariable accompaniments of idolatry are degradation and corruption. When the image alone is seen, the very grossness of the homage paid somewhat hides from view the reality behind it; but when the mental vision is not limited to the figure of gold or silver before the eye, and it rests upon an image of the mind-the intensified reflection of himself, the idolater is so much the more in the presence of Satan, and therefore more under his power. So that in the idolatry of the world we have the seeming paradox of a sham and a delusion, and yet the reality of Satanic power. To worship idols is a terrible delusion, but it is kept up by the power of the devil, and therefore an awful reality.

How subtle this power is! Idolatry is the universal sin of the world. No nation is free; no place where Satan, as the god of this world, has not, in some form or other, made himself the object of man's homage; more covertly than openly in most places. But whether the idol be religious forms, or the power, riches, pleasures of the world, or a material image, the effect is the same. Corruption in its varied forms, religious, intellectual, or in a still lower sense, keeps pace with the world's idolatry. And in equally varied forms appear its inseparable accompaniments—degradation and violence.

Such the condition of man. He feels the necessity of having a god, but is so ignorant of the true God, that he makes one for himself. The carpenter, with rule and compass, fashions his god “after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man.” So it is the image of himself that he worships. Having chosen his tree, “he burneth part thereof in the fire, with part thereof he eateth flesh, he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god.” (Isa. 44:12-17.)

What a picture of idolatrous folly! Well it deserved the cutting sarcasm of Elijah, “Cry aloud, for he is a god.” How complete the subjugation of the human mind to the power of Satan! Even if here

and there a stronger intellect sees and despises such folly, it is only to become an infidel and deny God altogether. Yet is he an idolater, for, though he does not fall down before a graven image, he does to his own intellect, and is equally the slave of sin. For the cultivated infidel of old time was morally on a level with the superstitious crowd. All fell below the level of the brute in the vileness of their nature. They were given up to vile affections. (Rom. 1)

This was the heathen world. Though paganism be banished from many countries-now called Christendom-yet is idolatry as rampant as when Jupiter was worshipped as father of gods and men, and now infinitely more offensive to God, for it is linked with the name of Christ. Is the worship of the virgin, the elevation of the “host,” the homage paid to saints so called, the reverence for relics, less idolatry than. that of pagan Rome? Is the superstition with which the ignorant visit shrines and believe in apparitions less gross than when heathens visited the shrines and consulted the oracles of old? Is the power and delusion of Satan less real at places visited by crowds of deluded people, than when pagans sought for wisdom at Delphi and other like places Are there not sufficient points of resemblance to prove both the ancient and the modern shrine to be the result of Satanic delusion? Is it not a thousandfold a greater sin and delusion now than before? For now the true Light shines, and men willfully shut their eyes. The pagan oracles were silenced when Christ came, but Satan is reviving them in the lying wonders of the present day. Some may deny them, and attribute all to the cunning of priestcraft. But even so they are believed in by the mass, and the effect upon them is morally the same.

It may be that there is some truth in the reported cures of bodily diseases at these shrines, just as there were undoubtedly some remarkable things said and done at the pagan oracle. But what does this prove? That Satanic power is as real now as then, only infinitely worse now, for the devilish cunning of the old serpent has linked it with the name of Christ. Granted that there may have been cures of physical ailment, they are de facto miracles of lies, and are preparatory to the greater delusion near to come. The complete manifestation of Satan's power is not yet seen. It is coming. A living man will set himself up, and give out that he is God, will set aside all other idolatry, and attract the world's worship to himself, and will put himself in direct antagonism to the Lord, the Christ of God. This will be the climax of the world's iniquity. Then nothing will be restrained; man will then have reached the point aimed at when he began to build the tower of Babel. The cup is full, man is ripe for judgment. It falls, and He whose right it is takes the kingdom. God's enemy has been allowed to do his utmost, that the power and supremacy of the Lord Christ might be made known to all. The extreme limit of sin and rebellion is attained, that sovereign grace in the person of Christ might be seen in crushing the serpent's head, and delivering the human race from worse than Egyptian bondage and degradation. The Lord Jesus will accomplish it, and God in Christ be proclaimed the Savior-God.

While the Gentile world was sinking deeper and deeper in sin, without hope and without God, given over to a reprobate mind, God, in the midst of a chosen people, was preparing the way for the accomplishment of His own counsel. Long before judgment was executed upon the idols of Egypt, and preliminary to it, He began to form a depositary for the truth of His, unity, which was then lost to the world. Abram was called out from idolatry, and separated from all the families of the earth. He and Isaac and Jacob were called to be pilgrims and wanderers, that their descendants, thus brought up in entire separation from the Gentile, and forbidden to mingle with the nations, might be the conservers of the truth that there is but one God, and His name one. This

truth was lost; but man was inexcusable, and the word (Rom. 1) declares it. For the invisible things of God are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both His eternal power and divinity, so as to render man inexcusable; and according as he did not think good to have God in his knowledge, God gave him up to a reprobate mind. Man willfully shut his eyes to the truth, and in righteous judgment he was blinded; and not only blinded to the truth of one God, but even to the common light, of nature, and became filled with all unrighteousness. He could not be reinstated in his original position, for the gate of Eden was closed, and flaming cherubim barred the way. So we see God begins a new thing, marking out a new way, for the saint. Faith, with a character not seen before, that is, separation from the world, having the promise of all things, the possession of nothing is the first aspect presented in this new way; and by such means the flood of idolatry was to be stemmed. The call of Abram is the first direct step to accomplish this. The previous dealings of God were but introductory. Not only must the knowledge of the one true God be brought back to man, but also the means of relationship between God and man must be made known, and now on a new footing. All the past history made plain, that by failure in righteousness man could not be accepted of God by his works. That link which was given to Adam in Eden was irretrievably broken. Henceforth the link of life between God and man was to be faith.

Before Abram there had been saints-Abel, Enoch, and Noah, who lived by faith. But Abram is called to a peculiar place. The former saints were not separated from their connections, were not manifest pilgrims as Abram was. Even the saints in Israel, when God as Jehovah was acting among them, were not called to such a peculiar place as was Abram. For them the earth was a place of blessing in the possession of it. The promises made to Abraham look chiefly to the earth, and will be fulfilled when Israel regain their land. His faith, in his wanderings and trials, is mainly, if not altogether, characteristic of the saints in the Spirit. He was a wanderer; his tent and his altar went with him. So with the saints now. The tent, that which we need as living in this world; the altar, indicating communion with God, and worship. Not a foot of ground did Abram possess. He had to buy a burial-place for his wife; and this with the consciousness that the land wherein he was a stranger was all his own by right of the gift of God. This is the kind of faith which was new, and it was in the exercise of such faith as this that the knowledge of God, then so utterly lost, was brought again to man. How deep the fall, when God has to begin with the fundamental truth of His own Godhead; but what a blessed way in bringing back the knowledge of God!

So Abraham's faith, in respect of the promises as its object, is the pattern for the faithful Israelite; as a pilgrim, possessing nothing here below, it is the pattern for the saints of the church now. Thus he is called the father of the faithful, whether of the former dispensation or of the present time. He believed God and therefore confided in the promises of God. But he, apart from promise, believed in God-" I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." This founds but goes beyond promises of the earth. It is God giving Himself as the object of faith, not taking away the promise, but Himself as the resting-place for faith. God bound Himself to Abram by promise, Abram was linked to God by faith.

What a wonderful means, and blessed, is faith! what power God has connected with it! Nothing in itself but the expression of weakness and dependence, but joined indissolubly to the word of God, how great its power! "Have faith in God," it removes mountains. The Lord Jesus said, "All things are possible to faith." In 1 Cor. 13 it is one of the three cardinal and ever-abiding characteristics of

saints; and if we would know its power, its victories over every foe, its endurance in every trial, see God's list of heroes in Heb. 11. One leaves his father's house and his kindred, content to be a stranger and a pilgrim at the call of God. By another the treasures of Egypt are not esteemed, the reproach of Christ being to him greater riches. It makes a poor sinful woman stand alone for the truth of God's judgment against a whole city. In a word, enemies are overcome, torture is endured, world's pleasures despised. What an estimate God puts upon those who have such faith-" Of whom the world is not worthy." This faith is God's gift, and we can say-not that we could tell it beforehand-that nothing but the principle of faith could bring man, fallen as he is, into living and loving relationship with God. The cross, while meeting all the claims of God in righteousness and holiness against sin, affords the only true and solid basis for faith; for by it God is supremely glorified, and righteous in justifying the ungodly. Through it the believer receives power over the world. As John says, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5.)

Faith not only separates from the world, but connects the believer with glory. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:1, 2.) It entails, may be, a life of privation down here, but it ensures the inheritance above. It leads into continuous conflict with Satan, the world, and the flesh, but it has the crown of victory assured. The conflict here below causes tribulation; not that tribulation which results from failure and unfaithfulness, when grace chastens us for our faults, and we humble ourselves tinder the rod. But the tribulation which faith brings is the first link of the chain which connects us with the glory of God. Nor are there many links, the chain is not long. Tribulation worketh patience, patience worketh experience, and experience, hope. It is remarkable that the word here does not tell us what hope works, but what it does not work, "it maketh not ashamed;" its influence so permeates the life of faith, that all is included in it, for it is the hope of the glory of God. Are we in tribulation through faithfulness to God and His truth? Then have we got hold of the first link of that chain of which the last is riveted to glory, the glory of God. Therefore we rejoice in tribulation, for it connects us with the glory of God. Thus the believer can look upon every foe as a conquered foe, and can clothe himself with victory as with a garment ready-made. Only he must put it on. Faith in Him "who fought the fight alone" wins every battle. Yea, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Faith teaches even now the victor's song.

And Jesus is not only the Object of faith, He is the Pattern. The Spirit of God has placed before our eyes the worthy deeds of those who stood in the fore-front of the battle-field of faith in old time for our emulation—a great crowd of witnesses to the power of faith. But for us there is but one way of following in the path where they were found, and it is by looking off from them to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. He is the Author, for if there were no cross, there could be no faith. For faith must have a foundation. The foundation is truly the word of God, but that word is the truth of the cross. Through Him that was nailed to it we receive faith; it is for His sake alone that the Spirit creates faith in our hearts, and sustains it all through our pilgrimage, until our journey ends in being with Him, and then we have Him too as the reward of faith. When we see Him; faith ceases. So He is the Finisher of faith. Loving faith has its own termini in the cross and the coming of the Lord. We only love Him in presence of that wondrous expression of His love which was first in exercise," We love him because he first loved us;" and then begins the faith that works by love.

When we see Him at His coming there is no more room for faith, “for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom. 8) But it is Jesus Himself that we see, both in the cross and at the coming. He is the Author and Finisher. He is also the Pattern for faith; His whole life here below as man is one perfect teaching of faith. What absolute submission to the will of God! What complete abnegation of His own! He alone had a holy will-He alone had a right to have a will. He was always in accord with His Father-” I do always the things that please him.” (.John 8:29.) But He would give us a divine example. Even in His agony He said “Not my will, but thine be done.” (Luke 22:42.) Therefore we look away from all others, however bright they may be. In Him we have the perfect Pattern, and nowhere else. Every other failed in one point, if not more. So we have the Lord Jesus, the Author and Finisher, the Pattern and the reward of faith. Jesus, the only absolutely faithful Man, has His reward in that God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name, and to whom all creation is to bow the knee. Grace give to us that we shall be with Him in His glory, and shall behold Him in it.

If this fuller power and glory of faith only came out later, the principle was seen in Abram, as the way in which God could reveal Himself anew to man. With Abram, called out from much that he held dear in this world, we have the intimacies of God, and the details of faith, which are not given in the brief notices of. Abel, Enoch, and Noah. In these three we have the three essentials of true faith given in a word. Abel submitted to God's righteousness, the first step in the path of faith. He bowed to the judgment of God, by his act he confessed his own life forfeited, and brings a lamb as a substitute; “he obtained witness that he was righteous;” and God accepts his offering as of faith. In Enoch it is the walk of faith: he “walked with God.” This is communion. And so Enoch has the best testimony, for God saw that Enoch pleased Him. This is more than being called righteous. The Spirit, in Heb. 11, does not say that Noah had a testimony from God, but he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Gen. 6 tells us that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, that he was a just man and perfect in his generations, and walked with God. But Enoch alone had the testimony that be pleased God. To have such testimony from God is astonishing, yet how precious! There was but one other Man that had direct testimony from God that He pleased Him. Ah, but that other Man was God, and the voice from heaven did not only say Jesus pleased God, but, “in whom I am well pleased"-pleased to the utmost. In this, as in all else, Jesus must have the preeminence. All saints when in glory will have the consciousness of God's delight in them, but Enoch had this testimony before his translation, while yet a man here below.

So then in Abel, Enoch, and Noah there are what characterize three distinct epochs of the ways of God with man. Abel offered blood, and, doing it in faith, God said he was righteous. This characterized the saints under the law, who by faith offered up the sacrifices prescribed in the Mosaic ritual. Enoch, having the testimony of his acceptableness, and being translated, tells of the higher place and better hope of saints now. To have the witness of the Spirit that we are children of God, to have the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, Abba, Father, and to wait for the Son from heaven, was not, nor was possible to be, the condition of saints before Christ came, nor can it be after His coming. There can be no waiting for the Son in the future dispensation, for the coming of the Son is expressive of one act, which cannot be repeated. These privileges are conferred upon the church by His grace. God is pleased with the church as being the special result of His work of grace. It is the pearl of great price, for which the merchantman sold all he had to secure it. Nothing more expresses God's pleasure-I do not say in each individual member, for alas failure in walk

marks us, but in the church as a whole. Noah, heir of the righteousness which is by faith, marks the position of millennial saints; for he entered upon a new earth, purged by the deluge from the corruption of the antediluvian race: type of those who are brought through the judgment when the Son of man appears in the clouds of heaven, of Israel; who will enter into the inheritance of their land, given of God, when the waters of rebellion shall have gone off the face of the earth. To Noah, when he came out of the ark, the earth was as an inheritance. God establishes him as the ruler of all, and makes a new grant of it to him, in terms more extended than to Adam; and because sin had caused that even the beast might shed man's blood, the word is given, “at the hand of every beast will I require it.” So, not only of man, but of beast, God would have satisfaction. Why? Because blood was become a precious thing, and that in view of the precious blood of Christ, infinite in its preciousness and worth. Blood was to make atonement, therefore blood is a sacred tiling; it was not to be eaten with the flesh, but, as it were, poured out before God.” (Gen. 6:20-7:7.)

Noah was the first man to whom authority over his fellows was given. The sword was put by God into his hand. Men now deride the “divine right” of kings. But the right and authority to govern is the gift of God, and does not depend upon the use made of it. What use did Pilate make of his power, when he condemned the Lord Jesus to be crucified, saying, while condemning, that He was a man in whom he found no fault? Yet did the Lord say that Pilate's power was given from above. (John 19:11.) Men deceive themselves in saying the source of authority is with them. It never was-it never will be. “Vox populi” may be trumpeted forth as sovereign. It is Satan's means to deny the prerogative of God, and vain foolish man falls easily into the snare. “Vox Dei,” they say, is but the cunning of priestcraft. When God ceases to appoint rulers, Satan will. He will give his power to the beast. Democracy in essence is from beneath; it is Satan's opposition to the appointment of God. Its most strenuous advocates are found in the ranks of infidelity.

Moreover, in these three saints who lived before the flood, in the way in which the Spirit of God speaks of their faith, we see that which marks the individual saint of the church now. For in Abel's there is reconciliation; in Enoch, communion; and in Noah, righteousness-that is, practical righteousness-and given in the right order. A sinner must be reconciled to God before he can have communion, and there can be no acceptable righteousness which has not communion with God as its spring. The very order of the things which God tells of is full of instruction.

In Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob we have the detail of life, where are given, not only the victories of faith, but also the failures of the believer. God teaches us as much by their failures as by their victories. The importance and value of faith are seen in each as that which alone keeps us in the right way, and makes us acceptable. Absolutely, it is only grace, which flows in such deep streams through the cross, which puts us in this position; morally, it is, and must be, by faith, and a faith which must be operative in all the circumstances of life. So when God separated a family for Himself, He gave daily lessons in the power and endurance of faith. Besides this, there are doubtless typical teachings in the different circumstances and events of their lives. Yet we may say that one object (not the only one), before the mind of God in the whole history of these patriarchs, was to show the need of faith as the moral process by which man was to be brought into a righteous and holy place of obedience and worship-a place which leaves to God all the work of bringing us there, and at the same time keeping us as intelligent creatures in the place of responsibility. In a word, the place is where God is known as a Savior-God, and man as an intelligent worshipper.

I am not looking only at the faith, nor at the failures of the patriarchs, nor at them as types and illustrations of things afterward fully revealed, but at this fact also, that God was preparing a place and a people where to record His name-in His wisdom a necessary preparation, so that when judgment was executed upon the idols of Egypt, there might be a people ready to bear witness to it, and to preserve the truth of His unity and Godhead-" to whom were committed the oracles of God."

There are seven periods, or phases, clearly distinct in the history of this wonderful people of Israel, each one a step in the moral process necessary to fit them for their destined place in the counsels of God. Just as there was a material process from the "beginning," till man was made, so there is a moral process with this people, that they may be fitted for the high honor of having Jesus, the Messiah, as their King. They are to be a kingdom of priests-all their children taught of God. This was proposed to them first on the ground of legal obedience, but they failed, and lost everything. It was God's purpose, however, that they should be such; and grace in sovereign power comes in to make them what they could never attain to on the ground of responsibility. In God's wisdom a moral process was needed to teach them what they were, and to display the patience and power of grace.

The first period may be called the family period, as distinguished from their existence as a nation; this is from the call of Abram to the going into Egypt. Second, from this point to the establishment of kingly rule in David, a period when the high priest was the first man in the nation-Moses baying had a place peculiar as their leader through the wilderness-who had to do immediately with God as King. Third, the time of the kings who had the place of being the representatives of the nation before God, closing with the carrying away to Babylon. Fourth, thence onward to the birth of Christ. Fifth, the brief period of His life here. Sixth, their present dispersion. The seventh (yet future) is the time of millennial glory. To these distinct periods there are features peculiar to each, most of them distinguished by their condition as a nation, and their position before God, and the lessons He was teaching in each. But the family lesson, the domestic training, comes first-God's rights in the family circle. These are as important as His authority over conscience and individual action. Alas! God's authority in family matters is too often unremembered by saints now. Christian parents are responsible to keep their children, even while unconverted, according to God's order of what a Christian household should be. In the household of Abraham there is much more of godly order than in that of Jacob. In them we see the exercise of faith, and consequent blessing, or the lack of faith, and the sure rebuke and chastening.

As a family, the patriarchs were wonderfully and graciously preserved separate from the surrounding people. And in perfect accordance with a family character are God's dealings with them, and the manner of His communications. What can show this more than the visit of the three men on the eve of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? Jehovah appeared unto them (Gen. 18:1); but he saw three men. Not at first did Abraham recognize the presence of Jehovah. When the two angels had left, to execute God's judgment upon the guilty cities (Gen. 19:1), then Abraham was conscious of being in the presence of Jehovah. But mark the familiar, yet holy, communing: "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" How expressive is this of intimacy! And in Abraham's intercession for the righteous (if any) in Sodom, he takes the place of a suppliant. Nowhere is there a brighter instance of power and patient grace waiting upon the pleadings of faith. If Abraham be familiar in his pleadings, it is the familiarity of lowly and holy

confidence in God. The manner of his intercession shows how God condescended to talk with Abraham. If intimacy was less with Isaac and Jacob, condescension was not. By frequent intercourse God maintained in them the knowledge that He was the Almighty God. It was His way of separation from idolatry, but it was by a moral process, and not by a simple fiat of His will.

These are the first lessons, the early trainings of Israel. It tells the only way the nation can be really blessed, and which will be when each family shall walk in the path of faith trodden by the father of the race. We may in New Testament light learn other and deeper truths; but in the intercourse with God, and in the obedient unquestioning faith of Abraham, there is the foreshadowing of Israel's future, to which God was looking while training the patriarchs in the ways of faith. When that future is come, all will know Jehovah. The commonest things, “pots and pans,” will be holy, and the bells of the horses will bear the inscription, “Holiness to Jehovah.”

The very failures of the patriarchs were utilized by God to make them, and all who read the record with discerning eyes, feel the necessity and the blessings of faith. Nothing below is suitable to a life of faith save the pilgrim character; that is, now that the world is known in its true character, which was not fully known until the Lord Jesus had come, and been rejected.

Thus Abraham is presented as a pattern to believers now, and held up as such both by Paul and James, that is, by the Holy Spirit. On the one side is his trust and confidence; on the other, the results in works, fruit of faith.

Chapter 44

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 4. The History of Faith

While in Abraham we see the energy and activity of faith, in Isaac it is rather peace and rest in the land (save when he went to Gerar, where the Philistines strove with him), that is, as compared with Abraham; for his dwelling was a tent as well as Abraham's. Isaac had also his troubles, but neither the trials nor the victories that Abraham had. In Jacob it is by no means the life of faith, but during the earlier part-indeed nearly all that is recorded of him-rather the absence of faith, and the consequences. This marked his course up to the time when God called him to go to Bethel. (Gen. 35:1.) A saint of God living according to the world is sure to be always in trouble of some outward, if not also an inward, kind. There cannot be a more pitiable object than a saint out of communion, and, as far as he can, following his own will. The germ of life he has is always clashing with his desires and ways. Peace of heart is a stranger to his soul; difficulties and disappointments meet him at every turn, until God, faithful to His word, is compelled by some terrible event to break him to pieces, and thus bring him to know himself and grace. It was so with Jacob. He sought to obtain good by the cunning and crookedness of nature, and had to bear the sorrow which such a course surely entails, until God, in sovereign grace, after having made him feel the bitterness of his own ways, conducts him into rest and an honored old age.

How deeply interesting to mark God's gracious ways, as He led saints on, step by step, into the exercises of faith; from the first call to Abram, to leave his country, kindred and father's house, for a land not known, nor even named, but simply a “land that I will show thee,” until he is able to yield his beloved Isaac to God; or from Jacob's dream (Gen. 28:16, 17), which caused such terror in his soul, the Lord being there, and making it a dreadful place to him, until, at the close of his life, he is able to say, “the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil.” (Gen. 48:15, 16.) The praise in these his latest words is just the special response to the promise of God in the dream. There was a rough, hard, path between, but God brings him there at last. And, wonderful to say, we have a dying song from that worm Jacob, while from faithful Abraham nothing is recorded. Jacob's bright moment is at the close, and his last notes are the sweetest. Still it is in Abraham that we see deep and intimate knowledge of God, and strong confidence in His word. God brought death between His word of promise and the fulfillment of it. But Abram's faith was not overcome by death, for he said God was able to raise from death. But I would look awhile, and see how his faith grew.

At the outset of his course God's call was accompanied with the promise that he should be the father of a great nation, that he should be a blessing. Those who blessed him should be blessed, those who cursed him should be cursed. Here was his first lesson; but however good it is to follow in the path of faith, with the promised land assured as to obedience, was it the highest characteristic of faith? He went out, not knowing whither he went, but he knew he was going to a land which was to be his own. The obedience here was stimulated by the promise. Afterward his faith was put to a severer test, where no reward was named, and he had to fall back upon the word

already, given. It was a higher degree of faith. Still, in becoming a pilgrim at the call of God, the obedience of faith is seen. But he is no sooner in the land than trial comes, and his young faith is put to the proof. He had already built an altar, but worship never precludes trial. Nay, the place of worship is always where faith is tested. If through faith saints are led to the only ground where true and spiritual worship can be given, they will find sharper trials there than elsewhere. But faith is comparatively worthless unless tried; when it comes out of the furnace, it is more precious than gold. (1 Peter 1:7.) Abram has his altar, but he has famine also. Will he abide the trial, and remain in the land into which God had called him? Is his faith strong enough to trust God spite of the famine No. Abram fails, and goes into Egypt. He has not yet learned to trust where even the promise seems to fail, and to rest on God's word notwithstanding present appearances. His failure in faith while in the land leads to failure in truthfulness when in Egypt. Failure seldom comes singly. The first departure from the right path rarely brings out fully into the light the secret evil that caused it. It is generally God's way with His saints to allow the whole evil to be manifested before He begins to restore, and this in order that it may be judged in its deepest roots. God will have truth in the inward parts, and, blessed be His name, His grace produces it.

So low did Abram sink, that Pharaoh, the king, rebukes him. Shame to the saint when the world rebukes him! The king sends him away from the place to which he ought never to have gone. The flesh engendered distrust of God, and seduced him to go to the world (Egypt) to find there a resource from famine. The world sends him back to his true place. Thus often now God uses the world to rebuke the unfaithfulness of His own people. But even this was a distinct step forward in the teachings of faith, for the corollary of faith in God is, “no confidence” in self. And this is evidently what God was impressing upon Abram's soul. In result, Abram gets back “unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first; and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah.” He is restored to worship; while in Egypt he did not call on the name of Jehovah, for he had no altar there. The lesson taught him here is, that it is not enough to leave his own country, and come into a land marked out by God, but he must abide there, though circumstances and worldly prudence might persuade him to depart. This has a voice for us now.

Abram advances in the school of faith. Being in the land, he is where God would have him, and he is not careful to choose for himself any particular part. So when Lot separated from him, Abram's freedom from anxious consideration as to where he should pitch his tent, shows itself in his disinterestedness in giving to his selfish nephew the choice of where he would go. Lot made no advance in faith. As the companion of Abram, he professed to take the same position-that of a pilgrim. But he had not pilgrims' ways. So Abram, after his return from Egypt, and restored to his altar, begins to feel that the presence of Lot is a hindrance. There was no true communion between them. Lot was rather a follower of Abram than of God; the land more his object than obedience to the call of God; and his herdmen strove with the herdmen of Abram for the better pasturage. Would they have dared to strive with Abram's herdmen if they had not known their master's desire to have the best of the land? Here was a sight for the Canaanite and the Perizzite who still dwelt in the land-two saints, ostensibly in the same condition, making the same profession of obedience in forsaking all to follow the leading of God, yet cannot agree! The cause is soon seen. Where nothing disturbs, very feeble faith looks as bright and strong as great faith; but nothing so exposes the want of faith as the greed of earthly possessions, whether for ourselves, or for our children. In our pilgrimage here there never are wanting circumstances in which the power

of true faith and unselfish love may be seen, where the faithful can no longer walk with the worldly. Faith is compelled at last to speak out plainly, still, if decidedly, yet lovingly. So Abram and Lot were made manifest; the wrongdoing was with Lot, but Abram does not reproach him. “Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.” (Gen. 13:8, 9.) Abram, not for the sake of having undisturbed possession of the best pasturage for his flocks, but to live in peace, in undisturbed communion with God, bids Lot choose his ground, and he, Abram, will go elsewhere. The secret of Lot's heart comes out now. There is no expressed wish not to separate, but an apparent readiness to go away. No doubt the separation was a greater relief to Lot than to Abram. The worldly-minded are never at home with the faithful. Where are they at home? Let Lot, righteous though he be (2 Pet. 2:7, 8), declare. “And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan: and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from, the other.” (Gen. 13:10, 11.) The horrible wickedness of the cities of the plain did not prevent, him making his abode there; the good things of this life were too strong for him. So Paul said of Demas, who forsook him, “having loved this present world.” The love of the world makes sad havoc among saints. Unfaithfulness, declension, no testimony: such the ruinous condition of a soul whose eye rests upon the well-watered plain. What advantage can it bring, even though it be “as the garden of the Lord"? The wicked are there in possession; is that a place for a saint who professes to be a pilgrim, and in separation?

The fruitful vale of Sodom was a test to the faith of both Abram and Lot. God provides such opportunities now as then, that faith, which is His gift, may be seen, and be a witness to the power of Him who has called us. So faith is content to give up present good, to forego companionship, preferring to be alone, rather than tolerate what would be a hindrance to communion or a dishonor to God. This was Abram's victory. Did it cost him nothing to say to his nephew and his companion hitherto, “Separate thyself"? Nay, but true-heartedness to God was above every other consideration or feeling. The love of kindred is set aside when faithfulness to God is in question. Far different was Lot. Flesh never makes a good choice, and a saint's flesh the worst choice of all. So Lot proved to his own cost. Abram can trust God for all, and yields to Lot. His departure is the occasion for God to renew and amplify His promise to Abram. How greatly sweeter this was to him than the well-watered plain could be to Lot Abram goes to the plains of Mamre with the well-learned promise in his heart, and there builds his altar. Lot has neither the faith, nor the promise, nor the altar. How could he when in Sodom? What had he there? “For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.” (2 Peter 2:8.) Did the fruitfulness of the place make less unbearable the wickedness of the inhabitants, or compensate for the vexation of his soul? It was great unfaithfulness to go there; nor was the consequence confined to the loss of his possessions, but the corruption of the place had taken hold of his family, and his history closes under as black a cloud as perhaps is possible for a man who is called righteous. (Gen. 19:30, &c.)

If faith knows how to yield, and take a low place, God knows how to honor it. So Abram gets the victory over the four kings, and rescues poor Lot from captivity, who had behaved so unseemly.

Though Abram could not live with Lot, yet he runs to his help when in distress. Communion of saints is one thing, helping a brother in need is another thing; this is always imperative (1 John 3:17), the former not always possible; for how can two walk together except they are agreed?

When saints take a wrong course, they are never left without warning. Lot has settled down in the plains of Sodom, and God sends four kings to drive him out. All his coveted wealth is taken, and himself a captive. If Lot had had faith, he would have seen in this that Sodom was no place for him. But be saw it not. The fruitful plain, fat pasturage, world's wealth, filled his eye and his heart. God's warning call was unheeded, and Lot settles down again in his old place, after having been. delivered by Abram, and his wealth restored. A heavier judgment comes, and we have seen the sad sequel. As much as Lot was under the influence of the love of the world, so much, and more, was Abram above it. The saint's superiority is seen in Abram's refusal to take reward from Sodom's king. If faith overcomes the world, neither will it take its benefits. Abram had God's promise, and he was too rich with such a promise to accept gifts from the poor king. But he did not forget the just claims of those who had not his faith, nor God's promise; he stipulated for the young men who were not of his household. As to himself, well, God rewards him. He will be debtor to no man. We never give up anything for Christ now, without having sevenfold more from God. If a believer now is called to give up what moat he prizes, it is only to put him in a position where infinitely more precious things may be given. So said the Lord, “There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” (Luke 18:29, 30.) And so said God to Abram, “Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” Faith grows by exercise, but more by what it feeds upon; for God unfolds Himself to the believer's eye, and is constantly attracting faith, that it be fastened upon each fresh revelation of the love, and goodness, and power of God. There is no such fresh revelation made to the church now as was given to Abram, for God is fully revealed in Christ; but each believer is conscious with what fresh power old and familiar truths are applied to heart and conscience as we pursue our pilgrim path, strengthening our faith, and giving a deeper apprehension of the grace of God; yea, and a more genuine abhorrence of sin in the flesh. So, in the main, the path of faith is the same. Abram was led on step by step; so are we. And faith is given that we may lay hold of each fresh display of God in grace, each fresh unfolding of the glory of Christ. And this is God's will. “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; to him be glory both now and forever. Amen.” (2 Peter 3:18.)

Abram refused the king's reward, but God will be his reward. He has the promise of a son and heir to the promised inheritance. It was God's purpose from the first: “I will make of thee a great nation.” As yet Abram's faith had not distinctly laid hold of this; he thought that one born in his house would be his heir. “I am thy exceeding great reward,” God said. Abram wants to know how that can be; “Behold to me thou hast given no seed.” God graciously meets the yearnings of his soul, and combines the carrying out of His own will with granting Abram's desire, as a reward for refusing the gifts of the world. Here was faithfulness to God, for he who had left all at the call of God, and would have riches only from Him, was very jealous lest the king of Sodom should say that he had made Abram rich. God not only rewards Abram with the promise of a son, but also in a figure gives him a brief glimpse of what awaited his descendants in the near future. That is, Abram becomes a depositary of God's promises, and the covenant is made, whatever intervening trouble

may come, “Unto thy seed have I given the land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.”

Faith does not reject earthly blessings when God gives them; but when one seeks to forestall God's time, it always brings sorrow. God will perform His promise surely, but in His own way and time. Nature was impatient, and could not wait. Unbelief made Sarai say that she was not included, in the promise. (Gen. 16:2.) Failure in this instance seems greater in Sarai than in Abram. Nevertheless he, like Adam, listened to his wife, instead of trusting God. Ishmael is born. Sarai becomes envious, Hagar presuming. Household dissension is the result. And such is always the case where the head of the house forgets his responsibility to God.

God is faithful to His word, and His grace abounds over failure, and gives further and deeper disclosures of Himself. Previously God had said, “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward;” what He was to and for Abram-Protector and Giver of blessings. Now He reveals Himself-a far more blessed thing: “I am El Shaddai.” To this revelation is joined the precept, “Walk before me, and be thou perfect.” When God was only giving promises, it was without this call to holy walking. When He reveals Himself, there must be holiness in the one to whom the revelation is given. True and peaceful knowledge of God is inseparable from holiness of life. Even confidence as to personal acceptance by the shed blood is shaken where there is a worldly walk. If we would have and enjoy the intimacies of communion by walking with God, we must also walk before Him in holiness. These two things cannot be sundered. God had brought Abram into communion with Himself, had revealed the condition of his children for four hundred years to come, and He would keep him in the enjoyment of this special place by a holy walk-” Be thou perfect.” The promise is repeated, but the point of this scene is that Abram feels the presence of God Himself, and the power of His word. Mark the difference between being in presence of blessing, and in that of God. Great as the promised blessings were, we do not find Abram on his face. But now it is El Shaddai Himself talking and telling His name to Abram. What else could he do, but fall on his face and listen?

God spoke freely with Adam before he sinned, that is, He gave commandment as to his conduct in the garden. He talked again when He came to judge them after their sin. But never before was such talk as this from God to man. How came it so now It is the condescension of grace; it is the way of blessing under the new aspect of faith first seen in Abram. Earthly blessing first presented, now God reveals Himself as the El Shaddai. Abram has graduated in the school of faith, and God puts honors upon him. It is the highest point he has yet reached. “Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham.” Not merely does the import of the new name tell of his progress in faith, but the fact of giving it is a proof of increased intimacy (may we not say, of God's pleasure in him?) It is not uncommon among men to give new names to things in which they are specially interested. So this new name tells us that Abraham pleased God. Enoch had that testimony, now it is given to Abraham. In what position was he when he received it? On his face, in true worship. This is the place where faith puts us. None, save those who are there, can tell its blessedness. On our face in His presence, and hearing God talking to us! The result to Abraham is, that he and all his household are circumcised: communion with God is death to the flesh. Thanksgiving for mercies and blessing is surely offered to God by every saint, but it is not the higher kind of worship. What produces this higher worship? Not the reception of blessing, but God revealing Himself. “I am El Shaddai,” and Abraham falls on his face.

We by faith know Him in Christ as Savior-God, also as God and Father. This knowledge, divinely taught, makes us worshippers.

Another instance of the intimacy into which faith brings the believer, is, that God reveals to Abraham the imminent doom of the cities of the plain. Already he has had a glimpse of the oppression of his descendants in Egypt. Now the judgment upon guilty Sodom is told him. And here it is not Abraham asking, for he was not aware that judgment was so near, but God telling without his asking. So near was Abraham to God, that He will not even judge the guilty cities before He tells Abraham. Here is seen not so much his faith in God, as God's friendship with Abraham. He is called the friend of God: can there be a greater proof, a more astonishing instance, than when God says, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” &c. God is not only Abraham's friend, but Abraham is God's friend, and, as such, God will not hide “that thing” from him. Moreover God has confidence in him; “For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah to do justice and judgment; that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.” (Gen. 18:17-19.) Here is the fruit of faith in man, and of grace from God. On Abraham's side, faithfulness; on God's side, confidence in His faithful servant. Could legal obedience produce this? Nay, nothing but faith-God's gift-His wise means of bringing us into the highest possible place of communion, and of being His delight.

Again, another privilege of faith, Abraham becomes an intercessor, and he pleads for the righteous, if any such are found in Sodom. He has perfect rest for himself: the judgment will not touch him; he intercedes for others. It is the believer's privilege now. Assured of our own salvation, we pray for those around us. How great the intimacy, how strong the confidence, we might almost say, what familiarity he uses in his pleading! And how pleasing to God his anxiety that righteous men should not be involved in the judgment-nay, more, that even the guilty cities should be spared if only ten righteous men should be found there! God goes as far as Abraham's faith. It was he that ceased to ask before God ceased to grant. What a mighty power with God is faith! He in grace would have gone further, if Abraham's faith had. But God overrules all, and Abraham stops in his pleading. Faith, however great, has never reached the limit of mercy. If not for himself, yet for others, Abraham fell short of the grace of God. Still, to be an intercessor is a marvelous place for a believer. Angels have not this function. Yet even now idolatry, while assuming the name of Christianity, puts them in that place. The poor heathen knew no better. It is reserved for Christendom, in spite of the light that now shines, to manifest this utter darkness of man's mind, to the dishonor of Christ.

Such the point to which Abraham, led by the Spirit, has attained. He enjoys familiar intercourse with God. There are three important facts connected with this privilege. He is a worshipper through the revelation of God's name to his soul; he has received a new name, a token to him of God's pleasure, as it were a seal to his heart that now God claims him for His own; and he is alone with God. The two others had departed to deliver Lot (Gen. 18:22; 19:1) ere the morning sun arose. How little the guilty inhabitants of the doomed cities were aware that a saint of God was pleading for them! Not till the rain of fire and brimstone descended did they realize their dreadful position. Then it was too late. So will it be at the end of this age.

A believer enjoying such privileges, having such power with God, can such an one fail? Yea, and in the same way as before. The same fear, and the same untruth, and a sharper rebuke from Abimelech than from Pharaoh. The root of the failure was deep; the evil which manifests itself for the second time had existed from the very outset of his course; and we find that the basest and most despicable form of selfishness lies hid in the heart of the man who has shown such faith and enjoyed such privilege, namely, denying his wife for fear he himself should be killed. On the former occasion one might have supposed it was the effect of a gulden access of fear when he came near Egypt, though even then inexcusable, for God had said, “Unto thy seed will I give the land.” Abram forgot the promise, and his faith failed. “They will kill me for thy sake.” Then where would have been the seed to whom the land was promised? But it was no sudden temptation, it was a preconcerted plan from the first between Abraham and his wife. (Gen. 20:13.) That such an agreement should be made when they first started on their pilgrimage may not surprise us much; but when we see the same unjudged evil again appearing in one now so eminent, we learn one of the most solemn lessons possible. For Abraham had been rebuked by Pharaoh for his untruth, had gained a victory over self when he yielded the best of the land to Lot; and been honored of God in conquering the four kings, and rescuing his nephew; above all, God had revealed His name, and he had been made a worshipper, had become an intercessor, and now the promise of Isaac yet sounding in his ears-even after all this, up springs the old unjudged root, “They will kill me for thy sake.” It tells us this, that no amount of blessing, no enjoyment of privilege, can set aside the necessity for judging sin in the flesh. No doubt he had judged the act of denying his wife on the first occasion, but he had not gone back and judged the intention, formed before, long before, the seeming need for the Act. Now he owns, and publicly confesses, that he had so agreed with his wife. (Gen. 20:13.) Abimelech may not have discerned the sin in it. God did surely, and he will have Abraham to judge the root as well as the branch, the sin which had clung to him from the first. So, whether by our failure or by direct communication of truth, the sovereignty of grace appears, and God leads His saints by moral means into the paths of faith and holiness. It is ever so. If we fail to judge the nature that produces the evil, what ever sorrow the commission of it may cause, it will appear again and again, until by faith we are able to pronounce sentence of death upon all that we are by nature.

It is our privilege to see and admire the wisdom of God in these moral processes of teaching. Our slowness in learning but serves to display the patience of His grace. And we plainly see that, whatever the blessing of faith, and the honor God bestows upon it, it is only dependence upon God; and when the eye is not resting upon Him, we are the same, or worse, than before. By the details of Abraham's life God is showing how He brings the believer into closer connection with Himself than if man were unfallen. The riches of grace far exceed the blessings of creation. To display, and to be known and worshipped according to the riches of His grace, was His eternal purpose, and thus He has glory in the highest. He is a God who saves, gives to the unworthy, reveals Himself in His own nature of love-a love stronger than sin, than death, which raises fallen man, and puts him by faith in a position far more blessed and glorious than creation could, or mere legal righteousness, had this been possible. It was knowing this that Paul could say, “But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” And note, it is not thanking God because they had obeyed, but because they had been the slaves of sin. Certainly such thanksgiving could only be after they had obeyed. They had been slaves, but were such no longer; and the sphere of blessing into which they were

brought is so much higher than that which was attached to creation innocence-a sphere which can be filled only by those who were once slaves. No law-righteousness could fit one for it. There all that God can give, all that a creature can receive, is found. It exalts God in every way. The apostle thanks God for two things: namely, redemption brings infinitely higher blessing to those who were once slaves, but have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered to them. And brings glory, highest and best glory, to God; and Paul, led of the Spirit, gives thanks for what God is. Redemption glory brings out redemption thanksgiving.

Another, and the severest test of all, awaits Abraham's faith. It is said, “God did tempt [try] Abraham.” These very words prepare us for the solemn scene. There had been previous trials, but of no other is it said, “God did tempt Abraham.” In the life of every saint there is one trial which may be called the trial; all others are, to this one, comparatively light. It may be earlier or later in the life and walk of faith, but it comes. The trial of Abraham is now come; and whether we look at him, or the sustaining power of divinely supplied faith, we can but, as it were, stolid aside as the scene passes before us. A man, at the command of God, going to offer up his only son as a sacrifice I No sudden, and therefore imperfect, obedience on the spur of the moment, but a three days' journey, where was ample time for any conflict between love for his son and obedience to God. But faith triumphed-faith in the promise, that in Isaac the everlasting covenant should be established, and with his seed after him. (Gen. 17:19.) How, if Isaac were sacrificed? Faith gave the ready answer,” Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.” (Heb. 11:19.) His feelings, as he leads his unconscious son to the altar, are too deep, too mixed, to permit any analysis. God alone could gauge the depth of his affection for Isaac, but faith and obedience to Himself were greater; the feelings of nature were kept down, as, in the power of faith in God, he journeyed to the mount of Moriah. No stoical indifference pervaded his breast; all the intense love of a father for an only son was there. But how calm is Abraham! It is the calmness of faith. On the third day the appointed place is seen, and he bids his attendants to remain. He and the lad were going yonder to worship. How truly his heart is in communion with God, how unfeigned his obedience. He calls the offering up of Isaac “worship;” but he adds, “and come again.” Here his faith shines, and casts its bright light over all the path. “Come again” —yes, he and Isaac were coming again. The word of promise was irrevocable, and if death come, resurrection must follow. But this faith is not at the expense of natural affection. As the two go on, Isaac says, “Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?” Mere nature would have broken down here. No father's love, unsustained by faith, could have borne such a strain as this. Can anything more clearly indicate the entire submission of his heart to God, more complete control of parental feeling, than his answer, most expressive by its very brevity? “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.” Isaac was carrying the wood on which he was to be a burnt-offering-type of Him who bore His cross before He was nailed to it; such a question at that moment must have pierced Abraham's heart. No, natural affection was there in its strength. Only God had the first place in his soul. If God demanded Isaac as a burnt-offering, who is Abraham to demur? He would teach Isaac to bow to God's will, but does not tell his son that he is the lamb. In this short answer are comprised his own submission to God's will, raising Isaac's thoughts above the circumstances up to God, and his deep love for him; perhaps his feelings too strong to say more. Exquisite is the blending of all these in his soul. God knew what the strain would be upon the father's heart, but He provided for it, and brings Abraham through the trying ordeal, and then commends him for what He had enabled him to do. This is grace indeed. How

sweet and blessed to Abraham was God's commendation of his obedience of faith. “By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, for because thou Hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.” (Gen. 22:16-18.)

Faith sacrifices its best and choicest things to God. Abraham did not withhold his choicest. This is one of faith's greatest victories. He is a mighty man of faith. They who conquered foes by faith, who gave their own bodies to torture, do not by that show the power of faith to the same degree as Abraham in giving up his only son, Isaac. For there was more than the putting aside of parental affection: the promises of God, of such immense blessing to and by the seed, were apparently given up-apparently, not really, for Abraham knew now that God's word must stand. He and the lad will come again. The Spirit of God tells us what Abraham meant when he told his young men to wait for them” accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.” This is the highest kind of faith-it is resurrection faith. No other kind will do in the presence of death. This is the special characteristic of faith now. We believe in Him “who lived, who died, who lives again,” in Him “who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.”

Death's impress is upon everything here below, and by faith this is our estimate of them all. By faith we reckon ourselves to have died with Christ; by faith we live again with Him. By faith all that we prize most is beyond death, on the resurrection side. Christ is there. Having been identified with Him in the likeness of His death, so also we shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. The pledge of victory over all our surroundings, which bear death's stamp, is the resurrection of Christ. The faith which is vain unless Christ be raised, may surely be emphatically called resurrection faith. Since death claims all here below as its prey, he who has this faith is a new creation; and so scripture declares. (2 Cor. 5:17.)

If this faith be our faith, how is it operating in us? Can we, like Abraham, rise to its height? Do we cheerfully give up things not nearly so dear to us as an only son This was Abraham's faith, and the Holy Spirit brings him before us as an example for our instruction: “Be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Heb. 6:12.)

But what precious teaching is here! on the one hand, how entire the giving up of all to God must have been in this most eminent man of faith; on the other, how great the grace and power given to enable him to obey, in loving and confiding faith, the command of God. If his faith is recorded for our imitation, the same grace is ready to endow us with the same power. And then only think of the reward!

Wonderful lessons for us. This record of Abraham is not merely to tell us of his faith and consequent blessing, but of the way, the only war, and that in a most heart-stirring narrative, in which God, our God and Father, can be glorified in and by us. May we have grace to profit by them.

But we cannot leave this most interesting and instructive event without a word about Him whom Isaac typifies. If we have wondered at the type, how much more do we at the Antitype! Ah, there

was the reality. Moriah's mount was but the shadow. In figure Isaac was offered, in figure he was raised. Calvary's mount is not figure, but fact-.not the shadow, but the substance. When God's Son was bound to the cross, there was no voice from heaven to stay the uplifted hand, but the contrary. God forsook His Son. The voice from heaven to Abraham was, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad.” The voice heard by the prophet said, “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and smite the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.” (Zech. 13:7.) God's beloved Son was not withheld from death. He, like the ram caught in the thicket by his horns, became the substitutional Victim. But Jesus was willingly caught, was foreordained to it. Eminent as the typical men were, they fade before Christ. Isaac bore the wood, but he was unconscious that he was to be bound upon it, that the knife in his father's hand was for his own bosom, the fire for his own burning. Jesus bore His cross, and knew all that was coming-the nails, the spear, the forsaking! There, on Calvary, was the real sacrifice-there the true Lamb.

To vindicate the honor of God, to make atonement to His insulted majesty, to make known God's love, to declare Him as the Savior-God-this was the purpose for which He came, this the thicket in which He, as God's Lamb, voluntarily allowed Himself to be caught. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.”

(To be continued.)

Chapter 45

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 5. The History of Faith

What follows of Abraham's life is not so much the exhibition of faith and its lessons, as the foreshadowing of God's purpose. And the character of the type is in keeping with the family character of God's dealings and promises to these saints of old. Take the marriage of Isaac. The inhabitants of the land wherein Abraham dwelt were a doomed race, on account of their exceeding iniquity, and Abraham would not have a wife for his son from among them, but one of his own kindred. Nor, if the woman refused to leave her country, would he allow his son to be brought thither again. He would neither mingle with the Canaanite, nor go back to his old country. The land of his sojourn was God's gift, and there he and his must abide. The Lord God of heaven had taken him from his father's house, and from the land of his kindred, and neither would he, nor should Isaac, return thither again. No doubt Abraham believed that God would bring a Rebekah to Isaac; nevertheless, happen what might, Eliezer had to swear that he would never take Isaac back to the place which Abraham had left in obedience to the call of God. “Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.” (Gen. 24:6.) It is a domestic arrangement in accordance with the promises made to Abraham. Called to separation, he in faithfulness would maintain it intact in his family and household. A Christian parent who sanctions the union of one of his children with a godless family, is surely not walking in the steps of faithful Abraham.

But the marriage of Isaac gives a picture of the church's union with Christ-not so much the present union, which is by faith with an absent Lord, as when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride hath made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7.) Eliezer had adorned Rebekah with bracelets of gold and jewels, gifts from the bridegroom, and she said, “I will go.” She made herself ready. So the church, adorned with and by the Holy Spirit, will be presented to Christ, arrayed in all His precious gifts. The domesticity of the type tells of the intimacy and communion of Christ and the church; not national, not governmental, but the Lamb and His wife. But the journey across the wilderness comes before the presentation, and under the competent guidance and protection of Eliezer she is led to Isaac's home, henceforward to be her own home. She rides on Isaac's camels; ample provision is made for the journey, suitable attire-all she has is Isaac's gift. Not a stranger, but an inmate of Abraham's household, leads her. The ornaments of the church are the gift of her Bridegroom, and, as she goes through the world, is sustained by His power-if we may so say, rides upon His camels—and the Holy Spirit is the Eliezer of the church. “When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” (John 16:13, 14.) Precious communication!

But it needed New Testament light to see the type of it in the marriage of Isaac with Rebekah. How admirably suited was Isaac to be the type of Christ! Not till in figure he had passed through death and resurrection is Rebekah brought to him; he is the quasi risen man. So, not till Christ had suffered death and was alive again in resurrection power, was the Holy Spirit sent down to form

the church to be His bride. Not as the Incarnate One, which was first necessary, but as the risen Man, is the church united to Him. To be the risen Man, after glorifying His Father and God to the uttermost, was the motive for His coming into, the world. As such He will exercise all His rights which were conferred upon Him as man; as Messiah, Son of David, Son of man, Lord and Christ, as well as being the only way in which He could be Head of the church, His body, all eternally secured in resurrection power and glory. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.” (John 10:17.) It was the Father's commandment. Resurrection was the only way in which all these glories could center in Him. The world's judgment, too, by Him is assured by it. (Acts 17:31.)

So the marriage of Abraham with Keturah points to the future blessing of the nations in resurrection power. Abraham's faith had reached to resurrection, life from the dead; and all that follows, from his receiving Isaac back from the image of death, has a resurrection impress. The power of it, the first lesson, was taught when the promise was given that Sarah should have a son, He did not laugh incredulously, like Sarah; he did not consider present things, “he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom. 4:17, &c.), fully learned when he would have offered up Isaac, abundantly proved in his children by Keturah. The man whose body was dead has many sons.

Abraham is gathered to his people, and Isaac and Jacob now appear. Very little, comparatively, is said of Isaac, but much concerning Jacob. In both a sensible difference from Abraham is seen as to communion with God, and in the power of faith. Nature was prominent in both: in Isaac, the weakness engendered by it; in Jacob, the cunning. In neither do we see the continuous energy, victory, or the endurance of faith. Nor were the communications of God to Isaac so intimate in character as to Abraham. The promise was renewed to Isaac, but it was “because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” (Gen. 26:5.)

The faith of Abraham is held up as a pattern to the church of God both by Paul and James. In Rom. 4 it is the principle of faith. In James 2 emphasis is laid upon its fruits. So in the former it is accounted to him for righteousness; in the latter, if it be not accompanied by good works it is worthless. Faith without works is dead. Abraham was justified by faith-it was the moral ground of his justification. But, says James, he was justified by works; that is, his good works, when he would have offered up Isaac, proved the reality and genuineness of his faith.

We have seen that the latest aspect of his faith was victory over death by resurrection power; and so the typical Isaac cannot be separated from the typical Abraham. It is a continuation of the same line of faith's teachings. If Abraham shows the power of resurrection faith, Isaac shows the result in the position into which Christ leads as a risen man. And whatever the personal trials and failure of Isaac, as the typically risen man he never went into Egypt. The interposition of God keeps him out. Personally he failed in Gerar, as Abraham, and would, like him, have gone into Egypt, but for the warning. Abraham and Isaac, viewed as one, present. the power of subjective faith, and the blessed position given to it by God. “If ye then be risen with Christ.” This is the standing we have now. Whether we set our minds upon the things above, or on things of the earth, is our responsibility, but does not affect the standing which grace has given. If by faith in Christ we are joined to Him, we are on resurrection ground, for Christ is risen. We can never be thrust back into

the region of death. Our being there is the divine reason why we should seek, as to practical life here, the things where Christ is-at the right hand of God. Our high and blessed position is the starting point for a holy walk. Law never did, nor could, give such a position; therefore he who takes not resurrection, but law, for his standing before God, never does, nor can, walk in the true paths of holiness.

It was not suitable, typically, that Isaac-apart from his personal faith-should be found in Egypt, for he occupied the place of a risen man. We are not of the world, neither should we seek its advantages. This world is to the Christian what Egypt was to Abraham and Isaac-always a temptation. There was another famine in the land “beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham” (Gen. 26:1), and to both Abraham and Isaac Egypt seemed to be a resource from the evil. God permitted Abraham to go, using it as a means to teach him, and saints at all times, the danger and loss-which grace alone can avert-of departing from the place where God has brought us. When trouble now arises in the assembly of God, there are some ready to leave it, thinking to escape. They may by so doing be free from the particular thing which is dishonoring to the Lord, but they fall into worse, and, moreover, lose the blessing peculiar to the place they leave. The word says, “Purge out therefore the old leaven,” not, Leave the assembly. God forbade Isaac: “Go not down into Egypt, but dwell in the land that I shall tell thee of.” Isaac's faith was not so vigorous as Abraham's, and God would not suffer him to be tempted above that he was able. When God sends trial, He always gives grace to bring us through it. But we sometimes make trial for ourselves; even then, if the backsliding heart looks wistfully upon the corn in Egypt, God, who is faithful to His purposes of grace, interposes in sovereign mercy, and, in spite of our unfaithful longings, preserves us for Himself.

Famine made Isaac leave his place, and though not to Egypt, he went among the Philistines. Faith would have remained, and trusted in God, unmoved by famine. Isaac got into trouble among the Philistines. Gerar was no place for him. The word, “dwell in the land that I shall tell thee of,” is a call to leave it. He did not obey the call, and, like many another saint, has to be driven from a false position. No doubt he knew of his father's failure, and this, with the call of God, “Sojourn in the land,” ought to have hastened his steps away from the place. “And Isaac dwelt in Gerar.” Hence his trouble, his sin; the same experience as Abraham. Had he remained in the land, he had not so failed. But he must learn experimentally, in common with all believers, the seductive power of the flesh. When Pharaoh knew the relationship of Abraham with Sarah, he sent them away-” Take her, and go thy way.” But he did not leave Gerar when Sarah was restored to him. Abimelech said, “Dwell where it pleaseth thee.” (Gen. 20:15.) Was it pleasing to God that he should remain in that land? He remained long enough to experience the injustice of the servants of Abimelech, in violently taking away his well of water. This drives him to Beersheba, within the land, though at that time a possession of the Philistines, for he “sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.” Then the well that he digged was confirmed to him by an oath. (See Gen. 21) Isaac knew all this, yet he remains. He must learn for himself. If he fail to learn the lesson taught through Abraham, he must realize in his own person what Philistine enmity is. In spite of his increasing greatness and possessions, the Philistines stopped his wells, and filled them with earth. Of what advantage were his numerous flocks without water? In scripture water is frequently used as a symbol of God's blessing. The daughter of Caleb had the upper springs and the nether springs. (Josh. 15:19.) For the saint passing through the valley of Baca, God makes it a well. (Psa. 84:6.) So in the New

Testament, “The water that I shall give thee.” (John 4) It is the peculiar character of Philistine evil to mar God's highest blessings, and to hinder our enjoyment. The Christian now, if he is not in complete separation from the religious world, is like Isaac in the land of the Philistines; earthly hindrances prevent his communion with God, his wells are filled with earth. Flesh is the same, whether in Egypt, Gerar, or in the land (as Isaac afterward proved). And we learn this important truth, that though by resurrection-our standing in Christ-we are separated from the world, yet, if not practically separate by faith and holiness, we are exposed to the temptations of the flesh, and suffer through it.

The flesh always brings suffering to the saint. Only he who has suffered in it ceases from sin. (1 Peter 4:2.) Not that suffering in the flesh necessarily implies the commission of sins. The most faithful are the most conscious of its presence, and the nearer we are to God in practical holiness, the more we groan, being burdened. The irreclaimable flesh always lusts against the Spirit, and there must be ceaseless watching, Lest, in an unguarded moment, it suddenly shows itself in act or word. This is not rest, but toil and suffering. The fully armored soldier (Eph. 6:11, &c.) on guard is not taking rest. If through unwatchfulness sin be committed, suffering takes another phase, and is accompanied with the consciousness of willful failure, and of having grieved the Spirit of God.

God told Isaac to sojourn in the land, but Isaac is not obedient, nor does he go until Abimelech bids him depart. “Go from us, for thou art much mightier than we.” Yet how loth he was to depart! Three successive attempts he made to remain among the Philistines, and as often failed. God would force him back to his right place. He re-opens the wells that Abraham had made, as if the Philistines would be kinder to him than to his father. He digs for himself, and finds contention (Esek). Again he digs, and feels their hatred (Sitnah). At length he gets within the border, and there he finds room (Rehoboth), and soon pitches his tent at Beersheba. Here Jehovah renews the promise made to Abraham, and Isaac builds his altar. No more in Gerar than in Egypt can there be an altar unto Jehovah. But mark the cool assurance of the Philistine— “We have done thee nothing but good!” And this after they had driven him away! To do all the evil they can, and then say they have done good, is the Philistine character. The race is not extinct. In fact Abimelech was afraid of Isaac. The world, in any form, is secretly conscious of the saints' superiority. This but intensifies its hatred. The Philistine, no more than the Egyptian, can endure the presence of God's saints. (See Gen. 26)

Though out of his true place, yet Isaac showed how he could yield to the injustice of others. He might have disputed for the possession of the wells, but he would trust the word of promise. The wells, yea, the country, were all his by the gift of God; but he, like Abraham, must be a pilgrim, and wait for possession until God's time. Now at Beersheba he has his altar, God gives water, and confirms His promise. Still it is “for my servant Abraham's sake.” How prominent the place given to Abraham!

In the next scene Jacob is nearly as prominent as Isaac. There are but three things recorded of Isaac-his marriage (which is not a lesson of faith, but a type of God's purpose concerning the church); second, his dwelling at Gerar; and now his failure as regards the line of promise. Jacob's history begins here, and here we get the index to his natural character, so marked with the cunning and shrewdness of the world we may say with its dishonesty too. He took advantage of Esau, in a very unbrotherly way, to obtain his birthright. Rebekah knew that the elder was to serve

the younger, and doubtless told her favorite Jacob. Why did he, then, seek to obtain, through Esau's necessities, what God had promised? There was no faith in God's word. What a contrast between this and the steady faith of Abraham! But Rebekah afterward did worse. And God is warning us in the faithful recital of their failings, as well as accomplishing His own purpose.

The great test of Isaac's faith is now before us. It is the trial, the most prominent event of his life, as regards his personal faith, and as great a failure as any recorded; for his carnal appetite is but a small part of it. The gravity of it is that he deliberately sought to turn the purpose of God into another channel, and in intention he gave to Esau the blessing which God said was for Jacob. It is a solemn but most instructive scene. Faith came in at the end, and it is noted in Heb. 11; but it is the only one, while for Abraham there are many instances recorded. In fact, that which most demands our attention-yea, our admiration-is the wonderful way in which God, apart from His saints' responsibility and failure, overrules all, and bends all into subservience to His will.

Here was amplest room for the discernment and intelligence of faith. But it is the complete absence of both these qualities which marked Isaac at the beginning. The eye of faith was as blind as the eye of nature. Whatever Isaac's blindness, on the one hand, or Jacob's deceit, on the other, God's will is done. But this in no way lessened their responsibility and sin. Indeed the whole family were just then leagued in sin, although in opposition, that is, Isaac with Esau, and Rebekah with Jacob. Isaac would give the promised blessing to Esau, which is evident from the words of his blessing. He intended to say to Esau, “Be lord over thy brethren.” This was Jacob's prerogative, And to him it was said, as God purposed. But where was Isaac? How very far from communion, how low his soul in every way, to think of giving Jacob's blessing to Esau! Departure from God's word to satisfy a carnal appetite. Esau, already pronounced a profane man for selling his birthright, abets his blind father, and agrees with him to frustrate, if possible, the counsel of God. For, no doubt, Esau knew that God had said, “The elder shall serve the younger,” and he hoped to regain the blessing. Did Isaac hope to restore it to him? Evidently Rebekah was equally determined that Jacob should have the blessing; but her way of securing it was not of faith, for then she would have quietly trusted in God. He who had promised was faithful, and able to do it. But her preference of Jacob was quite as fleshly as that of Isaac for Esau. Hence her deceit and lying, and teaching Jacob to lie. It was a most shameful conspiracy of wife and son to deceive a blind and aged husband and father.

How came Isaac to be deceived by such a clumsy artifice? He knew the voice; were the neck and wrists, covered with the skin of a kid, a surer test than the voice? Isaac was deceived in a way in which no man of the world, with common sense, would have been. How came it to pass? He was not in communion with God, and a saint not in communion is liable to be deceived by the grossest means. His thoughts were fleshly; his soul loved venison, and the savory meat blinded his mind. “Bring me savory meat, that my soul may bless thee"-give thee the blessing-” before I die.” When he became conscious of what he had done, of his attempt to set aside God's order and choice, of the mistake in not recognizing Jacob beneath his disguise, he trembled exceedingly. Then faith awoke, and the scales fell from his eyes. God's will, that the younger should rule over the elder, came into his remembrance; and, spite of his earthly preferences, he said, “Yea, and he shall be blessed"-yea, shall have the blessing. He sees how God prevented his giving the promise to the wrong man. He judges himself. He takes God's side of the question. “Thy brother came with subtlety.” Jacob deserved to lose the blessing; by his meanly lying conduct he forfeited the place

given by promise. Where would he have been, and the nation called after his name, if grace had not covered his sin at the very outset of his career? Isaac, had he allowed his natural feeling to work, would have been more likely to curse him rather than bless. But the eye of faith is now wide open, and he will not recall the blessing which he unwittingly pronounced upon Jacob, but sinfully wished to give Esau. Faith being restored to exercise, he puts his Amen to what God had said-" Yea, and he shall be blessed." This was his one great victory of faith. In the conflict he had not been scatheless, for a while he was under his enemy, and it was with fear and trembling that he rose. Not like Abraham, whose victory was over parental affection, a thing righteous in itself, and pleasing to God. The arena of Isaac's combat was of a much lower character. That which hindered his faith was the lowest of animal appetites-something savory and pleasant to the taste. Nevertheless, the meanest foe, as well as the greatest, can be overcome only by the same power, and this invariably is, faith in God. And for this reason it is written, "By faith Isaac blessed (τ■ν) Jacob and (τ■ν) Esau concerning things to come." Not Esau and Jacob together, but Jacob first, and Esau in a lesser way.

Wonderful and gracious lessons here-the constant need of communion with God, that our faith may be kept bright and intelligent as to His ways! How easily the least allowance of what is very natural—the love of anything may darken our perceptions, and dull all the spiritual faculties of the new nature. "The love of venison" stands here as the representative of earthly things, and these sadly interfere with a life of faith. But how great the grace which restores the soul, and gives to us, even as to Isaac, to bow to His will; not because we must, but because we desire it! For Isaac not only said that Esau's brother had come and taken away the blessing, but adds, Yea, and he shall have it. All through these narratives there are examples given to be followed, and others to be avoided. Not by precept only does God teach, but by the victories and the failures of those of old. It is His moral process in our souls of raising holy desires, holy fears, and holy love, bringing us into lowly obedience and conformity to His mind and will. The triumphs of faith beckon us onward in the same pathway, the slips and failures of the believer are a beacon that warns believers of the dangers of the flesh.

Isaac, restored in soul, follows now in the wake of the promise, and forbids Jacob to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. This was right; but was it done intelligently, or persuaded by Rebekah's fears? However this may be, Jacob is sent to Padan-aram, and the lessons of faith are continued in his history. Isaac disappears. At first the insubjection of the natural mind is manifested, not till after many sorrows is be broken. Bitter were his trials, sharp the chastisement laid upon him. Yet all through it is the dealings of grace. How plainly seen are the loving perseverance of God, and His faithfulness to His own. God will have His way with us at all cost. If we will not be guided by His eye, He will hold in with bit and bridle, blessing all the time. The time comes when we praise Him for His love and care, and kiss the rod that smote.

Jacob is a homeless wanderer: stones are his pillow. God speaks to him in a dream, and renews His promise, and, moreover, adds a word which was never spoken to Abraham-" I will never leave thee." Abraham confided in God: was there no need to tell him that God would never leave him? In grace He does tell Jacob, teaching him faith, assuring him of constant care and protection, by loving-kindness and tender mercies. He would lead Jacob to trust in God. He knew how prone he was to trust to himself and his own cunning. God would draw him away from self, and gives him a special word suited to his circumstances. He would be with him in his wanderings, would bring him

again into the land, would never leave him “until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” (Gen. 28:13-15.) Is not this inviting, attracting Jacob's confidence, and affording a sure standing-place, where the foot of faith may be immoveable? The providing such a firm foundation, such a resting-place, is truly gracious. Jacob was beginning his journey, and for many years would be an exile from home. God, knowing his need, places all His resources at Jacob's disposal. In casting a glance over his life, and marking the painstaking of God with him, we are reminded of the song of Moses (Deut. 32:11, 12): “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.” Strange gods might bring idolaters and the heathen under their power, demons might make men do their will, and lead them on to destruction, but they were not permitted to use their power upon Jacob, the chosen of God. No strange god, but the Lord alone, did lead him. God would be no strange god to him. No doubt this song looks forward to millennial times, but it is true of Jacob. And how sweet to our souls to know that the same God that watched over Jacob with such unremitting care, bearing him on His wings, now watches over us with the same untiring love! If God said to Jacob, “I will never leave thee,” Jesus tells us that nothing shall take us out of His Father's hand.

How did Jacob respond to this care and loving-kindness of God? There was no confidence, and necessarily more or less fear. In his dream he saw the angels of God ascending and descending on the ladder, set up on the earth, and he awoke affrighted. He said the place was the house of God and the gate of heaven. The Lord was in that place, and he did not know it. To him it was a place to dread. The presence of God to every soul not in communion with Him must be “dreadful.” Abraham never said, never felt so about the presence of God. Jacob is very far behind Abraham.

God had been in a dream telling Jacob not only that He would never leave him until His word was fulfilled, but in a symbolic way shows how He would keep up the communication between Himself and Jacob. His ministers (see Heb. 1:14) would be carrying up from Jacob to God, and bringing down from God to Jacob. That is, the angels ascending and descending were emblematical of God's providential care of one who had not yet learned to trust Him. But Jacob knew not what his dream taught, and he was afraid. No marvel, for it is only the knowledge of the perfect love of God that casts out fear.

Chapter 46

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 6. The History of Faith

In the spirit of one who has not learned this perfect love of God, Jacob makes a vow; in fact he tries to make a bargain with God. If God will give Jacob all he wants, then Jacob will serve God! And this when God has already given him His word that Jacob shall want for nothing! Truly man is a perverse thing. And God bears with this. Oh what a patient God is ours; how has He not borne with us! But the patience of God follows out the moral process in Jacob's soul. In his exile he reaps what he had sown; as he deceived his father, so Laban deceives him. He had taken unbrotherly advantage of Esau's hunger: his uncle Laban takes advantage of his position, and Jacob has to work hard for his wages. By low cunning he overreached Laban, and brings upon himself Laban's anger, which might have been fatal, only that God stepped in and restrained Laban from touching him. Indeed Laban had just cause to be angry with his unscrupulous nephew. In their last agreement Jacob made a proposition which if accepted would be made by his craft far more profitable than any wages Laban would give. It was one of his meanest schemes; but mark his want of conscience: “So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come.” (Gen. 30:33.) Laban (quite deceived) eagerly embraces the proposal, but soon finds out his mistake. He too has to reap what he had sown, for he deceived Jacob grievously in not giving him Rachel.

But Jacob has to fly. The time has come for him to return to his father's house, and God tells him to return. Why steal away unawares? Because he had consciousness of sins. He knew that he had wronged Laban: hence his trouble and fear. No sooner delivered from Laban than the dread of Esau falls upon him. God uses it as a means of bringing Jacob to Himself in prayer.

After Laban's departure “Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.” Jacob recognizes them, he had seen them before in his dream, and said “This is God's host.” Their appearing was God's reminding him of His promise, “I will never leave thee.” It was to assure him of God's protection in the dreaded meeting with Esau. But his response to this grace is very feeble. His fear is overwhelming. How humble-we may say-how abject his message to his brother! He is reaping the fruit of his former conduct. Esau is coming with four hundred men. This drives him to God. He prays and confesses himself unworthy. (Gen. 32:10.) If by slow steps, he is advancing on the path of faith: as yet it is a stony road, but salutary and needful. God is wise in His teachings. Faith would lead through green pastures but for the flesh! Our unbroken will strews the path with stones, making us weep when we should sing. But Jacob says he is unworthy; how different this from his vow to serve God, if God would only supply his wants; but what trial and sorrow to bring him to this point! It is a preliminary step to the being made a worshipper to which God was in His grace bringing him. But the breaking down of “old” Jacob is not yet complete. He cannot yet trust all to God, and so strong is the fear of Esau upon his soul that he sends all before him, his beloved Rachel too, over the brook. He sent his gift over, and “lodged that night in the company.” But he could not rest, he rose up that night and sent “his two wives and his two women servants and his eleven sons, and [they] passed over the ford Jabbok.” (Gen. 22:21-24.) He is left alone. It was so

ordered by God, for another lesson of unspeakable grace was to be taught him that night, and he must be alone with God. Our most precious lessons of grace are learned when alone with God.

God, as a man, meets him and wrestles with him. He had been wrestling with him throughout his life, but now it was face to face. Until break of day the man wrestled with him, and did not prevail. God gave Jacob power and said that as a prince be had prevailed. God condescended to say “Let me go, for the day breaketh,” and then he put it into Jacob's heart to say “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” It is the very thing God was waiting to hear, and to which He led on Jacob's soul. His word, “Let me go” was said for the very purpose of making Jacob say, Bless me first. In a later day the Lord Jesus Christ led on the Syro-Phoenician woman to beg as a dog for the crumbs that fell from the table, and then commends her faith by granting her prayer. He led her to the place, and then rewards her for taking it. So here with Jacob: God wanted him to prevail that He might bless him. This is the manner of His grace. And a new name is given to him. We read that the less is blessed by the greater, and the Greater in this scene is the One who “saw that he prevailed not against him.” (Gen. 32:25.) Wonderful! He who blesses is the one who prevailed not, and the poor man that as a prince had power with God and had prevailed is made lame for life. It is a night to be remembered. God would keep it in Jacob's remembrance, and given him two mementoes-a new name, and lameness. Each has its lesson. Nature must be broken and halt in God's presence. It was after he had felt the withering touch of God's hand, that Jacob said, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” Nature was weakened before he had power with God; and he was lame before he was called Israel-a prince of God. Surely the truth, not merely foreshadowed but plainly taught should be taken home to our hearts. Flesh shall not boast in His presence. “He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.” The only way for us to have power with God is to be “lame” as to our own strength. “My grace is sufficient for thee,” said the Lord to a greater servant: “for my thoughts is made perfect in weakness.” It is His way with us.

As the sun rises, Jacob passes over Fennel to rejoin his family, but he halts upon his thigh. His household might wonder at his altered gait, and say, Jacob is lame. But God said of him-Israel is a prince of God. Man always judges after the sight of his eyes, God according to the position His grace gives. Did Jacob henceforth walk as a prince that had power with God? Nay, he did not even at the time rise to the height of the grace shown him. He said he had seen God face to face, “And my life has been preserved.” This was all! He did ask God's name, but he did not rise above “self,” and was in no condition to hear the Name. God blesses him, but tells not His name. The “prince” had to go down deeper into the dust, to drink a bitterer draft of sorrow, yea of shame, before he could hear God's name. Nature must be broken, not merely lamed. To hear His blest name is better far than being called a “prince.” Man, that is, the saint, must be on his face before God, in deep self-abasement, then, and then only is he in the right attitude to hear the Name. Jacob has not yet been there. Still there is progress. For now his little faith was sufficient to inspire him with courage. Esau is in sight, but now it is not Jacob terrified and sending women and children before him, but it is Israel going before (33:8), the prince who had power with men and prevailed, the second prerogative of his new name. Whatever vengeance was in Esau's thoughts, they are all banished. Israel, though a suppliant bowing himself seven times, is the prince and prevails. Esau is subdued and runs to meet his brother; they embrace and weep together.

Is not this another proof of God's overruling care, another call to Jacob's faith? So God teaches, so He draws to Himself, tenderly, lovingly, perseveringly, “bearing on His wings.” How wretched the

heart that cannot respond to this goodness! Jacob is delivered from Esau, but not yet from himself. Nothing of Israel is seen again till he goes to Bethel; nothing but Jacob, the old cunning and deception. He frees himself from Esau's company, promising to meet him in Mount Seir. Did he intend it? He went to Shalem, and there apparently forgets all God's care and his own vow. He had asked to be brought back to his father's house, and God had told him to return. But he settles down and buys land while away from his home; he would be a dweller where he should be only a traveler. True, he builds an altar, but in vain; there are no worship and no true altar among the unclean. This poor Jacob soon proves. He became a fellow-citizen with Canaanites. He bought “a parcel of a field” to make a house; not like Abraham who bought a cave wherein to bury his dead. In vain the altar and its great name; it was true that God was the God of Israel-El-elohe-Israel. But it was not true that the name made the altar God's altar. Men make the same mistake now and give high names to their own altars, and say-the house of God,

But does this make one “El-Beth-El,” any more than Jacob's altar did? God forces him away from his evil and guilty position, by making him feel the sad consequence of settling down in that place and allowing Dinah to see the daughters of the land. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” The fearful revenge of Simeon and Levi fills him with dismay,” I shall be destroyed, I and my house.” He seems paralyzed with fear. How unlike a “prince” is this. He forgot his new name and lost its power. And saints now lose power over the world when they seek a resting-place in it. All the circumstances say to a soul that can hear, What doest thou here, Jacob? But he does not hear till God in mercy speaks, “Arise, go to Bethel, and dwell there, and make there an altar unto God that appeared to thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.” (Gen. 35:1.) God calls to his remembrance former mercies, and names the place where His altar must be made. It is as if God said-Go back to your starting-point and begin again. Like the Nazarite who defiles himself in the days of his consecration, he had to begin all over again, his former days would not count. (Num. 6:12.) This is the turning-point in his life.

At the call of God he sets out for Bethel, he leaves his field and his own altar for the place of God's choosing. He is going to worship. Before learning to do well he ceases to do evil, and begins by purging his house. “Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean and change your garments.” Was it any wonder that a man with strange gods in his family should have sought to remain with Canaanites? But now he hates even the garments spotted by the flesh. There must be self-abasement as well as cleansing, and he directs them to take off their earrings. It was an external sign of repentance and humility. Jacob feels his sin at conniving at the idolatrous practices in his family. Rachel stole the images from her father; was it his love for her that led Jacob to permit them in his house? Christian parents sometimes permit practices in their households which they know to be wrong. It is a sin to them. When human affection interferes with faithfulness to God, it always brings sorrow. A holy God must chasten His saints for their faults. First Deborah dies: did she as nurse aid Rachel in idolatry? Bethel becomes for a time Allon-bachuth. Not long after, Rachel dies. Jacob loses his beloved wife, and she names the child-Benoni-son of sorrow. But he has been to Bethel, and while bowing his head to the stroke rises in faith. The bereavement may be chastisement for past unfaithfulness, and the cause of his failure is taken away; but if there be sorrow in remembering the failure, there is power in being brought into the place of worship and communion. She who brought the images into the family being removed, it becomes an occasion of “power with God,” and “Israel” calls the

child-Benjamin-the son of the right hand.

In their journey to Bethel God causes His terror to fall upon the cities, and so keeps Jacob and his sons. But he is not without chastisement, “for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” (Heb. 12:6.) Deborah dies and there is weeping. When there is true worship, then also sin must be judged in its roots. Now God appears again, and Jacob hears his new name again. It was given before, and then because he was a prince and had prevailed. But it was only in respect of his own wants, above which he did not rise. Hence “a man wrestled with him;” but God does not “wrestle” with faith. Now like Abraham he worships, and to him as to Abraham God reveals His Name, nor waits to be asked. Jacob had asked “Tell me thy name;” but he was not in a condition to hear it, and it was not then revealed. When that Name is revealed, it is not merely to know God as the one who delivers and blesses; it means communion. There is a secret joy in knowing it. So there is also in God telling us His and our new name, and the joy of this is a secret between God and the soul. There is a joy common to all believers; there is also a specialty the privilege of each which no other knows. There is fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and with each other; but over and beyond this common privilege there is a secret communion with God. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” (Rev. 2:17.) Blessed truth! God is known to us by a new name, and we are known to Him by a new name. Not merely that He is Father and we are children, but each child has his own special and peculiar place in God's family, a name known only to God and to himself. What made the name “Israel” sweet to Jacob? what clothed it with power? The revelation of God's name. When he had it without knowing God's Name, he soon forgot it, and went down lower than ever. Now He knows God's Name, and realizes it in the presence of death, even the death of his most loved. It is here, at least in some degree, resurrection faith, though not shining so bright as Abraham's. So Rachel dies, but there is no “oak of weeping.” It is Benjamin-not Benoni.

In looking back a moment, how marked the gracious dealings of God with Jacob! It is truly the perseverance of grace, until he is brought to have a new name, and that in connection with knowing God's name. It is this which made the name of Israel to be truly a new name. Abram had a new name as well as Jacob; why was there none given to Isaac? I apprehend because Isaac is typically a risen man; as such he did not need a new name. As risen he was a new man. In all we see the teaching of God, and the working of faith. It is the way God brings us to love and serve Him, to be in communion with Him and to live here below as true worshippers. And where can there be acceptable worship? Only in the place of God's appointing. Man's will is the principle confessedly when they rear other altars, and, as men differ, so each one has his own opinion. This is Protestantism; nearly, if not quite as great as the opposite evil seen in Popery. The result is that intelligence as to the true altar of God is well nigh lost. The old dispute about “this mountain” and “Jerusalem” still goes on. But God's place, into which the Father brings us, is neither the one nor the other.

There are four salient points in Jacob's life, each being addressed to our faith. The first is his dream, marked by the absence of faith but by much fear, yet God offering Himself as a stay and resource in all his wanderings. Secondly, the wrestling, where the grace of God intent on blessing him is the more prominent, where also the flesh gets its first breaking, and in consequence Jacob is fitted to receive a new name. Thirdly, God's call to Bethel, where he is made a worshipper,

having first purged his house, his own name repeated and confirmed, and God's name revealed. Fourthly, at the close of his life where his faith is so bright, the shining spot in his whole life, which is held up as such in Heb. 11. The intelligence of faith looks over the past and recognizes the presence of God in keeping and leading. “The God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil.” (Gen. 48:15, 16.) This is faith's answer given at the outset of his course, “I will never leave thee.” Guided now by God he blesses Ephraim and Manasseh, putting the younger first. Flesh put Esau first; faith put Ephraim. He makes his sons solemnly promise to bury him with his fathers—faith's answer to the promise, “To thee and to thy seed will I give it.” Checkered as his life had been, so marked by trial and sorrow, none had a brighter end.

Gen. 26 forms a parenthesis in the inspired narrative. Isaac's death closes the preceding chapter, and Jacob as a type passes away to make room for another, in whom the purpose of God concerning Christ is foreshadowed. At the first reading, this account of Esau's generation might seem as a disconnected fragment, which could equally well have been inserted a few chapters earlier, or a few later, as where it now stands. But neither chapter nor word can be displaced without marring the perfectness of God's word. There is divine wisdom in placing it just where it is.

Jacob, in several points of his career, illustrates the history of the nation, which is continued in Judah. (Chap. 38.) Then comes Joseph, who in his turn foreshadowed the Messiah-the true Joseph, who, cast out by His own, will not be seen again by them till He comes in power and great glory. As the Lord Jesus said to the Jews, “Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (Matt. 23:39.) And again, “Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” (Matt. 26:64.) So, just as the kings and dukes of Edom appear between the typical Jacob and the appearance of Joseph, the Gentile appears in dominion and power before the Lord Jesus is presented to the Jew. So also the historical books of the Old Testament close with the Babylonish captivity, and the New Testament opens with Jesus, born King of the Jews. The Holy Spirit does not occupy us with delineating the grandeur and might of those who rose to eminence when Israel lost the inheritance-save as when connected with the condition of Israel, as were Ahasuerus and Nebuchadnezzar—but passes on to the birth of the true King. Here, in Genesis, we have only a list of names to tell us that this duke and that king once lived. Their power was ephemeral, their greatness evanescent, and they are summarily dismissed. “These are the generations of Esau.” But when the Holy Spirit speaks of the “generations of Jacob,” there is but one Man before His mind, and ten chapters follow, giving His typical history.

The first thing said about Joseph is, “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children... and he made him a coat of many colors.” (Gen. 37:8.) If there had been nothing more in this than the expression of a father's partiality, would the Holy Spirit have recorded it? God calls the Lord Jesus His well-beloved Son, and has given Him many glories. A robe of many colors is His, but they are the colors of His glories. Not one greater, or more brilliant, than the glory of His humiliation. He laid aside His riches, and became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. The glory of being rejected, scorned, crucified, and laid in the grave, so conquering the power of death and the grave, and delivering us from the bondage of the fear of death. The glory of being made sin, and of being forsaken, bearing the whole judgment of God, that believers in Him might become sons of God. The glory of vindicating the righteousness and majesty of God, of being Heir to David's throne, of being Supreme Ruler over the whole world its ordained Judge, of having His name

written upon His vesture and upon His thigh, “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” The glory of being Head of the church, and having a peculiar people, each one both king and priest, a special company, the object of His special love. And in the brightness of His millennial reign all these varied rays of glory will be focused in His own person. Israel will shout, “Emmanuel, God with us,” and the great voices in heaven will proclaim, “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.” (Rev. 11:15.) Soon will our gladdened eyes be with Him where He is “that they may behold my glory.” (John 17:24.)

Joseph is specially the type of Christ, as the representative of all the generations of Jacob, of Him who, in His own person, secures all the promised blessings which Israel had forfeited. All is summed up in Him. And in the exaltation of Joseph, so that no Egyptian could move without his permission, before whose chariot heralds proclaimed, “Bow the knee,” we see the exaltation of Christ, to whom every knee must bow. And when that glory comes, He will be seen, not merely as Messiah, the true Son of David, the rightful Heir, to whom the willing heart of Israel restored will pay homage; but also, as the Egyptians bowed to the authority of Joseph, so will the nations own the exalted Christ, in that day, to be King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Chapter 47

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 7. The History of Faith

From chapter 36 onwards, Joseph is the central figure. Neither his father nor his brethren-save the story of Judah (chap. 38)-appear again but in connection with Joseph, who henceforward fills the first place. Faith, as real in him as in Abraham, is not so prominently seen; for God was not so much displaying the power of faith in Joseph as presenting him as a type of Him who, by rejection, death, and resurrection, was to accomplish His purposes of grace.

Besides being a type of the Messiah, he was the providential means of bringing the family into Egypt, God overruling and shaping the effect of his brethren's hatred to bring it to pass. As to his personal faith, the Spirit of God singles out his latest act as its bright evidence. (Heb. 11:22.) The splendor of the king's court did not blind him to the promise made to his fathers. Egypt was no resting-place for him. By faith he foretold the departure of the children of Israel, “and gave commandment concerning his bones.” But, like his fathers, he must be tried. In each case, that for which the trial came was made prominent. Abraham's trial brought out the triumph of faith over death. Isaac's testing showed the absolute certainty of the counsels of God, which neither Isaac's carnal appetite, nor Esau's tears, could set aside. Jacob's testing extended over the greater part of his life, and because so long, admirably proves the patient waiting of God, the grace which is so prominent a feature in His dealings with Jacob, the faithfulness to His word, “I will never leave thee.” This blessed promise is the motto, in large characters, impressed upon the title-page of the history of his life. In Joseph rectitude and moral purity are exemplified; it is the answer of faithfulness on man's part to grace on God's part.

One event is given which, while showing the power of godliness, tells too what the faithful may expect from this world-maligned, falsely accused, and a prison. This was the first effect of faithfulness. Was there ever a trial or a testing cent from God where the faithful saint was not first left to feel the world's malignity? Why? That God's blessing and approval may afterward come all the sweeter. In Potiphar's wife we see the world in no uncommon character, whose prince is first the tempter, then the accuser of saints. Joseph has to wait more than two full years before God appears for him. Faith and patience must have their perfect work. Then the reward comes, not merely liberty but exaltation to the highest power short of the throne. Pharaoh's dream is added to those of the butler and of the baker, where the wisdom of God is displayed in Joseph, the inspired interpreter.

Not less wonderful are the providential means employed to bring Jacob and his family into Egypt. Many a tale has been written, and most improbable contingencies imagined to display the skill of the writer, and so unexpected as to challenge the credulity of the reader; but nothing, in all the range of fiction, surpasses the story of Joseph. Where is there greater cruelty to a young brother, a poor wailing lad, against whose entreaties their hearts were steeled? Where greater heartlessness of grown-up sons against an aged and infirm lather? And when a slave, an imprisoned slave, where a more sudden and surprising change from a dungeon to a throne than that of Joseph?

Such are the means which prepare the way for Israel's sojourn in Egypt. Egypt is prepared for them; then God sends famine, and drives them thither. Truly His hand is seen in every step. God could have fed them in the land spite of famine, as He did both Abraham and Isaac. But principles had to be learned there which could be learned nowhere else. Their sojourn in Egypt is a transitional stage, where the family developer into a nation. To provide food was not the primary object, but a minor purpose, and made subservient to the greater, namely, that in Joseph there might be a type of a greater than he, who suffered from a deeper hatred, and who is a greater Deliverer from a worse famine. God was looking onward to His Only-begotten, and the murderous hatred of Joseph's brethren was made to take the form which would best illustrate God's purpose. They sell him to Ishmaelite traders. They had a presentiment-may we not say the assurance?-that the dreams of Joseph meant his ruling over them, and they resented it. Even Jacob was moved, and somewhat rebuked him, yet he “observed the saying.”

There was a figurative fulfillment when his brothers did homage to him in. Egypt. Their sheaves made obeisance to his. Nor did they fail in homage after they knew him. But this did not meet the full meaning of Joseph's prophetic dreams. For not only are the sheaves of Israel to bow to Messiah, but the second dream shows the sun and moon and the eleven stars-all the constituted authority of the world, Gentile or Jewish-bowing to Christ in the person of His representative.

Chapter 38 gives the condition of the Jew after he had rejected Messiah, and though apparently not connected with Joseph, yet is it an integral part of the future which the Holy Spirit is here holding up as in a glass. But first Messiah is cast out. He, as man, was bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, as much as Joseph was to his brothers. The Lord was specially connected with the tribe of Judah. They were the Jews to whom the Messiah was presented, and rejected. The other tribes are lost to the sight of man. So, after they had sold Joseph as a slave, it is Judah alone that we have in the next chapter.

Joseph is as one dead to the family, and Jacob in his grief may remind us of those who mourned when the Son of man was led to Calvary, of the weeping daughters of Jerusalem. In that awful procession that followed the Lord Jesus, bearing His cross, not every one clamored for His death. Some that wept there might be those who had felt His healing power, who once were deaf, dumb, blind; she who was healed of the issue of blood, she who had been made straight, after having been bowed for eighteen years by Satan; she who had washed His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, whose sins were forgiven, “for she loved much.” These were at least in tears, but powerless to avert the sore judgment of such a crime-powerless, because it was “their hour, and the power of darkness"-powerless, because He was foreordained to the cross, because the cross was the way-may we not say the only way-in which God would be glorified while saving lost sinners. Still, the crucifying Christ was a crime (Acts 2:23), and such a crime, that if the guilt of all other crimes were concentrated in one, it would be small compared to that. It brought judgment upon the murderers. What shall be done to the husbandmen who cast out the Heir? “He will come and miserably destroy those wicked men.” (Matt. 21) Therefore the Lord Jesus, who knew the coming judgment-ever thinking of the loved nation-said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children,” &c. (Luke 23:28)

But while Joseph is unknown to his brethren, or at best only a “memory,” he is in power in Egypt, and marries Asenath, an Egyptian woman; his sons are separated from their mother's Gentile

connection, trans, planted into the position of “heirs of the promise” with faithful Abraham, duly numbered with Israel, and divide the inheritance with them. So the Lord Jesus, rejected by the Jews, has called out children from among the nations. “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” (Gal. 3:7-9.) I speak here of the fact that Gentiles are called into the position of faith, not of the higher privileges of the church. Branches from the wild olive-tree are grafted in, while the natural branches are cut off. The Jews-the children of Judah—are now mixed up in sinful connection with the nations, and so will remain, until Messiah come in power. Judah separated himself from his brethren, and makes Hirsh, the Adullamite, his friend. When Messiah comes, the Gentile will be a servant. (Isa. 14:1, 2.)

If Abraham and Isaac together exhibit the power of resurrection faith, and its position before God-the believer's standing now in Christ-Jacob not darkly shows the perverse nation. Their history is his, reproduced on a larger scale. Angels appeared to him at the beginning of his course, as the law was given by the ministry of angels. In his dream of Laban and Esau, he cried to God, and was delivered, and, after his deliverance, forgot his vow and God's mercy. The Israelites, when oppressed by their enemies, cried to God, and He raised up judges and saved them, and they forgot their vows and promises of obedience. Images were found in his family: the crying sin of Israel was idolatry, for which they were driven out of the land. And just as Jacob for a time lost his son Joseph, and did not see him till he was exalted in glory, so the Jews will not see their Messiah again till He appears in glory. Israel's joy (Gen. 46:30), when be saw Joseph, leads our thoughts onward to the godly remnant in Jerusalem when the “child Jesus” was brought into the temple, as expressed by Simeon, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” (Luke 2:29, 30.) And also the self-judgment of Joseph's brethren, when (Gen. 42:21) they said, “We are verily guilty concerning our brother,” points to the time when Israel, repentant, shall look upon Him whom they pierced, and wail because of Him. This will be at the closing of their dark hour; and for the repentant among them, the times of refreshing are about to dawn. As when Jacob was in his darkest moment God appeared, and brought him to Bethel, so in the extremity of Israel's distress the Sun of righteousness will suddenly arise, and the glories of the millennial day burst forth.

In the calling out and separating a people for Himself, beside the unity of His Godhead, God was in grace, on the principle of faith, bringing man into communion with Himself, into loving and obedient relationship. Faith was the only moral way in which this could be accomplished. So the first lessons and of subjective faith. In the ritual which accompanied the law it is objective faith; that is, Christ presented in His varied offices and work, and, above all, in the holiness of His person. We upon whom the ends of the ages have come have before us this rich store, first, of the power of faith, as seen in Abraham; and then, the all-sufficiency of Him who is presented to us as faith's sole object; in types and shadows then, but now seen in all their import, because the True Light now shineth. But throughout all the dispensations of God, faith, viewed either in its objective character, or in its subjective power in the heart, is the grand moral means by which the power of Satan over the soul is destroyed; modified according to the character of each dispensation, but the same principle; for “without faith it is impossible to please God.” And again, “By faith are ye saved.”

In the wisdom of God, the subjective lessons come first, and the family was the fitting school where to learn them. But faith must have an object on which to rest, what we may call its “point d'appui.” And this is presented in the ceremonials of the tabernacle. Under them Christ, the object of faith, is veiled by types and shadows, and necessarily so, for God's moral processes with man required that he should be proved not only fallen, but irretrievably lost (save by grace). To be under law, man himself accepting the responsibilities of that position, and at the same time God's object of faith shadowed forth by the very things which were the bond of retaining him in the responsibilities of that position, is what we see in Israel journeying through the wilderness. So we have, not the subjective power of faith, but Christ, and man as such in his creature responsibility to God, where not only is faith demanded in the power of Jehovah-God, but where obedience is tested. Obedience, of course, is shown now by the believer; but then it was demanded of man while yet in the old creation, to prove him. “The law was added because of transgressions.” (Gal. 3:19.) It is obvious, too, that Christ, as the object of faith, could not be fully revealed while this process was carried on. The full revelation of Christ, as in the gospel, is grace without law. The gospel of grace necessarily sets aside law. It is also obvious that law to such a creature as man could only result in his greater condemnation in the abounding of the offense. But the proof of this was to be developed in his own history, so that the upright man might acknowledge its truth. And every upright Israelite who discerned the truth of his condition would have beneath the sacrifices of bullocks and of rams the appointed place for his faith to rest upon; dimly seen, no doubt, for God dwelt then in the darkness of types; but wherever any soul, feeling its need, attempted to look beyond the mere shadow, the God of all grace was there to meet him. The ground of faith and responsibility to law are wonderfully blended in the ordinances given to Israel.

In the lives of the patriarchs we have the detail of the exercises of subjective faith, before the varied offices of Christ, as faith's object, are given-every shadow has its substance in Him alone; but it may not be unimportant to remark, that objective faith is the first mentioned. It is seen in the first of faith's heroes, as given in Heb. 11. Abel brought a lamb. In Enoch and Noah we see subjective power, for Enoch walked with God, and Noah testified against the world of the ungodly. It was fitting that Christ, without whose shed blood there could be no faith, should be first presented, though ever so dimly. God saw the import of Abel's lamb, and that was sufficient for blessing. That offering made Abel righteous by faith.

In tracing the agency of faith, as the means of bringing man to God, a very different scene is now before us, in which God is not seen in special relationship with a particular family, but as the God of a nation (hence as a Governor); and the nation that He governs is presented, according to the exigencies of truth, in a condition of natural enmity against God, and constant outbreaks of rebellion. Faith is seen in a few, and God accomplishing His purpose. But, as a whole, Israel in the wilderness is a sad picture of human perversity and evil. It is the second period of the history of the chosen race, and, save with Moses, the intimacy of communion is not seen. It was rather fatherly discipline with the patriarchs, now with the nation God is King. If man puts himself on the ground of law, God must deal with him there. It was a standing deliberately chosen by Israel, and all the responsibility of choosing, and failing after, rested upon them. God did not force law upon them. All His dealings were, up to the time of accepting law, pure grace, though provoked, never upbraiding, but dealing with them, from the Red Sea to Sinai, as if they had been grateful and obedient. Here we must again bow our heads before the inscrutable wisdom of God; for while Israel has free

choice to accept law-standing, or continue as before, it was God's purpose that man should be tested by law, and necessarily fail, that his sin might appear exceeding sinful (Rom. 7:3; 3); and this, to prove that salvation is altogether of God.

The nation was prepared by God as a sphere where the great problem was to be solved-can man, fallen and sinful, with any amount of help from God, become acceptable, and holy, and obedient by his own will and energy, even with all the advantages possessed by the Jew? (Rom. 3) The universal answer is-No. But it was this terrible truth man had to learn. Even now the same self-confidence is as strong in the natural heart as when Israel, ignorantly and proudly, promised obedience to Jehovah in all things. Indeed, now there is more daring in the man who takes a stand upon the ground, when Israel so utterly failed; for he has both their attempt and immediate failure, and also the warning word of the apostle-that is, of the Holy Spirit—giving us the cause of their failure. They sought to establish their own righteousness, and not that which is of faith. “We are well able,” they said. Faith speaks differently. Even the righteousness of the law could only be attained by faith (Rom. 9:31; 10:2), and in the previous chapter this righteousness is the direct result for those “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

When they multiplied in Egypt, the providence of God used a very efficacious means to separate them from others, and to knit them together as a people. Among human things there is no surer way of binding a nation together than by a common suffering. God in His wisdom used this for His purpose. There was not only a common descent, in which they always boasted” We be Abraham's seed” (John 8:33)-but the additional one of being oppressed with a cruel bondage. Thus dissociated from the Egyptian by peculiar suffering, and distinguished among the nations by miraculous interposition of God, who was also displaying Himself as the God of the whole earth, as well as binding them together, for the report of His wonders in the land of Egypt spread far and wide. “I know that the Lord hath given you the land,” said Rehab. By His mighty power God would teach the nations that He is God in heaven above, and on the earth beneath. It was preparatory to His being known as Savior-God by-and-by among all nations. But even then to Israel was given the knowledge of His great power in saving, and never more evident than when the sea stood up like a rock. It was a question of delivering His people from their enemies, not of their deserts: He would magnify Himself. And He brought them through the waters of death, giving in type, as in the passover, an important but most blessed truth for believers now. The passover afforded shelter from a sin-judging God, the Red Sea brought God over to us on our side against every foe; and if God be for us, who can be against us? Not only deliverance from the enemy, but the power of Him who is now for us exerted in their total destruction-never to be seen alive again. The praises of Jehovah's triumph naturally follow.

The Christian now is not in a condition to worship, until he by faith realizes his complete deliverance from the world and the bondage of sin. As Israel passed through the waters of death, so, we having died with Christ, our old ties with the world in its Egypt character are broken forever. This is the teaching for us of that wonderful display of redeeming power in the God of creation. The certainty of God being for us is thus given by example in the Old Testament, and by doctrine in the New. It was for our sakes that this happened to them, as well as other things which are used as a warning. (1 Cor. 10:11.) They are all divine lessons taught, through grace, by the Holy Spirit. Even the natural man, if not judicially blinded ought to know the absolute necessity of a Savior, for the Israelites were shut out from all visible means of deliverance. But teaching and learning is a

moral process. God does not communicate the knowledge of His salvation by a simple “fiat” of His will, without preparing the soul for its reception, and then its joy.

What could be apparently more desperate than the position of Israel when, encumbered with household goods, a helpless crowd of men, women, and children, they saw themselves hemmed in on every side, by mountain, by sea, the infuriate king, with all his army, in rapid pursuit? No wonder if that mixed multitude cried out. Is it singular that they upbraided Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness; wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?” (Ex. 14:11.) We who know the base ingratitude of man are not surprised. Marvelous things had been wrought on their behalf, yet they would rather die in Egypt than wait for deliverance. There was a tomb of sarcasm in their despairing complaint-” Were there no graves in Egypt?” Since they must die, why not have left them in Egypt? How grand and striking the picture drawn in few words in the inspired word! Moses is the only one who is calm and confident. Human reason would call him a blunderer for leading a helpless multitude into such a trap. Pharaoh saw it, and rejoiced; to his eye there was no escape. Moses would have chosen a nearer way, but God led them by a way in which return to Egypt was prevented; and here we see moral means and sovereign grace both prominent. “Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.” God would deliver from and prevent their return to Egypt. He led them by His way, to human wisdom a mistaken way, but by which God was more abundantly magnified. And how manifest His hand in bringing them out of Egypt, even against their desire, for they had said to Moses, “Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians.” Yet they go forth harnessed-laden with household goods. It needed the controlling power of God to do this as much as to divide the sea. It was as natural for them to rush back to their bondage, as for the divided waters to reunite. But Almighty power restrained both, and accomplished His own will. Moses was a man of faith, and his faith drew out theirs. “By faith they passed through the Red Sea.” Faith, in the track of God's way, always gets the victory over the fears of others. “Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of God.” And the salvation came in a way least expected. The cloud came between the terrified Israelites and the raging host of Egyptians. He who dwelt in it could have smitten the host in any way, in which He had already shown His avenging power. The destroying angel could have gone through the host, as He went through the land to smite the first-born in every unsheltered house; as in later times He went through the camp of the Assyrian host. But that the Red Sea should be divided, and the waters stand up like a wall on each side, was a way of which the Israelites never thought; perhaps Moses himself, though perfectly sure that deliverance would come, yet did not know how. It is a most interesting lesson for faith, nor can it be more tersely and beautifully expressed than in the words of Moses, “Fear not, stand still, and see.” There is the helplessness of man, there the power and the grace of God. There man may know himself, there learn to trust in God. God waits for man to recognize his own impotency, then He makes known His sovereign power. The typical teaching of the Red Sea was only seen when the work of the cross was finished; the real work of which, both passover and the Red Sea being but shadows, must be accomplished ere the full blessedness of it can be known to faith.

Many other truths had to be taught, many others learned, and in the journeyings of Israel through the desert all may be learned; for if taught by types and shadows, the truth was there ready to be apprehended, more or less, wherever there was faith and a repentant spirit, tint, owing to the

incorrigibility of nature, learned with much sorrow and bitter tears. There was no other moral way by which an intelligent, responsible, yet sinful creature could learn himself and know God. Israel failed to learn, notwithstanding the painstaking of God. Neither mercies nor judgments could change their nature; and their possession of the land, temporary as it was, was due only to the purpose of God, not to their obedience. But we now get all the advantage of the truths taught them, and the teaching of the ordinances comes with greater power now than it could then to them. “When he, the Comforter, is come, he shall teach you all things.” The Mosaic ritual-rather we should say, each divine ordinance given to Israel-unfolds the various offices and glories of Christ. “He shall take of mine, and show them to you.”

So we come now to a new chapter in the moral processes of God with man; not the exhibition of subjective faith, but Christ, the Object of faith, and with this making bare what is in man. Both go on together, and for the most part, if not in every instance, the sin and perverseness of the Israelites in their forty years' wanderings, are used as the occasions for manifesting the power and grace of Christ, in meeting all the need of man in all his diversified forms of failure and sin. Two things go on hand-in-hand, as to man as such-his ineradicable wickedness, his utter inability to help himself under the most favorable circumstances-nay, that the greater his advantages, the greater sinner he became; on God's part the foundation of mercy foreshadowed, and the resources of grace keeping pace with the evil of man. Nor can we avoid marking, that God seemed to wait for every fresh and deeper phase of evil to manifest the yet deeper power of grace, the boundless provision in Him whom God was setting forth in all the varied excellencies of His person and work. And we can now see how fitting and wise that, when man was being made manifest in the unbelief and vileness of nature, God, at the same time, was manifesting in type surely, but still really and efficaciously, Him who alone could meet and purge away all sin; so that sin, and God's remedy for sin, are ever in juxtaposition. There is not a sin or failure recorded in their desert journey, but the divine way of meeting it immediately follows. Heavy judgments, too, appeared at times, for God must assert His authority, but always mercy and greater depths of grace. The whole history of the wilderness demonstrates the absolute necessity of a Savior-God, if man is to be blessed, and also God's determinate counsel to be such, in spite of all that sin, devil, and world can do.

Besides the inveteracy of sin and the sovereignty of grace, a third fact is, that Israel as a nation is under the immediate government of God, From the moment they began their march from Egypt, God appeared as their King. And from Egypt to Sinai all is grace. The people murmured, and betrayed their desire to return to Egypt, almost as soon as delivered from it. Nature is utterly unable to walk in the path of faith, which makes this world a wilderness. Even before they passed through the Red Sea they preferred going back to find a grave in Egypt, rather than trust in God; and now, after the marvelous proof that God is for them, they long for Egyptian food. But grace, without judgment, answers their murmuring, and provides for their need. Jehovah heard them, but did not upbraid. They cried for bread-it was rained from heaven; He gave them flesh every evening, and bread every morning.

We know what the bread signified. The Lord Jesus said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.” The bread that Israel gathered every morning was only a type of the true bread, of which, “if any eat, he shall live forever.” (John 6:51.) But the flesh in the evening, what may we learn from that? Does it not tell us of the provision made by God to meet creature wants? After the toil of the

day the body needs refreshment. The Lord Jesus said, “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.” Accordingly, “at even the quails came up, and covered the camp.” There was abundance. God provides for the natural wants of His saints. He who sent the quails is the same One who said, “Take no thought for the morrow.” That is, God takes thought for us, and would have us free from over-anxiety as to what we shall eat or drink, or how clothed. He who leads us on day by day provides for each day's need. And, just as the evening quails meet all bodily necessities, so the morning bread teaches us to begin each day with Him who alone sustains the soul, and gives health and vigor to the new nature. Thus beginning the day with Him, we are strengthened to bear what each day may bring. How blessed, and what perfect peace, to have the assurance that both body and soul are cared for by our God The quails are as much His gift as the bread; both are of His grace. The quails, as merely meeting creature wants, are not laid up before the Lord, but the manna, the bread from heaven, is. The morning bread is more than a mere question of bodily need. It ceased not till they came to Canaan, the promised land. Heavenly bread is our food while we remain here below.

The unmixed grace of God shines equally clear and bright in the next instance, when they murmur for water. Moses cried to Jehovah that the people were ready to stone him. This aggravated their sin of murmuring. Still there is no judgment upon them for this, but Jehovah at once brings water from the rock, as if there had been no murmuring against Him, nor murderous feeling toward Moses. He called the place Meribah, because of the chiding of the people; he would perpetuate the remembrance of their sin by a local name. But God did not tell him to give that name. Grace would hide the sin. If the people said, “Is Jehovah among us?” God proves His proactive, not by judgment, but by supplying their need.

Chapter 48

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 8. The History of Faith

In their murmuring for water, what a proof we have that no exhibition of grace can make man-unless born again-trust in God. The people quite lost sight of God's power and goodness, so abundantly declared every step of their way. They forgot His power who made water as a wall on each side while they passed between. If He made the water rock, cannot He make the rock water? But as yet it is grace, not law. Moses is commanded to smite the rock, and the water flows plenteously-type of a greater Rock smitten for them, for us, from Whom living waters flow for thirsty souls. It is Christ who is the smitten Rock; “now that rock was Christ.” (1 Cor. 10:4.) In the gospel there is more; in the last day, the great day of the feast, the Lord Jesus stands forth as the Rock about to be smitten, “and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” This answers to the rock in Horeb. But the Lord adds, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit.” The effect of drinking from that living stream is not in Exodus, but in John's Gospel. In Exodus we have the figure of Christ smitten, and, however dimly seen, the least glimpse of the reality brought its own joy, and satisfying thirst-quenching peace to the saints at that time.

In their battle with Amalek, Jehovah gives another proof that He is among them and for them. But in contending with foes, we are taught that His presence, in power or victory, can only be realized by faith. Here Amalek represents the power of Satan, who, not able any longer to keep the blood-sprinkled ones in Egypt, dares to oppose the power of Jehovah-God in leading His people through the wilderness. It is a struggle peculiar to the wilderness. The battles in Canaan were to enjoy the possession of the land, prefiguring the energy and victory of faith to believers now in order to possess consciously all the heavenly portion of a present salvation. Amalek's opposition is what we are exposed to when Satan would make us doubt the power of God to bring us safely through a wilderness-world. So it is rather Satan's antagonism to the Son of God than to the saint. Satan is specially the enemy of God's Son, and as those who are redeemed by His blood afford the only point where he can most show his hatred, he brings his power against them. The Son must conquer, but it must also be at the point where Satan directs his attack-against the redeemed of the Lord Jesus. Our position is one of faith. By faith we get the victory. The Lord of all condescends to get victory over the enemy's power through our faith, that which He Himself supplies. The real contest is between the power of Christ and the power of Satan.

The scene in Exodus is deeply interesting-Joshua fighting, sometimes prevailing, sometimes giving way. What is the cause of this? Row is it that, in fighting the battle of Jehovah, Amalek now and then gets the advantage? Look at the top of the hill, and see the reason there. Three men are there, and upon them, apparently, depends the victory. Shall Jehovah's people prevail, or their enemies? If the enemy is conquered, it must be by faith rather than the people's sword. The issue depends upon the man of faith with the rod of God in his hand. Joshua had chosen his men-picked warriors-to fight against Amalek. But, choice as they are, they are nothing in themselves. It is not

only that man cannot win the victory, but that the redeemed can only conquer by faith. Looking at the three men on the top of the hill as a unity, and at the fact of the uplifted hand of Moses-not at his inability to sustain it in that position-we see a beautiful picture of our Mediator above, who, while we contend with the foe here below, assures us of final victory, “seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

In another aspect Moses is the type of the saint who, while contending with foes, depends wholly on God for the needed strength. The uplifted hand is faith in exercise, the rod of God with which the rock was smitten points to. Him by whom we win victory, and faith, holding aloft the rod, an emblem of full confidence in Him.

In Aaron and Hur two other necessary accompaniments appear, for Moses needed to be maintained in the attitude of faith. Weakness made him “let down his hand,” and then Amalek prevailed. It was impossible that the enemy should finally prevail; that would touch God's glory, would make void His promise. But God not only prevails, victory for man, but, according to His grace, it must also be by man. Saints in themselves are impotent, the strain of battle more than they can bear, and their hands hang down. Aaron and Hur go up with Moses, and they support and keep up his weary hands. Nay, such is the picture of weakness, that they provide a stone for Moses to sit upon; and this manifestation of weakness is worthy of note, for when he died, forty years after, “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” It is another lesson concerning faith, which is only mighty in the strength of Christ. So Aaron, type of God's High Priest, bears up the hand, which would otherwise droop. Christ, as our High Priest, maintains our faith. As He once said to Peter, “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” This is His action now for us, and, assured of victory through His intercession, we have boldness against the enemy. This may be called the upward aspect of faith.

But there is also the aspect toward man; that is, the genuineness of faith must be seen in the purity of our lives, and Hur (whose name is said to be purity) is on the hill with Moses as well as Aaron. Righteousness, the fruit of faith, has equally its aspect toward God. But men cannot see faith, they can only see its fruit; and the fruits should be seen: we should be ever careful to show the light, not to vaunt ourselves, that men “seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.” In a word, to be made manifest as victor over the world even while we remain in it, there must be, on the one hand, faith in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and, on the other hand, practical righteousness, which is both acceptable to God and a testimony to man. This gives the full picture of the man of faith-weak in ourselves, but confident in the strength of God. Moses was sustained in this position till the going down of the sun. So shall we be to the going down of our sun, as long as we are here, and that in spite of failure. Our hands, alas! often hang down, and what should we be if we had not the stone to sit upon, and divine power to uphold us? We are certainly taught here our inherent weakness, but then through it the almighty grace of God is seen, and He is glorified.

The meeting of Moses and Jethro is interesting, as showing in a little way the bringing in of Gentiles to participate in the blessings of Israel, and this will be when the full purpose of God concerning Israel is accomplished. Zipporah and her two sons leave the land of their birth, and are henceforth incorporated with God's people. This is the second instance of the same kind. Asenath, Joseph's wife, and her two sons, are taken out of their Gentile connection, and all obtain rank among Israel. Jethro, who would not be numbered among them, yet shows that the Gentile, as

distinct from the Israelite, will have his portion of blessing in the future day, for he eats bread with Moses, with Aaron, and with all the elders of Israel. Moreover, Jethro further intimates the Gentile position in the future day, in that he said," Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods;" for one of the chief features of the once idolatrous Gentile will be to worship Him who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Moses would bring his father-in-law into the place of blessing, inviting him to remain with them. This is very beautiful: he would have all his connections share in his good. Still, notwithstanding this trait of grace, Moses does not rise to the height of God's power and goodness. On the hill he had learned his own weakness, but also the sustaining power of God. Here he only remembers his weakness, and listens to the counsel of Jethro. The real question was not whether the thing was too heavy for him (ver. 18), but, Is not God able to strengthen him to bear it all? It may have been humility on the part of Moses to appoint all men to share the burden of judging the people, but it was humility at the expense of faith. It was the fruit of Jethro's careful wisdom, who looked not at the power of God, but at the weakness of Moses. No doubt it was a part of God's wise counsel that able men should be chosen to judge small matters, bringing only the great to Moses. But this great saint here failed in faith; he who had dared (in the power of God surely) to confront Pharaoh, who was the principal agent of the wonders in Egypt, and had hitherto led the people, seems to forget this power is of God. Jethro suggests his weakness, and Moses yields to the temptation. This, coming immediately after the lesson on the hill, is another evidence that even the most eminent saints and servants of God are always exposed down here to the danger of slipping from their high and blessed position, of failing to use the power conferred upon them through faith in God.

Up to this point all has been patient grace. Their wants have been supplied-flesh, bread, and water miraculously given, each containing a truth of grace, where God was manifesting Himself in a deeper way than simply meeting their bodily need. The truth, though wrapped up in type and figure, was there for faith, for the discerning heart, had there been one such among them. Nor were intimations wanting of something more than met the eye. As when the rock was smitten, it was love's rebuke to their murmuring, it was the assertion on God's part that He would be among them. Referring again to Ex. 16, God's intimation of a deeper thing than bread for the people is contained in the words, "Ye shall see the glory of Jehovah." It was as great a miracle. to bring the quails, but seeing the glory is not said in connection with them. "At even, then shall ye know that the Lord hath brought you out of the land of Egypt: and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord." What took place "at even"? God gave them flesh to eat; it was God's proof that He had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and that if He led them through the wilderness, He would feed them also. But more than this was to be seen in the morning. For then, not only a proof that God had delivered them from bondage, but they should see the glory of Jehovah. What happened in the morning? It rained bread from heaven. What largeness of blessing in the expression, "rained bread"! The quails at even covered the camp, but it was the "bread" that displayed the glory of Jehovah. Both were given that they might "know that I am the Lord your God." But the" glory" is more, it points specifically to Him who is the Bread from heaven. He is the glory of God. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." (John 13:31.) "Who, being the brightness of his glory." (Heb. 1:8:) Thus it was that this special type is called the glory of Jehovah. Did they who were then filled with the typical bread see "the glory of Jehovah"? They were in no condition to see it. It was there, but they were blind. Grace must open the eye, then we

can see the glory. The people did not like the thought of grace. Nevertheless how sovereign it is! What is the reason given for God's sheaving His glory in giving this bread? “For that he heareth your murmurings against the Lord.” (Ver. 7.) God displayed His glory because they murmured! What greater proof that sovereign grace alone was in exercise towards them? And then His power against their enemies was ready at the call of faith. They had neither eyes nor heart for the teachings of grace.

All this was evidently preparatory to the great question about to be put to them: Would they remain simply as objects of grace, or take upon themselves the responsibilities of law? Enough of their own evil had been manifested to make them shrink from such a position. Enough of grace and forbearance to lead them to remain as they were, the dependents of mercy, who; notwithstanding their guilty murmuring, were receiving the supply of every need. But they neither apprehended God's grace nor knew themselves; and when God proposed law to them, with unbounded self-confidence they accepted it. From that moment all is changed. God retires into the thick darkness, and His presence is indicated by tempest, by earthquake, by burning, by the long, loud trumpet-voice that made the people tremble. Even Moses felt the change: “And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and tremble.” (Heb. 12:21.) It is the beginning of a new chapter in their history, a fresh point of departure. That it was God's purpose to test man under law in no way lessens their folly in voluntarily giving up the only ground of blessing. True, such a trial was a necessary part of God's moral process with man; yet how wonderful that, while He is putting man under a test where his innate evil is brought to light, where his failure is inevitable, his responsibility remains intact. Human wisdom falls to the ground, and is absolutely worthless, in presence of such a problem. But the reason of faith (if I may so say) bows before the divine wisdom and skill which the word reveals.

The case stood thus. Before trying man by law, God allowed man to put His grace to the test, and the fullest proof was given that they might trust God for all. When they had proved Him, then the question is put before them. God reminds them, of His mercies: “Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” (Ex. 19:3-6.) This is God's emphatic way of putting before them the two things-grace and law. Would they accept all as the gift of grace, or risk all upon their obedience? “Say to the house of Jacob” ought to have reminded them of his failures, and that they were of his house, and would equally fail. “Tell the children of Israel” ought also to have spoken in loudest tones that the name, “Israel” —prince—was given in pure grace, and all Israel's prosperity was due to grace alone; there was the same grace for them. Sad was their choice. In their utter failure they could never plead that they were compelled to be under the responsibility of law. Their ruin was wholly their own doing. “O Israel,” said the prophet, “thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.” Their first act in this new relationship to God sealed their doom, save as the grace which they despised averts it. Blessed be God, grace can, and will, not only avert, but makes even now the sin and evil of man the occasion for the largest displays of grace. “By grace ere ye saved.” Israel's choice of law was both sad and blessed. Sad, because ruinous to them; blessed, because it enlarged, so to speak, the arena of grace. Not to speak of

church privileges, so far above all earthly blessing, the grace which meets their case will in the millennial day bring greater blessings than law promised to obedience. He who took all their infirmities, who bare their sicknesses, who was wounded for their transgression, who heals them by His stripes, their great Representative, the true Moses who stood before God in the breach (Psa. 106:23), and won back all their lost blessings, will not only make good all the original promises, but will add to them the glory of His presence as King in Zion.

Self-confidence is part, of the sin of man, and nowhere is it so tenacious of its hold as upon man when he becomes religious (that is, without being born of God). The people were never more religious, and never more self-confident, than when they said, “All that Jehovah hath commanded us will we observe and do.” It had to be shown up in its ruinous effects. It is the opposite of faith, and faith is the only way to be saved. Hence the absolute necessity to bring it to the front, that it might be thoroughly judged and feared. And this is the lesson taught us now as we read this portion of their history. So it is grace that works behind the scene, and the terrors of Sinai have their spring and source in richest grace. If God would be known as Savior-God, man must be shown as lost. Fallen as he was, he still thought he could yield perfect obedience. God gave him the opportunity to manifest his ability, nor left it to him to mark out his own line of obedience, but lays down landmarks for his duty to his neighbor, and minute directions for his approach to God. Man had not to grope for his way, and, failing, to plead ignorance. The ten words are given, and man, in his vaunted power, left without excuse. The result set forth in darker colors his lost condition. It did more, not merely proving that he is sin itself by nature, but a transgressor as to his life. The New Testament declares that the law was given for this very purpose-that the offense might abound. A sinner by nature, no other effect was possible from the application of law than to make him a transgressor. It was God's purpose to make him such, that he might know himself, and thus be shut out from all but Christ, the only Savior. “The law was our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ.” (Gal. 3:24.) Law also brought out more clearly God's rights over His creature, that man owed, as a creature, unswerving allegiance to his Creator, though he proved himself utterly incapable of yielding it. But it is a wonderful and solemn scene that passes before our mind; law proving and condemning man, types and shadows declaring a Savior-God, and both the ground of God's righteous government. How inscrutable the wisdom of God in this momentous process! The law was founded upon grace; it was only a means to the end God had in view. For if law simply had been His mind, Israel must have been destroyed when they made the golden calf, ere Moses came down from the mount. Upon that occasion grace was manifested, imperfect in form and aspect, for it was mingled with law. With the trial of man by law and government, grace could not be fully exhibited. Enough, however, was seen, consistently with the purpose of God, for that time. In itself law is only the condemnation of man, for “the letter killeth.” Underneath its surface, hidden by the accompanying ritual, or but dimly set forth, lay the germ of life, the spirit and intent of the law. “Now the Lord is that Spirit.”

Found wanting when all is grace, what will man be under law? Proved to be rebellious and ungrateful, his impotency for anything else next appears. The law-process is the grand trial of his strength, or, more accurately, the full demonstration of his weakness. The position assumed by Israel was lost as soon as taken. Failure was inevitable. But we repeat that the law-process was the process of grace to bring him to the footstool of a Savior-God, who, of his own sheer mercy, would save him as confessedly lost. His irremediable ruin is proved by it, as his inveterate hatred

of God is proved by his rejection of Christ.

Scarcely had the echo of promised obedience died away, when they fell into idolatry. The fundamental principle of the law was broken ere it was promulgated, and the law in its original form and its corollaries were never given. Still, the ordinances contained in Ex. 19-31 inclusive are given in relation to that position which they ignorantly promised to occupy. That position was a sinner, the vileness of whose nature is implied in the enormities forbidden in chapters 21, 22, has promised perfect obedience to a holy God. We have only to put side by side this evil nature and God's holiness, to see how impossible it is for man to be obedient, and therefore acceptable. Can there be a greater and more solemn proof of man's ignorance of himself, than when such a creature promised perfect obedience to God?

But supposing obedience possible-for this is the ground at this moment, and these chapters are in view of it-what need for atonement? “And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin-offering for atonement, and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it.” (Ex. 29:36.) Because, however perfect their obedience might be, their nature was sin, and that could not appear before a holy God without blood of atonement. However faultless their righteousness, their nature must be atoned for. There is no question here of transgressions, of sinful actions; how could there be if obedience was perfect? So abhorrent was their sinful nature to God, that even, with the highest practical obedience, the altar was defiled by their touch, and had to be cleansed, and atonement made for it. Righteousness can never make a sinful nature acceptable. Oar highest worship now must have the blood of atonement for its foundation, and our altar (we have an altar, Heb. 13:10) is cleansed and sanctified by the precious blood of Christ. I judge that the atonement by blood at that moment was not for the acceptance of the person, for God had covenanted to make them a holy nation, and a kingdom of priests, upon their obedience, but rather to meet the need of irreclaimable nature, and as a confession that death was the only thing deserved by such a nation as theirs; and therefore prefigures a New Testament truth-now, not by the daily offering of a bullock, but-that “by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. 10:14.)

So changed now was the relationship between God and Israel, that Jehovah says for the first time, “Lo, I come to thee in a thick cloud.” (Ex. 19:9.) Bounds are set, to prevent the too near approach of the people. The priests also are forbidden. Only Moses and Aaron are permitted to come up into the mount. If priests and people broke through to come unto Jehovah, He would break forth upon them. They had put a barrier between themselves and God. They had made it necessary that the terror of God should be felt, which was confessed when they besought Moses to speak to them, and not God. (Chap. 20:19.)

What a solemn, yea, awful, view is given in chapters 20-23 as to man, that nearly all the rules for his conduct are prohibitions! Would such things have been mentioned, were it not that his nature was inclined to them? The warning at the close is equally solemn: “Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him.” (Chap. 23:20, 21.)

Under this first giving and aspect of the law there could be no pardon. There was no provision made for transgression. Perfect obedience, or death: dread alternative! It was after all these words

of Jehovah, and His judgments had been rehearsed to the people, that with one voice they dared again to say, “All the words which Jehovah hath spoken will we do.” (Chap. 24:3.) The fatal vow is sealed with blood. In presence of the blood they repeat it, and the blood-pledge of death-is sprinkled upon the book and upon themselves. It is a covenant by which a sinner binds himself, under the penalty of death, to be perfectly obedient to God. Can we be surprised at their hopeless failure, that the very first thing they did under the new regime brought upon them the terrible penalty How solemn the character of the lesson needed to make man learn what he is!

There is a second part in this scene. The first is their duty to their neighbor, the second, how they were to present themselves before God, and what offerings to bring. Chapters 35-31 contain all the necessary directions. But, oh, how immense the difference between the activities of grace and the words of the law! All previous to this was His giving, now they must bring to God. “And this is the offering which ye shall take of them,” &c. (Chap. 25:3.) Never before were they told to bring such things to God. He delighted in giving. Now a tabernacle was to be erected, and it was fitting that they should bring of their best for it. I am quite sure that the minutest detail in the furniture of the tabernacle is the symbol of some truth necessary for one who by nature is sin, and yet at the same time perfectly obedient. For when transgression came in, the service of the tabernacle was modified, and much added to meet their condition as transgressors as well as sinners. I am equally conscious of ignorance, and do not pretend to suggest a thought as to the detail. Others, better instructed, have written upon it; though, even then, many a question arises unanswered. When we know even as we are known, all this marvelous detail will be made plain, and the wisdom and the grace of God will be the theme of praise. To me one of the most prominent truths taught is, that man, being vile in nature, not even perfect obedience as to life precludes the necessity of atonement. It is here what he is, not what he does. Hence blood was to be offered before there was any question of breaking the law.

I might add, that the precision with which all is ordered teaches that, when we draw nigh to God in worship, nothing is trivial, nothing unimportant. Then it was in the abundance and rich display of what man prizes as being dedicated to God's service and glory. Now the same in principle-it is the absence of all this. Our worship is in spirit and in truth; and to appear at the Lord's table-our highest act of worship-adorned with the world's gold and scarlet, is as offensive to the rejected Lord, as the absence of it in the tabernacle would have been to Jehovah.

Moses was forty days in the mount where God was showing him the pattern of the things for the tabernacle. (Heb. 8:5.) This length of time was not needed for God. In a moment of time he could have made Moses see all and understand all. Why then forty days? In the wisdom of God it was the necessary time to test the people whether in obedience they would in patience wait for the ordinances they had vowed to observe. So far were they from recognizing the solemn responsibilities which they had undertaken, they did not even wait to hear them. They had sung the praises of Jehovah who had triumphed gloriously over their enemies; now they forget him, it was the man Moses who had brought them out of Egypt, and as they wot not what had become of him, they ignored him also. Impatient at his delay, they come to Aaron, that he might make gods for them. They compel him to make a calf. This was the god that brought them out of Egypt. What a perverse people! The God whom they had vowed to obey, His mercies, His power, all forgotten! Still stranger is the action of Aaron. He and Hur were left to adjudicate upon any question that might arise while Moses and his minister, Joshua, went up into the mount (chap. 24:14); though

only Moses, not Joshua, “went into the midst of the cloud.” Aaron makes a calf, builds an altar before it, and proclaims a feast for the morrow to Jehovah! God had said, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” [in my presence]. But this was the thing they did; a calf, and a feast to Jehovah! They brought the calf, their god, into the presence of Jehovah; then they offered burnt-offering and peace-offering, sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play; that is, to dance, as they had seen done in Egypt.

Jehovah saw it, and disowns them. “Go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest out of Egypt have corrupted themselves.” They said Moses had brought them out, and so here, as always, man is judged and righteously dealt with upon the ground of his own taking. As Adam, who said he was afraid because he was naked; as the unfaithful servant, who saw his lord was an austere man. The pleading of Moses is most beautiful and instructive; but it is so, because in it he was the type of the great Mediator. “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up like unto me.” (Deut. 18:15.) This is one of the likenesses. The mediation of Moses prevailed: God intended it to prevail. “And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.” Is it not worthy of notice, that, though God said to Moses, “Thy people,” the Holy Ghost, in writing this record, says, “His people"? It tells us that the counsels of grace stand fast, spite of the sins of that people.

Moses seems astonished at Aaron's conduct. “What did this people unto thee that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?” The question implies that nothing which they could have done was a sufficient cause for what he had done, and at the same time he lets Aaron know that, as the most responsible, it is he who has brought so great sin upon them. He, as the man left in charge while Moses was up in the mount, ought to have resisted, even to the being stoned. It is but another instance of man's failure when in a position of responsibility. And observe the excuses failure always uses. Not he was to blame, but the people, who were full of mischief; he only told them to bring their gold, which he cast into the fire, and “there came out this calf!” Not that he made the calf, but it came out of the fire! How flimsy the excuses man makes for sin until by grace he is delivered from guile!

Chapter 49

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 9. The History of Faith

The first transgression was not of one of the lesser commandments, but of the greatest of all. (Matt. 22:36-38.) Had the broken commandment been, “Thou shalt not steal,"-their ruin would have been as certain; but that the great commandment should be the first broken makes their ruin and utter inability to obey still more manifest. The proof was complete and final. The irrevocable penalty was death; the only alternative, sovereign mercy.

The sovereignty of grace did appear. Their transgression and sin was God's opportunity (if such a word may be reverently said of God) to manifest His grace in a way not known before. Moses said, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory.” But God said, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee.” Not His glory, but His goodness! Yet His goodness is His highest glory, the glory He delights in. The glory of judgment is His strange work. (Ex. 33:18, 19; 34:6, 7.) Moses takes courage from the revelation of goodness, and pleads the stiff-neckedness of the people as a reason why Jehovah should go with them. It was according to the mind of God. This boldness of faith God waited for, and immediately He responds in grace to the extraordinary plea.

“Behold I make a covenant: before all the people I will do marvels,” &c. God holds to His original promise, and will drive out the Canaanite. But they were to make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land, they were to be in covenant with Jehovah, whose name was “Jealous.” Another copy of the law was prepared for them, and the ordinances were repeated. Ex. 35:4-19 is a recapitulation in brief of Ex. 25-27. For if man has failed, the holiness of God is the same, and the furniture of the sanctuary and the order of worship, in its essentials, is unchanged, so long as man is under law, either pure and simple, as at the first, or mixed with ordinances of grace to meet his failure. But we remark that, while chapter 20 opens with the whole ten words, chapter 25 only mentions one-the observance of the sabbath. God will have His rest. Though they had sinned, He will not permit that to turn aside His purpose. For He will yet say of Zion-to which He will bring them-” This is my rest, here will I dwell forever.” So this ordinance is brought forth prominently, and God will have the continuous foreshadowing of His rest before them. In chapter 20 this observance of the sabbath, with the other commandments, precedes the prohibition of what man was liable to. In chapter 35 it immediately precedes the things needed for His worship. Too late now to find rest in man's righteousness. Rest can only he found in that which pertains to God. It is only now that the sanctuary is actually prepared. The willing hearted brought, and the wise-hearted wrought, according to all that Jehovah had commanded. It is after Jehovah has revealed His “goodness” that the work is done. Without that “goodness” no tabernacle could have been reared. The investiture of the priests, and specially of Aaron, now takes place. And when all was completely prepared, “Moses did look upon all the work, and behold they had done it, as Jehovah had commanded even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them.” The last chapter of Exodus gives us the first act of service in the new tabernacle.

In Leviticus are the additional ordinances to meet the need of those who are not only sinners, but transgressors. With every act of service in the tabernacle there is blood. Not that even with the first giving of the law blood was absent, for then it was put upon the horns of the altar, upon Aaron and his sons. (Ex. 29) But (Lev. 16) now the mercy-seat is sprinkled with blood, which was not commanded to be done in Ex. 25 It was made of pure gold, and there God would commune with the people through Moses. The pure gold set forth the holiness of God, who cannot behold iniquity. How then meet the transgressor? The blood is sprinkled both upon and before the mercy-seat, and its efficacy is seen the same in principle as when in Egypt God said, “When I see the blood I will pass over.” Then it was the staying of judgment; such was the immediate effect of blood on the door-post. Here blood is on the mercy-seat; mercy is of a more positive character, for now it means communion. “There will I commune with thee.” “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Heb. 9:22.) That is it, for it is not only a question of nature, but of actual sins, and these must be remitted. This typical blood pointed onward to the precious blood of Christ, the virtue of which, in making every worshipper accepted, and every act of true worship “of a sweet savor,” is foreshadowed in the first chapter of Leviticus. The bullock, the sheep, or the birds, each is a burnt-offering, and as such a type of Christ in His absolute sacrifice of Himself to God. This book opens with His worth, and through this the acceptance of every worshipper. The little worth of the offering, the imperfection of the offerer, cannot lessen the sweet savor of Christ.

There were also meat-offerings, peace-offerings, offerings for sin through ignorance, trespass-offerings (which, from Lev. 6:2, is not a sin through ignorance), and in all, the varied worth of the blood of Christ to meet every sin is set forth. It was when these ordinances were given that the actual consecration of Aaron and his sons takes place. It lasted seven days. (Chap. 8: 38.) Then comes the eighth day, with its glories, typical of the fullness of blessing. For the church the eighth day speaks of resurrection. All church blessing is founded upon resurrection. Israel's future blessing also depends upon a risen Christ. But while they will have all the glory possible that men alive in the flesh can enjoy from the death and resurrection of Christ, they can never know the church's distinctive blessing as risen also, and with Christ in heavenly glory. Lev. 9 points to millennial glory, when the Lord Christ, who has been hidden from their sight-like Aaron and his sons within the tabernacle-shall come forth, both King and Priest, and bless the people. “The glory of Jehovah shall appear unto you.” (Chap. 9: 6.) It is Christ here, as in the bread that fell in the morning, only then it was to nourish and sustain, now it is displayed glory of power, and receiving homage from the congregation, who shout and fall on their faces; but first Christ in His work as the sin-offering, and in His perfect devotion as burnt-offering. It is His person, what He was to God, rather than the blessed results of His work. On the cross a sin-offering; but His whole life was really and wholly dedicated to God, though pre-eminently a burnt-offering, when consumed on the cross. Of course Christ needed none. Though it is added, “and for the people,” yet in the people's offering the sin-offering and the burnt-offering are different, and the last was also to be an atonement for the people. “And Moses said unto Aaron, Go unto the altar, and offer thy sin-offering and thy burnt-offering, and make an atonement for thyself and for the people; and offer the offering for the people, and make an atonement for them, as the Lord commanded.” (Chap. 9: 7.) For the people there were also a peace-offering and a meat-offering; for this eighth day has a special reference to the future blessedness of Israel, when they will be all taught of God, when the peace-offering and the meat-offering will have their antitype in the peace and worship of the happy

people. The one was a token of their full acceptance by God, all their iniquity forgiven, fully restored; and. the other, a meat-offering, mingled with oil, as being holiness to God by the power of the Holy Spirit poured out upon them. For in that day no one will have need to admonish his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know Him. The heart of stone will be taken away, and a heart of flesh given. Clean water will be sprinkled upon them. In that day, when this great work will be accomplished, Christ, as both King and Priest, will appear, and bless the people. This will be the appearing of the glory. In type Moses and Aaron set forth the royalty and priesthood of Christ, and, though only, types, the glory of Jehovah appeared, and fire came forth “from before Jehovah, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat, which when all the people saw, they shouted and fell on their faces"-that is, they are worshippers. Then will be fulfilled, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God.”

A question arises here, what was the burnt-offering which the fire of Jehovah consumed? Let us look at each act of this memorable day. The calf of the sin-offering is the first. (Ver. 8.) The fat and the inward parts Aaron burnt upon the altar. It tells that all Christ was as man-energy, will, affection-was offered absolutely to God. The flesh and skin was burnt without the camp. So Christ suffered without the gate. (Heb. 13:12, 13.) Aaron burnt the sin-offering. He also burnt the burnt-offering. (Ver. 14.)

Then comes the people's offering. Their sin-offering “he offered for sin, as the first.” (Ver. 15.) “As the first,” that is, Aaron burnt it. So (ver. 16) of the burnt-offering, “and offered it according to the manner.” There remains the peace-offering and meat-offering. In verse 4 the peace-offering is put first, before the meat-offering. This latter, which means communion with what Christ was, can only be truly offered after peace is assured. But in verses 17, 18 the meat-offering is mentioned first. However acceptable and pleasing to God saints' worship may be, yet the glory of God is seen rather in Christ Himself and the peace which the work of Christ has brought in-He hath reconciled all things to Himself. And (ver. 20) it is said that Aaron burnt this last offering. It was laid in order upon the altar,” and they put the fat upon the breasts, and he burnt the fat upon the altar.” Then Aaron, having blessed the people, “came down from offering of the sin-offering, and the burnt-offering, and peace-offerings.” Then Moses enters the tabernacle, and Aaron again with him, and both come out together, and they bless the people. It is the crowning result of what the offerings of that day typified. It is Christ in His twofold character of King and Priest. Then the counsels of glory for the earth are accomplished. Jehovah expresses His delight in all the work of Christ, and with His own fire consumes the “burnt-offering and the fat.” But above it is said “he [Aaron] burnt the fat upon the altar.” If the “burnt-offering and the fat” of verse 24 be the same as in verses 19, 20, why is it there said “he [Aaron, as I judge,] burnt the fat upon the altar?” (See also ver. 22.) If not the same, may it not have been the evening sacrifice? (Ex. 29:38-43.) The lamb then offered was a “sweet savor,” a continual “burnt-offering,” and “shall be sanctified by my glory.” So in Lev. 9:23, the glory of Jehovah appeared, and fire came forth from Him. But however this may be, at the close of the day Jehovah declares His joy in the whole scene, and displays His glory. It is the seal of His infinite approbation.

This was a day of marvelous import, and nowhere in the whole history of Israel is the glory of Christ more clearly typified. And because it tells of Christ's glory, God is very jealous about it, and will not suffer the least interference with it. Though only typical, yet the great Antitype was before the mind of God. Hence His displayed glory, hence the swift judgment that overtook the two who

dared to interfere with it. Nadab and Abihu impiously brought their censers and fire, to offer it before Jehovah—it was strange fire. The Lord had commanded them not. Moses had said, The Lord will appear. (Chap. 9: 4.) These two men bring their fire where Jehovah had already brought His. This was their sin, and the fire of Jehovah again goes forth, but now in judgment, and devoured them. And this judgment has a millennial character, for in that time it will follow quickly upon the guilty, as it did upon Nadab and Abihu. Now grace is long-suffering; then glory will demand instant judgment upon the transgressor, But though grace beam long, it never puts aside the glory of God-on the contrary, nothing so establishes glory, or at the right time will vindicate it, as grace. The eighth day was the display of glory founded upon grace. The holy jealousy of God vindicates the glory of Him who humbled Himself to exalt the glory of God. At the very time of their consecration these two priests intruded and brought strange fire, and they died. So in the earliest days of the church God took vengeance upon Ananias and Sapphire, who also brought strange fire before the Lord; under pretended devotedness they thought to hide their covetousness and lying. The holiness and purity of the new-made church was assailed, and though both the pristine glory and beauty are gone now, God as swiftly judged the first breach in the church as in the freshly consecrated family of Aaron. In each case the being so near to God only brought speedier judgment. Many a priest since like Nadab and Abihu, many a Christian since like Ananias and Sapphire, have in neither case died before the Lord. Those who attempted the first stain upon the fresh purity of the tabernacle, or of the church, were cut off. God would show that He valued the glory and purity of His house. And if He righteously maintained His own glory when in connection with a tabernacle made with hands, how much more when the glory of His grace was in still closer connection with a temple built up with living stones

Fear seems to have fallen upon Aaron and his family. His other sons forgot to eat the sin-offering in the holy place; and Moses was angry, and rebuked them for their neglect. And all that Aaron could say in extenuation was, “Such things have befallen me,” and asks whether his eating in such circumstances would have been acceptable to God. Are not these strange words from the man who has just blessed the people-the man who has been the most prominent in all that day's work? On that day he was arrayed in his beautiful garments. He never put them on again. One appearance was permitted of this super-excellent glory, as a glimpse of the future; and indeed no other dress would have been in keeping with eighth-day glory. But soon, not the symbolical, but the real and the eternal, will be seen when Jesus, the great High Priest, appears to bless His people in millennial joy. But Aaron, so honored during the day, is down so low in the dust as to doubt the acceptability of his eating the sin-offering in the holy place. Open public failure, and with it swift judgment had taken place; and this time the failure was not in the common people, but the chosen family of priests have failed no less than the people when they made the calf. Ere they have properly commenced their duties as priests, the family, as a whole, prove their unfitness for the office, and the beautiful garments are laid aside. How very like the people, who broke the law ere the two tables were brought to them!

In immediate connection with judgment of Nadab and Abihu there is the prohibition of wine and strong drink, as a preparation for the duties of the tabernacle, “lest ye die.” And not only for Aaron and his eons, but this statute was to be forever throughout their generations. For wine hindered right judgment, and led to the confounding together things holy and unholy, things clean and unclean. Was wine the cause of the sin on that fatal day; the reason why they failed to put a

difference between their own unholy fire and the holy fire of Jehovah What does it teach? That no natural energy or strength derived from nature's excitement is fitting for the service of God.

Lev. 10:10 seems a text to chapters 11-15. The priest must know how to put a difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, in things connected with the tabernacle, and avoid all that would tend to confound them together, or to confuse his own judgment. This principle of distinguishing between clean and unclean is extended, and brought to bear upon the every-day things of common life; which ordinances, though past and no longer in force as to the letter, have yet a very intelligible lesson for us, namely, that of being separate and distinct from the world in the habits of life; it is quite opposed to the thought sometimes heard, that, provided the heart is right, we need not be careful for anything else. This, put into its plainest form, means that, if we are saved, we need not be careful for the testimony due to God. The minuteness of detail as to food is proof that God looks for holiness in the smallest things of life. And as to nature, where it is according to the order of God, yet being defiled through sin, it must be ceremonially cleansed. Then, as to the leper, the being clean or unclean according to the law-these are truths of the deepest and most blessed import. The leprous garment, the leprous house, how the defiling thing is to be rent off from the garment, or the whole garment burnt, whether the removal of the stones in which the plague is be sufficient, or the whole house be destroyed, all develop this divine principle in its application to the person, to his habits and mode of living, to his household, over whom he has legitimate authority. And not only for a decided case of leprosy, but also in cases which may resemble it, though not so virulent in character; there must be cleansing from all. The examination, when there was only a suspicion of leprosy, which might turn out to be a simple rising, or a “scall,” that did not spread, shows the jealous care of God concerning those who might be numbered among the clean; and when brought into the light of the New Testament declares the holiness befitting the individual, and the assembly of God.

The sin and death of the two sons of Aaron are the occasion for fresh ordinances, given in chapter 16. Aaron is not to come at all times; not with the garments of beauty, but having on the linen coat, and not without a cloud of incense covering the mercy-seat. There were also the two goats-the one a sin-offering, the other a scape-goat. But if Nadab and Abihu are in some sort the occasion (as ver. 1 seems to intimate), the truth brought out in this chapter is the foundation truth of all; not that it was never foreshadowed before, but here more fully. And also the express command is given to sprinkle the mercy-seat with blood. All the other offerings—the sin-offering, the trespass-offering, the burnt-offering, the peace and the meat-offering derive their acceptance and value from this great offering on this great day-” in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month.” On this day atonement was made for all, for the holy sanctuary, for the tabernacle, for the altar, for the priests, and for the people. (Chap. 16:33.) The atonement is made by blood, and God claims all blood as belonging to Him alone, therefore the next chapter prohibits man from blood in every way. The animal that died of itself was not to be eaten, for the blood was in it, it had not been poured out, “and covered with dust.” The blood was the life—it was atonement, when poured forth to Jehovah.

Prohibitions follow, first given in Ex. 20, &c., where they come before the service of the tabernacle, saying, as it were, that only those who obeyed these commands could follow on to the service of the tabernacle. Hence they come after the great day of atonement, as it were, bringing man first under the efficacy of the atoning blood, so that the power to mortify the members which are upon

the earth may first be received, when cleansed by the atoning blood. This is God's way now: first to be cleansed by His blood, then the daily cleansing by His word.

Even among the priests, the difference between the holy and the unholy, between those who might eat and those who might not, is distinctly marked. But these ordinances observed, and those who draw near to eat of the holy things, priests and people ceremonially clean, then Jehovah speaks of His feasts. The feasts are the sure result of the great day of atonement. They could not come before, and they as certainly come after. As Lev. 16 brings out prominently the work of Christ, so chapter 23 declares Jehovah's joy in it. Hence here are given the “feasts of Jehovah.” His feasts are the worth and efficacy of the Person and work of Christ. Therefore are they called feasts of Jehovah, not feasts of Israel. They were for Israel, who had the privilege of feasting, if they could ever so faintly discern their import. To call them feasts of Israel would have lowered their character. In them God had His own joy. They all refer to Him in whom God delights. They set forth the cross, and its glorious results. If not the very image, yet to faith taught of God enough was manifested consistently with man being under law. For, while presenting the Object of faith, God was testing man, proving him. Infinite wisdom and skill combined the two; so that where there was faith, there was the Object-Christ to rest upon. Where there was no faith, there was the law to judge man who had dared to stand upon his own responsibilities. But though all the fullness and varied excellencies of Christ are wrapped up in these typical feasts, so that Jehovah said, “Even these are my feasts,” they neither were, nor ought to have been, unfolded to the saint of that day. The full display of their truth could only be made at the cross.

The first feast-the sabbath-has a peculiar places inasmuch as it refers back to when God rested from His work, and looks onward to the full result of redemption, when the rest which sin broke in upon and rendered impossible shall be replaced by an eternal rest, founded upon (not creation, which might be lost, but) Christ's redemption, which nothing can touch. So the next feast presents in figure Him upon whom all depends. The eternal Sabbath of God is due to Him, who, as His Lamb, put His own blood between God and the sinner. God, as it were, shows first the result which is ever before His mind, the rest He will have when glory, the fruit of His grace, comes.

The passover is not the first mentioned, yet it is the starting-point where God began to work in grace after the rest from creation (Gen. 2:3) was broken; that is, morally it is the first thing to be done, and this was plainly seen as the institution of the passover, which feast takes its name from the fact that God as Judge did pass over the guilty. Historically, God had been teaching and blessing, from Abel to Jacob, before the passover, but all was in view of what was typified on that night to be remembered.

The soul, sheltered by the sprinkled blood, stands in a new place before God, and the remaining feasts bring out his privileges and duties, as well as the great result for the earth-the feast of tabernacles. In some of them the people were to afflict their souls, but the last points to the accomplishment of God's purpose for the earthly people. Under the branches of goodly trees they shall rejoice before God.

When Christ was here the voice came from heaven, “in whom I am well pleased.” There never was one on earth before who could draw down this testimony from heaven. But when Christ was here, such a word from heaven could not be withheld. He was God's feast all the time he was here. And so it was that even the images, the patterns of the heavenly things, were feasts to Jehovah. “Even

these are my feasts.” If the Mosaic patterns were God's feasts, how much more now in those which the church of God enjoys in a higher sense than Israel could! The accomplished fact is ours-it was not theirs, they had only the promise. Still, though under a veil, Christ, the Object of faith, was presented. How far subjective faith wrought in any soul was not the point under the law, although there are evidences of its power here and there.

The feasts close the presentation of Christ by type in connection with the giving of the law. Now God requires a testimony from them. Jehovah's presence is among them; His feasts are given to them, and their happy privilege is to bear witness to it. They are commanded to bring pure olive-oil, beaten for the light, without the veil of the testimony. (Chap. 24:2, 3.) Primarily it was the witness of Jehovah's presence, and then a testimony to them and to the nations. A solemn case is immediately brought forward as proof of the reality that Jehovah was there. The mongrel son of an Israelitish woman blasphemed the name of Jehovah, and cursed, and he is stoned by God's command. Then follow precepts for the land-promises and threatened judgments. The order for the wilderness is closed. If during their journey worse sin should appear, there would be found in what was already given sufficient resources in grace to meet it. Grace might appear in a new form, in wisdom adapted to the particular evil, but all was contained in these ordinances given while they remained at Sinai, for the people had not yet begun-their march in the new condition of being under law. Leviticus closes with, “These are the commandments which Jehovah commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai.”

How wisely adapted was the dispensation given to Israel for God's purpose, ere the time came for the declaration that faith inn crucified Savior could alone meet man's desperate need. When “faith” came (see Gal. 3:23), such government as existed in Israel could no longer be. The word of life says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Do, says the law; “not of works,” says the gospel.

Man's lost condition, salvation by blood, God's requirements as righteous Governor, are wonderfully blended, and form the mixed system of grace and law; and we may confidently say, now that the True Light shineth, that no other system could have accomplished God's purpose. In it He dwelt in unapproachable light; by it man was proved irrecoverably lost, and entirely vile; through it God, in infinite grace, was foreshadowing a fall salvation, and only waiting to manifest it fully in all the depths of His grace, till man had shown himself, by the rejection of Christ, to be not only lost and vile, but the enemy of God, and righteously condemned.

Although, to many believers, some things may be dark as to their typical application, there are three chapters in Leviticus standing out prominently in their significance-their teaching too plain to be missed: chapter 9, which prefigures the coming glory of Christ; chapter 16, which, while pointing to Christ in His death, displays His moral glory, who abased Himself to exalt God; and chapter 23, God's joy and satisfaction in all. These, in brief, show God's purpose to head up all things in Christ, the only righteous way in which Christ could be Head, and God feasting upon the rich results of His infinite grace. Just as the tops of the highest mountains catch the first rays of the sun, and, in contrast with the yet darkened valleys, seem all ablaze with light; so these three chapters, in the midst of types of the curtains, the sockets of silver and brass, &c., the patterns of better things, shine out in unmistakable light, reflecting the glory of Him in whom is the True Light, casting His radiance upon all the surroundings, and imparting a blessed import to all that which,

without Him, would be unmeaning and worthless.

The hidden meaning of the things contained in the law are brought to light now in the grace and truth that came by Jesus. It is the grace in Him which imparts such luster to the old things, and leads us to admire the wisdom in all. Many types, Christ the only Antitype. The church may be seen in some, but only in connection with Him, for He alone was the Object before the mind of God. Through Him God was to be justified in sparing the sinner; through Him the sinner thus spared was to be brought to God, and God to be abundantly glorified. This salvation could only be by faith in Him whom God was setting forth in so many types. For man, with every help that God gave, neither would, nor could, work righteousness. On the contrary, each succeeding act of sin was worse than the preceding. But while man's worst is being developed, God is bringing out His Best, until neither man in his wickedness, nor God in His goodness, can do more. For what wickedness is like that which crucified the Lord Jesus? and what can God do more than give His Son?

Chapter 50

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 10. The History of Faith

The perverseness of man is seen more plainly in Israel after they were in the land than while going through the desert. This did not appear at the first, where is an instance of what the energy of faith in one man can do. All the days of Joshua, and indeed all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, the people served the Lord; but when that generation had passed away, another arose which knew not the Lord nor His works, and they did evil. (Judg. 2:7.)

Their entry into the land seemed very promising, and they would have become possessed of it all if disobedience had not stopped the tide of blessing flowing in upon them. God, in His grace, showed what they might count upon if they would be obedient. The passage of the Jordan recalled to mind that the same God who led them through the waters to escape from Egypt was now leading them where the river had rolled into the promised land.

The Red Sea and the Jordan typify important truth. In both the waters are the symbol of death and resurrection of and with Christ. The first is deliverance from the bondage of Satan, from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1:13)-a new position. It is the introduction of the believer into the world as a wilderness, where no water is, save that which flows from Christ as the smitten Rock; where, if He be not seen, there will be constant murmuring for water. The Jordan points to a farther truth, that is, that the believer has done with all things here below as objects of desire before his soul. It is the practically realizing the new standing that he has died with Christ, and is risen again with Him. The Red Sea brings us to Christ's resurrection-the result of His work for us. The Jordan is the Holy Spirit making good in our souls, and producing practical holiness suited to the place in which the death and resurrection of Christ has placed us. So the Red Sea introduces us to a desert, the Jordan, into the enjoyment of the heavenly places, its privileges, and also its conflicts. The Jordan is, for faith, the realizing the full results of the Red Sea.

The trial of Israel is no longer a wilderness trial. There they had previously failed; how will they behave in the land of promise? It is the same story, even then growing old in the history of man. There is no condition, however favored, where man responds to the goodness of God. There is no confidence in God, however lavishly His benefits are given. The people have not yet learned what they are themselves, and so they have confidence in themselves-nay, they even boast of their obedience to Moses. “All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee.” (Josh. 1:16, 17.) Like all self-righteous men, unconscious of fault, they pronounce readily sentence of death upon the disobedient. Yet their disobedience had been so great, that Moses said; “Ye have been rebellious against Jehovah from the day that I knew you.” (Deut. 9: 24.) Thus it is that the word of God gives in a few brief touches the portrait of man, and without comment leaves it to tell its own tale.

To have no confidence in the flesh is the hardest and, perhaps, the last thing learned by any saint of God, and in most how many the lessons, how severe the discipline-yea, how persevering the patience of God, until the necessary process is completed, and sentence of death pronounced by the believer upon his old self To this point each one must be brought. Flesh shall not boast in God's presence: no glorying there but in the cross of Christ.

Confidence in God, and confidence in the flesh, are nowhere more clearly set forth than in the taking of Jericho and Ai: in the first the miraculous victory accorded to confidence in God and simple obedience to His word; in the second, the miserable failure resulting from going to battle in their own strength; and when God did give them the town of Ai, what contempt He pours upon them as soldiers! The results of confidence in the flesh are always sad, and may sometimes remain even after the cause is judged.

The word speaks much of the endurance of faith, but this is not its only quality. If passive resistance, as “breastplate” intimates, be its most frequent, and indeed now, during the time of the church's calling, the normal aspect of faith, there are times when it is aggressive. Not now against flesh and blood, but when one, in the grace and power of God, ventures into some den of sin to tell of Christ's love to the lost ones there, he is acting in the aggressive power of faith, as well as of love for souls; and the Master knows how to reward the energy of faith now as in Joshua's day. Or, when error, superstition, and infidelity are attacked, this also is the aggressive action of faith; only this last demands special wisdom, and clear and distinct guidance from God. To the church, as a whole, God has given the privilege of maintaining the pilgrim character of faith, and endowed chosen servants with its aggressive power-a power foolish to the natural man, but effectual with God.

What could the blowing of rams' horns effect towards throwing down the walls of Jericho? What could be more unmeaning and ridiculous to the eye of man? Possibly some among Israel thought with contempt of their silent march round the walls of Jericho for six days. The after-conduct of Achan sheaved that he for one had no just sense of the presence of Jehovah among them. But whether few or many like Achan, the energy of Joshua's faith carried them through. It was according to the wisdom and grace of God, who gave lessons of faith then for our learning now. The inhabitants of Jericho, with the exception of one singled out by grace, on the first day might have been amazed, and have trembled for what would follow, and on the sixth day have learned to deride the, to them, foolish procession. The seventh day brought its awful reality-sodden and irretrievable destruction. So it will be with the world, now hardening itself against the warnings of God. In a moment the walls of this world will fall, and judgment be executed upon the scoffers. But our point is the steady adherence of Joshua to Jehovah's command. It is the obedience of faith, which is foolishness to the world. The patience of faith manifested during the six days, the triumph of faith on the seventh, God crowns all by the exhibition of His power, as superior to and independent of man. Faith was the moral means. “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days.” (Heb. 11:30.) And the unmistakable note of the rams' horns was the correlative of faith-"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” (Zech. 4:6.) The obedience of faith always brings the power of God on our side; then victory is sure.

But over this bright scene came a dark cloud. Oh when was there any brightness from God over which man did not cast his own dark shadow? Even in this faith may learn; and the lesson is the

sad result of not asking wisdom of God before beginning to act. Joshua, as well as Israel, failed here. Vain-confidence is uppermost. What a gulf between it and true faith! With faith one man may chase a thousand, as Jonathan did. (1 Sam. 14) Here three thousand fly before the men of Ai; and, according to human judgment, they ware well able to take it. But Israel were fighting Jehovah's battles, when the wisdom and resources of man go for nothing, and, however adequate in appearance, always bring disaster. Human prudence suggested the viewing of the city. Human confidence said three thousand were well able to take it. Human energy essayed to do it. The lesson taught in the manner of taking Jericho was forgotten. There was no seeking counsel from God. Public failure followed. Had they sought God's mind first, He would have told them that a hindrance to victory existed in the camp; He would have preserved them from the disgrace of flying before their enemies. Failure before the enemy is always the consequence of some hidden and unjudged sin among those bearing the name of being the people of God. Blessing is withheld so long as sin is unjudged. In grace God uses their defeat as a means to bring the sin out into the light, that they may purge themselves, and vindicate the righteous government of God. They humble themselves before God; it is the first thing to be done. But faith rises above confession and shame, though no true faith is without it. It appeals to God to maintain His own glory, notwithstanding Israel's dishonor, and Joshua touches the right chord when in his lament he says, “What wilt thou do unto thy great name?” This was in one word pleading all the mercies and promises given in their past history; it was the boldness of faith pleading that God had committed His name to them, and what would be thought of His name among the nations if He gave them up to be destroyed by the enemy? It is an appeal to the pledged word of God that He would give them the land. Joshua's thought is now for the honor and glory of God. No saint ever appealed to God to maintain His glory, without an answer of grace and needed wisdom from Him. God tells him there is sin in the camp, and it must be purged out, ere He can fulfill His promise. And now, when a saint, conscious of failure, of sin however great, appeals to the grace of God, he has been led to the first step of restoration. All blessing ever given to man was, and is, for His name's sake. We have a Name to plead that must prevail. The name of Jesus is the glory of God. And God has made Him to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

The evil act of stealing the Babylonish garment, the wedge of gold, and the silver, was not the gravest feature in Achan's trespass. What was it that made the sin of Nadab and Abihu so great? They brought their strange fire into the place where Jehovah had just manifested by fire the glory of His presence. What brought instant death upon Ananias and Sapphira? They were selfish, false and hypocritical where God was displaying the riches of His grace. So here Achan proved insensible to the mighty display of Jehovah's power. The miraculous fall of Jericho's walls, without any pretense of action on Israel's part, was lost upon him. He used and took advantage of the power of God to gratify his covetous desires. It was this that made his sin so heinous, and brought so swift judgment. Jehovah was exalting Israel by proving that He was among them. Achan was dishonoring God in the very moment that God was peculiarly honoring him as an Israelite. To covet and steal in such circumstances made the sin a thousandfold more sinful. His deed was done, so to speak, in the very face of God. There are times when sin is exceeding bold-we might say defiant.

Faith recognizes God to be a holy God, and Joshua-his self-confidence gone, and roused out of its consequent despondency-acts upon God's word, and searches out the hidden cause of their

public disgrace. But, mark, the word that reveals Israel's sin is given after his confession and humiliation. Joshua rent his clothes, and fell on his face before the ark of Jehovah, until eventide. That memorable day began in the pride of fleshly confidence, but it ends with rent garments in the dust before God. It is a merciful provision of grace, for if it ended not there, where else could it end? There restoration begins, and there only. “He and all the elders of Israel put dust upon their heads;” there was corporate confession and humiliation. The same thing is true now; restoration can only be after confession, whether for the saint or the assembly.

The quest begins-first the tribe, then the family, then the household, then the man-and Achan is taken. He is the one who troubled Israel by his folly and sin. Joshua vindicates the holiness and righteous government of God. In this solemn judgment we learn the separation from, and utter condemnation of, the flesh and its lustings, which the holiness of faith demands, the stern resolve, at all cost, to judge the evil. No claim of kindred can be allowed, the voice of nature is hushed, brotherly love is silent in presence of the superior claims of faithfulness to God. Achan, and all that has been defiled with his sin, must die. Such is the judgment after which pattern we are called to put away unsparingly the things of the flesh, however pleasing. Even the things which may have a fair appearance are but hindrances, weights to be laid aside; how else can we run, and win the prize? The Christian has now to contend with the powers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Some in this warfare are, by the Lord's appointment, more prominent than others; but we all have to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. We have to watch against the inroads of Satan, to guard the purity of the Lord's table, to care jealously lest the holiness of His house be impaired, to resist all false doctrine, and the looseness of conduct which follows. This is our warfare as seated with Christ in the heavenlies. Satan is ever trying, in some form or other, to bring in the world or the flesh, and sometimes under the plea of brotherly love to cover evil, that is, not to judge it. Faithfulness to the Lord, true charity, stands first; mere brotherly kindness is but second. If, after warning and rebuke, evil remains unjudged in the assembly, it loses its place as an assembly of God.

The camp is purged, and God promises victory. “I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land.” But even after faith resumes its place, God, while giving victory, makes them feel the evil of forgetting Him. They had been lifted up because of their might. God put dishonor upon it at the taking of Ai. Every warrior must go, and an ambush must be laid. What an array of force and stratagem to take a little city! Joshua and the bulk of his army must pretend to flee, and so draw away from the city its “few people.” Thirty-five thousand men to take a town for which three thousand were sufficient! To pretend to fly as at the first was no honor: no heroism in this. It was to their shame as soldiers. This is no instance of the mighty power of faith. God knows how to put shame upon worldly strength and confidence. He allows, nay, commands, its full display, and will not use it. He gives them the city in His own way, and will only use the power of Israel as He pleases. It is plainly saying, I can do without you-proving to them that the strength in which they boasted was in itself a useless thing.

The next scene furnishes a proof that submitting to the righteous judgment of God brings blessings scarcely hoped for; not on the part of the Israelites, but of the Gibeonites, with whom is found that lowest kind of faith which trembles at the word of judgment. God, by the prophet in later days, said He would look to the man that trembled at His word. (Isa. 66:2.) If there was no contrition, there was trembling. And they submitted to the word of Joshua. “Behold, we are in thine hand; as it

seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do." This is highly instructive; it gives the only true place of a soul that submits unconditionally to the sentence of God. The Gibeonites confessed their deceit, and can only urge their fears as an excuse. But this fear of judgment has its reward, and they get the anticipative place a Gentile will have in presence of Israel owned of God. This servitude of the Gibeonites is a little foreshadowing of the coming time when the Gentile will be exalted in serving the Jew. They are made hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar; thus they become Jehovah's servants. And God remembered them; for when Saul oppressed them, He avenged their cause upon his family. But Israel's part, this transaction with Gibeon, when they were so deceived, is only the result of the same confidence in self which had been so seriously rebuked at Ai. They are betrayed into making a covenant with a nation which they were told to destroy. (Josh. 9) God overruled for good; but the point is Israel's failure for the second time through confidence in themselves, and not asking counsel of God.

But if Joshua failed at Ai, and with the Gibeonites, the next thing recorded is the most prominent victory of faith ever accomplished. At Joshua's word the sun stood still. No intervention of God on behalf of Israel was more remarkable. But not only this, it was a public witness to all the nations, to the whole world. The effect of such an intervention of the Creator's power over the works of His hands could not have been limited to the locality of the land. It told all that there was a Supreme God, who held the order of nature in His own hand, and controlled it as He pleased. For this thing was not done in a corner. In this act of Joshua we see the dependence, the boldness, and the power of faith. "Then spake Joshua to Jehovah, in the day when Jehovah delivered up the Amorite before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon." (Josh. 10:12, &c.) He spake to Jehovah; here is dependence. Having learned the mind of Jehovah, with boldness he speaks in the presence of Israel; and God, at the word of a man, arrests the sun and the moon in their course. This is the power of faith; that is, God responds to the faith He gives. And not the least instructive point for us is this-that Joshua, before telling the sun and moon to stand still, went first to God; there was prayer and dependence before the power. So it is now. When any occasion would seem to demand greater faith than we had known before, we shall never meet the emergency unless we have been to God about it. God honors Joshua's faith, and Israel reaps the fruits of it. That day was equal to two. It must have raised the wonder, if not the consternation, of the world. The immense fact, that "Jehovah hearkened to the voice of a man," should have eventuated in universal homage to Him whom Joshua served. But this testimony of the one True God was lost upon the world; for even then Satan was the god of it, and knew how to turn every event for the increase of idolatry. And for the nation in whose behalf this miraculous power was displayed, for them to turn to idolatry, made them worse than the nations over whom they triumphed in that day. In Hezekiah's time a similar mark of God's power was given, for the shadow on the sun-dial went fifteen degrees backward. That was not confined to Jerusalem. It brought ambassadors from Babylon, but did not turn them from the worship of Bel. Miracles, however stupendous, never per se convert a soul. "Many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did; but Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all." (John 2:23, 24.)

The bright shining of faith, as seen in Joshua, was soon eclipsed by the continually darkening cloud of those who came after him. The nearest approach to him is much below him. There was

but little of the holiness of faith in any. Gideon comes nearest, for in him there was heart-exercise before he wrought deliverance for the people. This was not seen in the other judges, and Gideon takes pre-eminence after Joshua, and though, as to time, coming after Barak, he stands first as to order. Heb. 11:32 gives (with others) four men “who through faith subdued kingdoms.” How different the measure and character of faith in each! In the book of Judges we have the order of time as history: Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson; in the epistle the order is according to the rank of faith-Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah. Is this change of order in the perfect word of God without a purpose? Gideon was a man with an exercised heart and conscience; Barak was so weak in faith that he would not go against the enemy without Deborah, and so lost the honor God presented to him. Yet the weak Barak was not so stained as the strong Samson, whose course was marked by his relationship to the Philistines, and only at the end of his life, when blind and spirit-broken, but humbled before God, accomplishing, at the cost of life, his most wonderful feat. Jephthah is still lower in the scale-he stains his victory with a heathenish vow, and sacrifices his own daughter to his superstition. Others are but recorded as the means by whom God wrought deliverance; they are not named in Heb. 11, and there is no mention of faith working in them. Ehud began his career by an act of treachery-no holiness in that. In his case, as in some others, it was simply the intervention of God, who uses what instrument seems good to Him. Let us not think that God approves such deeds. He can, and does, use both good and bad men for the accomplishment of His purpose. This surely does not imply approval of the evil deed. Ehud said, “I have a message from God unto thee.” In judgment upon Eglon, the oppressor of Israel, it was of God. But Ehud's treachery was of himself, and not from God, though overruled by Him. So also the wife of Heber, when she still more treacherously killed Sisera-a deed which would now be reprobated. But it was God's judgment, upon the enemy. Deborah blessed her, which only shows Deborah's intelligence, not that God owned the manner of the deed. Such an act, per se, is abhorrent to the mind of God. In eastern countries, to eat with another was a pledge of protection. To give milk when he asked for water implied kindness, and led Sisera to trust her, and sleep in her tent. Jehu also was God's instrument of vengeance upon the guilty house of Ahab; Jehu was a bad man, but God is sovereign, and makes man's wickedness fulfill His purpose-man's responsibility remaining the same in all.

The faith of Joshua and that of Gideon are given fully, and stand out as exponents of the difference of the circumstances of the one from the other. The triumphant energy of Joshua's faith, notwithstanding his slips at Ai and with Gibeon, would have been not in keeping with the times of Gideon, when Israel was groaning under Midian. Faith in Gideon wrought marvelously, as it did in Joshua; but there was not the brilliancy in Gideon's victory over the Midianites as when, at Joshua's word, the sun and moon stood still. Such a display of God's power with Gideon would have had the appearance of condemning their sin. God will deliver them, but, as it were, by secret means-a dream in the enemy's camp, which, while it strengthens Gideon, upon Midian brings dismay, and the terror of God turns their swords against each other. It was in the darkness of night that they fled; not in the light of day, when, if one day be too short, two are rolled into one. In Joshua we see the courage of faith; in Gideon, the fear and trembling resulting from the weakness of faith. Yet we have in Gideon a lesson for faith which Joshua does not afford-the tender patience of God with a weak servant. And we should have lost much if we had not the story of Gideon-in some points not to his honor, but then so much the more to God's glory. The angel of Jehovah appeared to both at the first, and the different bearing of Joshua and Gideon then gives an index

to their after conduct. Neither knew who the divine Person was. Joshua, confident in Jehovah's leading, asks, “Art thou for us, or for our enemies?” “Nay, but as captain of Jehovah's host am I come.” And Joshua falls on his face and worships. It was the word which revealed who He was, just as when the Lord Jesus said to the man who had been born blind, “I am he,” and the once blind man sees and worships. No fear of dying troubles Joshua, but, like a faithful soldier, he says, “What saith my lord unto his servant?” He puts himself at once under the command of the captain of Jehovah's host. But when Gideon perceived in whose presence he was, he said, “Alas! O Lord God, for because I have seen an angel of Jehovah face to face.” God gives him the assurance that he shall not die. Perhaps Gideon had misapprehended, as Manoah (chap. 13: 22) the word” There shall no man see my face and live.”

Still, the mark of true living faith is seen in Gideon, though he is yet unable to take in the full meaning of the words, “The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.” How true it is that God sees not as man sees! for Gideon was threshing wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. Gideon had the positive command to throw down the altar of Baal, and notwithstanding the promise that Jehovah would be with him, he did it by night, through fear of his father's household and the men of the city. His faith in God was too weak to overcome his fear of man, yet God said, “Thou mighty man of valor.” God gave him that title in view of what He would make him, not according to present appearances. But it is his faith we would consider, how suited in its actings in him to the circumstances of the times. His first act shows the genuineness of it; he confesses sin and departure from God; they were lying under judgment because they had done evil. Thus faith is ever accompanied by self-judgment. God's answer to it is simply wonderful—“Go in this thy might.” His might was in humbly bowing to the righteous dealing of God. Naturally he was a timid man, loth to trust the word of God without some special sign for the moment. How the great and pitying condescension of God meets him at every point, answering every expression of diffidence without upbraiding! “Let the fleece be wet, and the ground dry;” and again, “Let the fleece be dry, and the ground wet.” And God answers according to his prayer. If faith in Joshua brought out the magnificent power of God, no less did faith's weakness in Gideon manifest the rich grace of God. At the head of his thousands he now goes forth against the Midianites. But God will assert Himself, and will give victory in His own way, a way that shall preclude Israel from boasting. Only three hundred men are permitted to go. This reduction of his army seems to have reawakened Gideon's fears. God's grace and pity meet him again, and send him to the enemy, to get, as it were, from their lips the assurance of victory he hesitated to receive from God's word; and if he is afraid to go alone, to take Phurah, his servant, with him. And God deigned to confirm His word by the dream of a Midianitish soldier. Surely, after so many previous proofs from God of His will, it was not to Gideon's praise to fear at the last moment. But how grace shines all through this narrative! And Gideon's faith rises and responds to this last appeal God made to it. The little band of three hundred shout, and the enemy is terrified. Panic-struck, they slay each other, and fly. So truly it was God that saved Israel-it was His power and terror that routed the enemy, not Israel that conquered Midian; they were a routed rabble when Gideon's sword overtook them.

Although the weakness of Gideon's faith is personal, and the tender mercy of God to strengthen it individual blessing, yet we see how the aspect of his faith is in keeping with the low state of Israel. God's chosen instrument of deliverance was a man who thirst not move without a constant recurring sign from God; as if the grief of departure from God was so intense that it needed

extraordinary means to keep faith in action. On the other hand, how marked the intervention of God all through, up to the victory which brought deliverance! Gideon was the only one of his family that confessed the nation's sin. It was his father's idol that he threw down, and when the whole city came to avenge it, God made Joash say, in contempt of his own idol, “If he be a god, let him plead for himself.” But while we linger over these precious lessons for faith, the moral process goes on with Israel-with man-which was bringing out in ineffaceable lines the incurable depravity of man, and his utter incapability of serving God in true obedience, spite of never-failing mercy and grace in Him.

When Israel sinned, and cried out in their distress, “We have sinned,” there was no true judgment of themselves. They bewailed their misery, not their sin. Hence, after every deliverance they sinned again, and worse than before. They forgot the mercy that delivered them, they heeded not the rebuke, for their sin, and were deaf to the calling of grace. Such is man.

God gives a glimpse of the domestic and private life of the people, and it tells the same tale as their public history. The core was rotten. The account of Abimelech tells of civil war and murder, that of Jephthah of heathenish vow and superstition, and, in Samson, of intercourse with the Philistine. And this in Samson, one specially raised up to deliver Israel, was more flagrant than in another not called as he was. He was a child of promise, ordained to be a Nazarite from his birth, and who in the power of God did such great things. What an evidence of the strength of the flesh, even in a Nazarite

His marriage with the woman of Timnath was of God (Judg. 14; 4): that is, God used it as an occasion against the Philistines, but the thing itself was contrary to the expressed command of God; it is an index of their condition. How very different from Gideon is Samson If in fear and trembling, yet Gideon did pray, and sought God, not for his personal wants, but for confidence in God against his enemies. Samson prayed twice; first because he was thirsty, and then, at the last, that he might be avenged on the Philistines for his two eyes. Samson is as much below Gideon in the ranks of faith, as Gideon is below Joshua. It is worthy of note that there are three men prominently brought out in these books-Joshua and Judges-as there are also in Genesis; and in both cases illustrative of the power of subjective faith, or the lack of it: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the one; Joshua, Gideon, and Samson in the other. The energy of pilgrim faith in Abraham, that of subduing enemies and possessing the land in Joshua. But given as examples for us who have to pass through the world as not having any inheritance, and also as those who contend with spiritual foes in order to realize heavenly blessings. Neither in Isaac nor in Gideon is the energy of their predecessors seen; while in Jacob, as in Samson, the evil of the flesh is manifest. Jacob did rise, and his end was bright. Samson dies a blinded captive, crushed in the effect of his own vengeance.

How the testimony for God, in whatever way required, Seems to degenerate! If God puts a man in a place of testimony, either for special truth or peculiar privilege, though he be found comparatively faithful, yet in general the next one to occupy the position is less able. So, looking at the line of successive witnesses, the corporate character is, “some hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold.” Who filled the place of Paul (not as an apostle) as to faithfulness? Who since John has shown such love and devotedness?

In the latest chapters of Judges their social condition is depicted. The evil that caused judgment upon the nation had its root in the family. The man, Micah, began life with stealing from his mother. The restored money is made partly into an idol; and this is by the mother called dedicating the money to Jehovah! (Judg. 17:3.) Then comes a Levite, ambitious to be a priest, and he would be priest to an idol rather than keep his place as a Levite, and be true to his calling. A guilty ambition ruled his conduct, for he soon proved what he was, in leaving Micah to accompany the Danites. It was a higher position to be chief priest to a tribe, than to be chaplain to a single family. But not content with leaving Micah, he, with the Danites, robs the man who had at least treated him with respect and kindness. What a sad picture of the chosen nation!

But a more terrible one follows, equaling in cruelty and depravity most in the annals of paganism. Benjamin would screen the evil-doers, the other tribes would avenge the wrong done. They ask God, not if they may, but who is to go up against Benjamin. There was no humiliation, rather the assumption that they were righteous. In judgment upon them all, God permits the war, and Benjamin has a temporary triumph. But the triumph of wickedness is short-lived, and is only preparatory to a fiercer judgment. The other tribes are humbled through defeat, and then they asked of God what they should have done at first. “Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease?” They would remain under the humiliation of defeat if God told them not to go. In acknowledging Benjamin to be their brother, they hold themselves as deserving of judgment as he; not separating themselves in the pride of self-righteousness. Then God bids them go, and judges the evil of Benjamin. Mention is made of Phinehas. If these events took place in his lifetime, it must have been soon after the death of Joshua, not as following after Samson's death. And then it shows how quickly they fell into idolatry. It was a generation that knew not God. Evidently the priest was unable to stem the torrent of iniquity. But he was the connecting link between Jehovah and Israel. Through his failure that link was soon to be broken. But he failed at the very beginning, for Aaron it was who made the calf. Why was forbearance for so many years shown? The great reason was, that to be a type of Christ such a position was necessary, and God kept him at the head of the nation that he might be a fitting type of Christ, who will be as enthroned Priest the true link between God and that nation. But now the priests in the land are powerless as witnesses for Jehovah, and others are raised up as instruments of mercy. Had priest and people been faithful, there would have been no need for the intervention of judges. Eli was the last to occupy the original position of the priest. He failed in his family grievously. His two sons were not trained in the fear of God. (1 Sam. 3:13.) When they were called to perform the priestly function, instead of being the channel for the people's approach to God, they were the means of a further departure.

A heavier judgment than any yet takes place, and the priest-link is broken. Hophni and Phinehas, the guilty sons of Eli, are slain in battle, and the too-indulgent father falls back at the fatal news, and dies. Yet, failing as he was, it is not the bereavement of his sons that most touched him. His heart was still true to God. Whatever his grief at their untimely death, the fatal announcement is that the ark of Jehovah was taken. If the ark was gone, so was his function as a priest, and the visible link connecting Jehovah with His people being in the hands of the Philistines, caused his death. “The word of Jehovah was precious [scarce, or rare] in those days. There was no open vision.” But God preserved for himself a small and feeble remnant all through these dark times.

In a separate book from the history of their inveterate sin, in so persistently going after other gods, the Holy Spirit records the touching history of Ruth. It is another glimpse of domestic life. The story of Micah (as I judge) is that of the general condition of the people, and is given in the same book as the general history. But Elimelech and his family are marked off as distinct from the mass. Yet how feeble his faith! The land of promise had ceased to be such for him. Sin had brought judgment in the shape of famine, and he goes into the country of Moab for bread. But this affords another instance of the overruling wisdom and grace of God, who would have another Gentile (see Tamar and Rahab) brought into the ancestral line of the promised Messiah. The Lord Jesus, even in the Jewish line from Abraham, was connected with the Gentiles who will come in for their part in millennial blessing, when the King of Israel reigns supreme. The genealogy in Luke shows the Lord Jesus made in the likeness of man, but it was marvelous grace to the Gentiles that the Lord, even in His Jewish ancestry, should have a Gentile element. Ruth's personal faith, and desire to be numbered with the people whom God had called and blessed, is refreshing amid the general departure. “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God.” (See Ruth 1 V. 17.) Orpah kissed Naomi, and left her; Ruth slave unto her, and she has the distinguished honor of a place in the royal line of David, and of David's King. (Matt. 1)

God in grace had been preparing for the sad condition of Israel. Samuel the prophet appears. His position is abnormal; the original (human) link is gone. The priest is slain, and the ark taken. Certainly, to raise up a prophet is a blessed intimation of the long-suffering of God; but the presence of such is equally a witness of the sin of the people. The function of a prophet is not so much to maintain relationship with God, as to awaken conscience, and prepare the way to restoration of those who have broken the bond between God and themselves. Samuel, prepared of God, stands in the gap; type of Him, the great Prophet, who stands in the breach now, while Israel is broken and scattered to the four winds. There is neither ark nor priest for them now, and their true King is not yet come in power. They are now such as was symbolically foreshadowed when Eli died, when Ichabod was born, and the glory departed.

Chapter 51

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 11. The History of Faith

The process of Israel's. trial under prophet rule was exceedingly short. Many priests had been in this high position, only one prophet. For their failure under the rule of Samuel was worse than any previous, and necessitated a complete change in the manner, or mode, of the connection between Jehovah and Israel. They had spoken against God while in the wilderness, they had previously rebelled in the land; but now it is open and deliberate rejection of God as King. God showed the true character of their act when He said to Samuel, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” (1 Sam. 8:7.) But this, too, is but a means for God doing His own will. The immediate occasion was the unrighteous ways of Samuel's sons, whom be had made judges. The real and deep-rooted cause was their idolatry. To desire a king, like the nations, what was it but desiring to serve their foes, to be like them in all things. Like them in idolatry, they would be like them in having a king. The visible emblem of Jehovah's presence was lost to them; for awhile in possession by the Philistine, but when they were afraid to keep it any longer, it was brought to the house of Abinadab (1 Sam. 7:1, 2), and remained there for twenty years; and during that time, when the regular service of the ark was interrupted, no wonder if the people sank deeper in idolatry. It was reserved for the king, the man of God's choice, to restore the ark to its propel place, as, on an infinitely greater scale, will Messiah do, whom David typified. (2 Sam. 6:17.)

At the beginning of Samuel's rule there shone out a gleam of hope. They lament after Jehovah, and Samuel said, “If ye do return unto Jehovah with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto Jehovah, and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” It was vain to pretend to serve God while strange gods were among them. Their lament was not because they were beginning to hate idolatry, but because they were oppressed by the Philistines. The God of all mercy heard it, and sends Samuel with a message and a promise of deliverance. There is the appearance of repentance, they put away Baalim and Ashtaroth-right and necessary as an outward act. But with Samuel there is reality, and be would make them as real as himself. Their immense gathering at Mizpeh met have been a striking testimony to the surrounding nations, to whom, no doubt, the Israelites were a riddle. Samuel prays, and a whole nation is gathered to pray, in response to his call. As an outward act it was pleasing to God. It was while thus engaged, while Samuel was offering the burnt-offering, that the Philistines dared to attack them. They had heard that all Israel were come to Mizpeh, perhaps thought they were gathered for war, or, if aware of the occasion, thought it a favorable opportunity to attack them. They had before smitten them when the ark was with them, yea, had taken the ark. Why should they hesitate now, even though they were praying, and the prophet interceding? Had they not proof that Jehovah ceased to protect Israel? Ah, they knew not the immense difference between Israel with a superstitious and fleshly confidence in the presence of the ark, and Israel bowed down before God, crying for deliverance. Jehovah thundered upon the Philistines, and taught these despisers that if He chastened and humbled His

people when they rebelled, He also knew how to deliver when they prayed. God is showing Himself by deed as He declared by word, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,” &c. (Ex. 34:6, &c.) But as we glance through the process, the truth is confirmed on every page of holy writ, that the heart of man is fully set in him to do evil. Nothing short of the direct power of God upon his soul can effect the necessary changes change so radical that the old nature is condemned as past all cure, and a new nature is given.

When Samuel was old he made his sons judges. It was according to divine order that Eli's sons should be priests, but what warrant had Samuel to make his sons judges? A father's partiality is seen in, and blinded them both. Even Samuel, blessed as he is, is not perfect. The elders complain that his sons walk not in his ways, and propose a remedy, but not according to the way of God. It was not His mind that they should desire a king, although it was His will to give them one. It was making the covetous ways of Samuel's sons an excuse for doing far worse. To make one sin an excuse for another is a thing that man has frequently done. God allows them to have their desire. Satan would have them like other nations in having a king, that he might use them as a means of farther estrangement from God, and sink them deeper in idolatry and corruption. And this he effected, as we find in their history under the kings. Satan's purpose was that God might destroy Israel as He had the Canaanites, and then where would be the Seed that was to bruise his head? But God foils the devices of Satan by making them defeat their own end. And besides the turning of Satan's arts against himself, we see the responsibility and failure of man wonderfully entwined in the working out of God's counsels of blessing.

In an external way they were putting a wider interval between God and themselves; for the priest connected the people with God in a more intimate way than the king. The prosperity of the nation was not said to depend upon the faithfulness of the priest in the time past, but all for the future did depend upon the king. And this is also according to the wise purpose of God, for when the true King comes, all their blessing will come through Him. But kingly rule must be tested in luau first, so that the Lord Jesus might be manifest as the only Man that could have the government upon His shoulders, and that because His name is the Mighty God. The king is the nation's representative before God. If he did evil, or if he did good, so did the judgment or the blessing of God rest upon the nation. Under this aspect the king had a higher and more responsible position than the priest, though forbidden to intrude into his office. The coming Seed will be a Priest upon the throne. All glory will unite in Him. Both links will be in His person. Man is seen in both, and fails in both, so that God's Man-the Man of His right hand (Psa. 80:17)-may be seen as the only One that can perfectly maintain both.

The first king is chosen, the priest ceases to be the first man, and the manner of their relationship with God is modified. Yet the reign of Saul was only a time of transition, during which they reaped the consequences of rejecting God as their King, and choosing to have a man. When the right time came, God had the right man ready.

It is because there is so great a change from the rule of the priest to that of a king that the Holy Spirit in Matthew marks off all the preceding time, down to David, as one great division in their history. Two other periods are also given, each broadly distinguished from the others, each a term of fourteen generations-two sevens-a perfect witness of God's long-suffering, and of man's failure.

Why, we may inquire, is the family period included with the first term of their national existence? I apprehend, not merely because of the twice seven generations, but also because, both as a family and as a nation, they had to do with God as their King and Governor, and immediately connected with Him by the priest-link. At first the head of the family was priest, he offered the burnt-offerings; when the family became a nation, Aaron and sons, chosen from a particular tribe, performed the priestly function for the whole nation. So there is, first, the priest-link; then, from David to the Babylonish captivity, the king-link; and the third (as given in Matt. 1), no outward link, but under Gentile dominion, and “Loammi” written upon them. Idolatry marked them under the two former periods; hypocrisy is easily discernible in the third.

If Saul was simply a transition between the first two, as showing their sin, Samuel was no less so, as showing God's mercy. It was just that the people should feel the consequence of rejecting God, but He would not leave Himself without a witness, and raises Samuel, while preparing one to take the place His counsel had ordained. Saul not being the right man, there was a necessity for a prophet to be the channel of communication from God to Israel. The ark of Jehovah in the hand of the enemy, what could the priest do without it? The right man not yet called to the throne, there was a breach in their standing before God. Samuel is prepared of God to fill the gap. David, when anointed, took the prophet's place after his death. His birth, like that of Isaac, Samson, and the Baptist, is marked by the interposition of divine power and grace, singled out by it as a special servant for a special time. A prophet at no time could be a normal link between God and the people. His presence among them was a witness of their departure from their allegiance to God. Israel had broken the old link, grace had not yet brought, in the new; their condition at that moment was abnormal. But was not Saul a king? Yea, truly, but he never connected the people with Jehovah. The ark never came to its place in Saul's lifetime. He could not be the medium of blessing, nor in any way the representative of Israel before God, unless indeed that be a representative which is a living proof that they had rejected God, and chosen a man. Truly, as long as Saul lived, he was an index to their position. God did not acknowledge him as the right ruler, for Samuel judged Israel all His life. (1 Sam. 7:15.) Before God it was Samuel, not Saul. He was on his trial during the life of Samuel, and though he showed the complete absence of faith from the beginning, the long-suffering of God is most plain. After Samuel's death it was with rapid and but few strides that he rushed to his miserable end. His army crushed, his people hiding themselves and leaving their cities to the Philistines, Saul himself only escaped the enemy's sword by using his own. Was this sore judgment upon Israel because Saul was a wicked king? Nay, it was the sure consequence of their sin in desiring a man when Jehovah was their King. (1 Sam. 12:12.) The thunder and rain in their wheat harvest was but a little sign of the coming judgment, but which even then would have been stayed by repentance. “But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.” How significant the words-” ye and your king!” He was not God's king. Not anywhere is there an exemplification of the, to man, incompatible truths-God's sovereignty, and man's responsibility as in his life.

Yet, to human eyes, who or what more promising than the son of Kish? He was just the man to attract and fix the eye of nature. “There was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.” He was physically a magnificent man, of right royal appearance. God brings him to Samuel, and instructs the prophet, how to act. Saul is anointed, and has the assurance from God that he is to be king, and,

by a series of events which “providential” would not accurately describe, God's word is confirmed to him. Notwithstanding this, when the moment came for his being presented to the people, he had “hid himself among the stuff.” To man this might seem to betoken modesty, a sense of unworthiness, and self-distrust, and therefore most desirable in one suddenly called to the highest station. But however pleasing the appearance, was it of faith in God's word, confirmed as it had been, to hide among the stuff at the very time when he ought to have been present before the people? If self had been forgotten, if simple trust in God, obedient to His call, there would have been no need to drag him out of his hiding-place. Diffidence of self would surely have been felt, but there would also have been confidence in God, and humble reliance. Saul failed at the beginning. There was no faith: proof from the first that he was not the right man. Outwardly all looked well; the sons of Belial despised him, “but he held his peace.” He gets the reward of this in a victory over Nahash, and God establishes him upon the throne. The people would put to death those who mockingly said,” Shall Saul reign over us?” But he would not allow one to be put to death, “for to-day Jehovah hath wrought salvation in Israel.” Not Saul, but Jehovah; there is the appearance of giving honor to Jehovah. It is beautiful blossom, but, alas! the fruit, like the apples of Sodom, are only ashes. It looks well to praise God in the hour of victory, what will he do when the Philistines gather thousands of chariots and horsemen, and people as the sand on the sea-shore in multitude; when his own people “hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits” in every conceivable place. So great was the terror from the Philistines. Even his army trembled; he had three thousand men-soon they dwindled down to six hundred. (1 Sam. 13:2, 15.) Samuel is late in coming, and the strain is too great for the semblance of faith, and the impatience of unbelief leads him to intrude into the priestly office. His excuse to Samuel is but the proof that true faith was not found in him. There was positive disobedience, and he pleads necessity. “I forced myself,” he said. But God reads the heart, and by the mouth of the prophet Samuel pronounces judgment. “Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of Jehovah thy God.” It was all over with Saul; he had been put into the crucible, and there was no gold-only dross. God would have established his kingdom forever, but now it shall not continue. The succeeding test, when sent to destroy Amalek, only confirmed the judgment given already. The kingdom was rent from him, and given to his neighbor, who was better than he. Saul is both judged and forsaken of God, as chapter 14:37 shows, where also he proves himself, by his foolish prohibition of food, to be a hindrance to Israel's complete victory, and the cause of the people ravenously eating the flesh with the blood. Saul was the nation's ruin.

But mark here the omniscience of God. Saul would have been confirmed in the kingdom forever if he had obeyed. Will God permit a sinful man to prevent the development of His purpose? Nay, God foresaw the utter failure of Saul, and provides beforehand. So that, when Saul fell in Gilboa, David is brought forward as the man whom God had chosen. In this, as in many other recorded instances, how marvelously blended are reward for faithfulness in man as responsible, and the sovereign will of God, who does not permit man's inevitable failure to frustrate His purposes of grace. Therefore God, who had all Saul's course, from first to last, before His omniscient eye, provides for the necessities of grace, and calls David, and anoints him, long before the evil course of Saul is run. It is the connection of these two principles that human reason is incapable of grasping. Faith, where it cannot see, yet believes.

The succeeding events show a more rapid descent in evil. When David was anointed (chap. 16:13,14),the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." The servants know who sent the evil spirit, and seek to exorcise the demon by a skilful player on a harp. God overrules their act, and brings His anointed unto the king. Did David's harp allay the perturbed spirit of the king? At first it did (chap. 16:23), but Saul repented not, and more than once he tried to smite David to the wall with his javelin. The harp, which was afterward to sound in praises to God, was first used to soothe a wretched king. Like the deaf adder, he would not be charmed. David's skill does not eradicate jealousy and rancorous hate from Saul's breast. The youth had slain the giant that terrified the king and his army, and the women, in the song of victory, had ascribed to David ten thousands, only thousands to Saul. This stirred up hidden depths of evil in the king's heart, and he sought to kill David. He knew that the kingdom was given to David by God, and he hated him the more. It was rebellion against God, as well as hatred of David. It was the enmity of man's king against God's anointed-the same feeling that said, when Jesus, the true Heir, came, "This is the heir, come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours."

Nothing so excites enmity in man as seeing faith and obedience in another. The closest natural ties avail not to quench the burning hate of a soul impelled by Satan against those who bow in faith to the word of God. Jonathan knew that David was to be king, and he bowed in obedience to God. Naturally he was heir to the throne, but it was enough for him that God had spoken. But this brings upon him his father's hatred, and at him also the javelin is hurled; even Jonathan's mother escapes not the rage of Saul. "Thou son of a perverse, rebellious woman." So the Lord Jesus said, of whom David was type, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." Jonathan's faith might not and did not lead him out of his father's house; yet by it, and his love for David, he gave him all the outward marks of being heir to the throne, he "stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." (Chap. 18:4.) Mere love for David did not cause this self-sacrifice; it was faith and obedience to the sovereign will of God. It is a little pattern of what is now one of our greatest privileges, to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, our reasonable service."

Meantime God was preparing David for the throne. Through torrents of temptation and sorrow, but a needed process, that he might learn that all his dignity and exaltation was the free gift of God, and to know how to behave himself when he had it. During Saul's lifetime David was fugitive, his pathway to the throne was persecution and exile. But it was lack of faith which led him to seek an asylum among the Philistines. It brought him into great trouble, for it was there that his own people spoke of stoning him (chap. 30:6), and he certainly equivocated with Achish (chap. 30:10), and if God had not overruled, and not allowed the jealousy of the Philistine lords to break out, he would have been found fighting against Israel. David was never in so great danger as at that moment. How could he have ever sat upon the throne, if he had been numbered in the army of Achish? God watched over and delivered his failing servant from such a fatal position. He was in God's school, and there he was trained for his future position, his failure notwithstanding. Saul had no such training-it would have been wasted on him, for he had no faith to profit by it. Even the teaching of God is profitless unless there be faith. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard." (Heb. 4:2.) All men that hear the word are proved by it; the word tries everything. Where there is faith, grace meets the believer, and brings him through every trial.

Where there is no faith, man is left on the ground of his responsibility, and fails and perishes. Though David slipped more than once, he never forgot faith in God. In his deep distress his language is, “Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.” All other aspects of his sin were as nothing in that he had sinned against God. However great the fall, true faith always makes confession to God, the greatest evil is against Him. When he sinned in numbering the people, he makes no choice of the three alternatives put before him, but simply puts himself into the hands of God. In his direst extremity he said, “Let us now fall into the hand of Jehovah.” Though conscious of his offense, his confidence in God is maintained. It was a divinely-given faith. Indeed there is no true faith but that which God gives; and the man born of God will always turn to Him, even if it be to receive chastening. The saint in communion with God naturally turns to Him in seasons of sorrow and distress from without; but there is no more certain evidence of new life than casting oneself upon God, even when conscious of failure, and of having grieved the Spirit of God. Every such failing one would say with Job, though not perhaps in his spirit, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” (Job 13:15.)

The school of affliction, where the best lessons of faith are learned, is necessary, because even God's saints do not learn in any other way-at least few learn deeply, save in that school. Man's nature being so inveterately evil, few lessons are learned without tears; the Father has to chasten every son He receives.

David was the first man raised to a throne by the direct appointment of God; and he was made king, not merely to be a new link connecting Israel with Jehovah, but also to be a type of his greater Son, whom God will soon set upon the now vacant throne. There will be a bond then between God and Israel, established by grace, which never can be severed. It was a bright theme for the prophets when denouncing Israel's sin, and telling of impending judgment, God Himself putting words in the prophet's month which surely tell us of His own delight in the future blessing of Israel. “In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Jehovah thy Redeemer.” (See Isa. 54:7-17.) Israel is still waiting for that time. It was not for a mere man, though he be a David, to establish that eternal link with Jehovah-God; the Son of David will do that. David only gives a transient glimpse of the power of the coming One; and he, being only a man, passes away. But God, in giving us a picture of the future glory of Christ, joins Solomon with his father David. Solomon, born in the purple, carries on without a break the picture of the Messiah's kingdom. David is the warrior-king, subduing all his enemies. His life was wholly passed in war, with but few intervals of rest. The reign of Solomon was peace, the Gentiles paying tribute. The David aspect will be seen in Christ, as well as the Solomon splendor, but with the difference that must be between the shadow and the substance. No other king ever reached the magnificence of Solomon. But he, and all his bright display, will pale before the glory of Christ.

God has given, if we may so say, an outline of the work and consequent glory of Christ, from His first presentation as the Paschal Lamb in the passover night in Egypt on to the figure of His glorious reign of millennial peace set forth by Solomon. All the worth of His person, all the value of His work, and His coming glory, have, by type and picture, been foreshadowed, and all further revelation of Him-up to His birth-is but the bringing out, in different circumstances, of what had been previously given. Indeed, we can look further back, and exclaim, How wondrous the combination of wisdom and power, of mercy and love, in all the way from creation, and surely will

be until the final scene of glory, when universal praise shall ascend from a redeemed world to a Savior-God.

David and Solomon, having fulfilled God's purpose as types, pass away, and the process is carried on which brings out in every possible form the utter ruin of man, and the absolute necessity-if God would save man-that He Himself must be the Savior.

Apart from the typical teaching, we have the, old lesson again confirmed, that no position, however favored, can keep man faithful and true. Solomon's idolatry in his old age is but the outcome of previous failure. He had horses from Egypt, he had Gentile wives; both were forbidden. His wives seduced him into idolatry. (Cf. Deut. 17:14-17; 1 Kings 10:28; 11:3, 2 Chron. 9:25.) His failure brought the first threatening against Israel as a kingdom. “Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes which I commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.” “Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam.” How low he had fallen! He has become like Saul in this, that as Saul sought to kill David because God had given him the kingdom, so Solomon sought to kill his servant Jeroboam, because God had given him ten tribes. In both instances it was rebellion against the decree of God. The failure of Solomon is far greater than any found in David. All the training that David had was equally for Solomon, and God set David before him as the pattern for his walk. “If thou wilt walk before me as David, thy father, walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness,” &c. (1 Kings 9:4.) Who, remembering that through David's sin the sword should never depart from his house, would have held him up as a pattern to his son? It was because, in his darkest hours, he always put his trust in God. It is this faith that God calls “integrity of heart.” And therefore, in Psa. 7:8, which, in its perfectness, can only apply to Messiah, subordinately is uttered by David. But in all this of David and Solomon, manifestly, the lessons of faith and glimpses of glory are distinct from the trial and failure of man which was going on at the same time. God's purpose and man's evil are both developed.

The failure of the kingdom marks another prominent point in the history of God's moral processes with man. The nation had already rejected God as their King, now they reject the family whom God had called, and the man He had set upon the throne. No doubt the rending away of the tribes was judgment for Solomon's transgression, for the failure was with him. But the rebellion of the ten tribes was morally their own act and deed, and it would, through Rehoboam's folly, have extended to all the tribes. The adhesion of Judah to Solomon's son was simply due to the overruling providence of God, which, according to His gracious word, reserved one tribe to the house of David, and that for the accomplishment of His purpose-the bringing in of His king. Judah retains the hill of Zion; though shorn of glory, they have still the temple and the city, are owned of God, and the kingly connection is maintained between Jehovah and the kingdom of Judah. With Jeroboam's kingdom there was no outward link. There was no regularly ordained priest; and the king was given in judgment. God did not yet give them up completely. He sent prophets to them, notably Elijah and Elisha, and He had a remnant in Israel. No such company is recognized in Judah, as publicly owned, while the mass was disowned. Judah, though in result worse than Israel, is still owned as a nation. All the symbols of worship ordained by God were with Judah, the ten tribes had not one of them. Jeroboam tried to make Samaria take the place of Jerusalem, and the two calves in Dan and Bethel a substitute for the temple. Idolatry was the established religion of Israel, in opposition to Jehovah; in Judah, not the open professed rejection, but rather like

Aaron, who made a calf, and offered sacrifice to Jehovah, making a god before Him. But this was so much the worse, for it was, so to speak, insulting God to His face. Judah dared to put their idol in the temple of God. So it was Judah's nominal nearness to God that gave the power to commit the greater sin: Israel was now, like the nations, under the evil influence of idol-worship and wicked kings, save that God in mercy sent messengers to them. But all the kings, every successor to the throne, did evil in the sight of God. A righteous man could not be king of Israel, he would necessarily have gone to Jerusalem to worship, and in result the ten tribes would have returned to the house of David. But God took care that no righteous man should ascend Jeroboam's throne. He had a son, in whom some good was found (1 Kings 14:18), and for that reason God took him.

Chapter 52

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 12. The History of Faith

A good king of Israel was an impossibility, for in such a case there would have been two central cities, Jerusalem and Samaria, one in religion and worship; yet opposed to each other, sometimes at war, and Samaria always the rebel city, and without a single vestige of authority, or symbol or type, from God to perform the ordinances of His worship. Had it been possible to have had another divinely-sanctioned temple at Samaria, what confusion would have ensued! Two opposing testimonies would be mutually destructive. There could be but one center of worship, only one hill of Zion, as there is only one Calvary. And if in judgment the ten tribes were to be rent off from David's house, there was a necessity that all the kings of Israel should be wicked. Not that God made the kings wicked, but that He never permitted a good man to be king. The Levites as a body remained with Judah. They were nothing without the temple. Jeroboam's priests were made of the lowest of the people; whosoever would, he consecrated him. “And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.” The immediate successors of Jeroboam were conspirators and murderers. The inspired account, from Jeroboam to Omri, and from Zechariah to Hoshea, is like reading a page of Roman history in the last years of the empire. But Ahab, the son of Omri, exceeded all in wickedness.

But while others have such brief notice, little more than how he came to the throne, and that he died, or was slain by another; why so much concerning Ahab? Because in his reign God graciously and wondrously interposed by word and miracle. This king comes out so prominent through his connection with Elijah. Not he, but the prophet, is in the mind of the Spirit; and whether Ahab or his son be king, the detail is that of the prophet; Elijah or his successor is the subject, or rather the patience of God in using two distinct means to lead them to repent, if they had ears to hear. Judgment characterizes Elijah's ministry, mercy that of Elisha. It was to them, as the Lord Jesus said when here: if one mourned, they would not weep; if another piped, they would not dance. Elijah vindicated Jehovah's name, but they heeded not. Elisha proved God's goodness, but they repented not. God called repeatedly, but there was no response. Before Elijah's time an unnamed prophet was sent to Jeroboam, and denounced his altar. No wonder that the king tried to take him, for to return to the true worship would also be returning to allegiance to Rehoboam, and the restoration of Jeroboam's arm was proof that Jehovah, who called them to repentance, was able to restore them. But it was for Elijah to prove that Baal was no god, and to wring from the hearts of the idolatrous people the acknowledgment that “Jehovah, he is God.” The necessary result was, that the priests of Baal are all slain. But there is more. God vindicated, and Baal's priests slain, blessing follows, and there is abundance of rain; another intimation of what God would do for them if they obeyed His call.

But while attempting to trace the path of God's patience in all these moral processes with man, there are also to be noticed the instances of faith in connection with His dealings. Elijah's faith is marked by great power, but not less marked is, in one instance, the absence of it. Ahab grieves

over his dead priests, Jezebel swears by her gods to do the same to Elijah. His faith falters on hearing of this and he flees. After the glory of the scene upon mount Carmel, he did not expect to have to flee for his life, and to hide himself from a woman's fury. A murmuring feeling rises, and he asks God to take his life, saying, “I am not better than my fathers.” This is not humility, but saying that he ought to have been better treated; since he was not, better to die: he had had enough of trial. “It is enough, now, O Jehovah, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers.” A saint in intimate and peaceful communion with God never says, “It is enough,” but, following in the steps of the Perfect One, says, Thy will, not mine, be done. But a merciful God meets him, and satisfies his hunger. Food, miraculously provided, and in the strength of that meat miraculously sustained forty days and forty nights. We think of One who had no meat miraculously given, but endured for forty, days and forty nights; not that He would not be subject to the feeling of hunger, He was a perfect Man, and was willingly subject to its need. “Afterward he hungered.” But He was the mighty God-Elijah a weak servant. This goodness of God to a wearied and persecuted servant does not set aside discipline, and at last the solemn question is put, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” God strengthened him to go to Horeb, but did not send him there. He had run to Jezreel in the power of the Spirit, and no sooner there than he ran away, but not in the power of the Spirit. He left his post: hence the solemn question, What doest thou here? God, who had sent down the fire, and consumed the sacrifice, altar, water-who had strengthened his arm against all the idolatrous prophets-was not He able to curb the fury of an enraged woman? Elijah's faith, which was equal to the great occasion on mount Carmel, was not equal to the quiet, patient dependence upon God for his life. The passive power of faith needs for its sustenance closer communion with God than its active energy. Action, as it were, nerves us to the conflict; but quiet endurance of wrong, or suffering of any kind, which neither friend nor foe sees, but only God, this indeed needs divine power, and without God's support none would bear the strain. Many a saint has shown the courage of faith before his enemies, as Elijah when he faced Ahab, but who, like him, quails and flees, when there is nothing to do, but quietly trust in God.

Elijah boasts of his jealousy for God, but he was equally if not more careful of his own life. He said he was the only one left who cared for God and for His altar, but why did he ignore the hundred prophets that Obadiah spake of Besides those, there were seven thousand known to God who had not bowed the knee to Baal. God, who is as faithful in discipline as in grace, bids him anoint another in his place. Nor is the wickedness of Ahab forgotten in the needed discipline of Elijah. Hazael is to be anointed king of Syria, Jehu, of Israel, both in due time to execute God's judgments upon the house of Ahab. There was another sword to be unsheathed, the most terrible of all. “And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazed shall Jehu slay, and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.” None escaped Elisha's sword, which took a far wider sweep than those of Hazael and of Jehu. Elisha's sword was the word of God, whose judgment overtook the guilty house of Ahab, and the idolatrous nation, after the swords of Hazael and of Jehu were broken. “Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth.” (Hos. 6:5.)

What a proof of the infatuation of sin is found in Ahab! At first slavishly submissive to Benhadad, afterward, with unwonted spirit, he says, “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as be that putteth it off.” Then, after God had asserted His supremacy, as well in the plains as in the hills, and for His own name's sake given Ahab victory over the Syrians, and thus another

opportunity for Israel to return to His worship, the wretched blinded Ahab takes Benhadad to his bosom, embraces him, and claims kindred with Israel's foe-God's enemy! Not even the semblance of thanksgiving to God for His wonderful mercy and deliverance. On the contrary, he makes an alliance with one whose purpose was to destroy Israel. What an instance of the heart's inveterate enmity against God, of its sottish insensibility, and that in presence of His great mercy! But though judgment is near, mercy still lingers over the guilty nation.

Ahab sinks deeper in sin, killing Naboth to get his vineyard. He had sold himself to work evil in the sight of Jehovah. The terrible denunciations of the prophet make him humble himself, and mercy, that delights to delay judgment, puts it off during his life. But no temporary repentance, even though unfeigned, could avert the threatened doom. Ahab's humiliation was soon forgotten, it bore no real and lasting fruit. In the next war with Syria we find him with false prophets again: he had not profited by the testimony given on mount Carmel. There were four hundred false prophets, and one true prophet, “but,” says Ahab, “I hate him.” This one prophet told the truth, and Ahab loved not the truth. God sends a lying spirit to him, proof that Ahab was given up. He loved a lie, and the lie led him to destruction. The lying spirit encourages him to fight against Syria, though the true prophet warned him. And this did have some weight with him, his conscience feared the impending doom. He sought to avoid it by disguising himself from the Syrians, and by persuading the king of Judah to wear his royal apparel. But he could not hide himself from God. A certain man drew a bow at a venture, but God directed the arrow.

The latest public act of Elijah is God's judgment upon the idolatrous Ahaziah. This king, enraged because his messengers to Baalzebub were hindered from going, seeks to be revenged upon Elijah. Two captains and their fifties are consumed by fire from heaven. They thought it was an easy matter to take one man. God was not in their thoughts. Ahaziah is as determined to get hold of Elijah as to worship Baalzebub, and, as if in defiance of the power of God, sends a third captain and his fifty, who is only spared because he submits to the prophet, and prays for his life. The proof given at mount Carmel makes the false prophets use the name of Jehovah, and pretend to give counsel from God. (1 Kings 22:6.) But Ahaziah is bold, and sends openly to Baalzebub, to know if he shall recover. The God whom he so publicly insulted steps in, and tells him he shall die. His brother, Jehoram, was not nearly so bad, for he removed Baal. But he did not remove Jeroboam's calves, which were, doubtless, retained from the same motive of policy that induced Jeroboam to set them up. (1 Kings 12:26-30.) In his day the sword of Hazael begins (2 Kings 8:28), and the sword of Jehu fulfills the prediction, and all that remained of the house of Ahab Jehu slew. (Chap. x. 11, 17.) He slew also the priests of Baal, his prophets and servants; but it was by treachery; and Jehu called it zeal for Jehovah. How different this from Elijah's executing God's judgment His was true zeal, though Jehu's craft was no less the vindication of the true God against the false idol. But this Jehu, like his predecessor, retains the calves. It is a remarkable expression in 1 Kings 12:30: “And this thing became a sin"-not, was a sin. Of course it was sin, but this is not the meaning here, but it became a standing hindrance, through each king's policy, to Israel's going back to the worship at the temple.

Elisha's ministry was in keeping with Israel's condition. The same in character as that which God did in Egypt by the hand of Moses-that is, to demonstrate His supremacy. This goes to prove that Israel were then sunk as low as the Egyptians. God was bringing back the knowledge of Himself-His Godhead-which they had lost, by miracles, which were rather judicial than otherwise.

Apart from governmental discipline, it was according to the wisdom of God to raise up another servant, when about to prove Himself by merciful interposition, as He has before by judicial dealing. For Elisha's ministry is characterized by sovereign goodness. In the series of miracles, or recorded acts of each, the second one of each appears as an exception to the character of each respectively. (1 Kings 17:9, &c.) This is an example of pure mercy, and, to a Gentile, an instance of mercy to one not of Israel, which the Jew so resented. (Luke 4:26.) On the other hand, 2 Kings 2:23 was only judgment. The mockery of Elisha contained a sneer at what Jehovah had done in translating Elijah. “Go up, thou bald head” was no mere disrespect to Elisha, but derision of the God of Elisha. But these children were but the echo of their parents, they repeated what was said at home, and in the city whence they came. Sad state of Israel! They did not believe that Elijah had gone up. How could they, when they lived at Bethel, which was once the place of God's altar, now the place for Jeroboam's calf? The worshippers of the idol scoffed at the servant of God. Judgment followed quickly, and was felt more by the parents than by the children. But not only the idolatrous inhabitants of Bethel; the sons of the prophets did not believe that Elijah was taken up. They did not doubt the power of God, but assuredly they did His grace and His love. It would appear they had gone to Jericho, to see what might happen. If they did not see Elijah go up, they saw Elisha divide the Jordan, and they were ready to acknowledge that the spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha; but to urge that the Spirit of Jehovah had taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley, is an awful, but true, index of the darkness into which even the sons of the prophets had fallen. The children of Bethel are scarcely worse than the sons of the prophets.

Elisha begins his mission with blessing. Healing of the waters given even to Jericho, a place laid under a special curse. Now the word of God is that there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. This is grace indeed, for the curse (Josh. 6:26) was not because it was worse than other cities of Canaan, but because of the aggravated character of Achan's sin, because the first victory in the land had been used as an opportunity for sin. But here, where Israel's sin, as in the land, began in the place where Elisha begins his ministry of goodness and grace.

Elijah's first message was that there should be no rain; Elisha's first public act was providing abundance of water. The character of each first act was that which marked all that followed. The miraculous supply of water when perishing with thirst (chap. 3.), and the overthrow of the Moabites, tells of grace for them meeting their need, and giving them victory. But chapter 4 (I judge), while historically showing God's goodness and patience towards a rebellions people, gives also symbolically the condition of the whole nation, and the only way in which they could be established in the goodness and favor of God. The only power which could secure the blessing for them was the power that annuls death. The widowed wife of one of the sons of the prophets not inaptly depicts the condition of the once fully-owned nation, but now desolate; her two sons (Israel and Judah) about to be taken for bondmen. She had nothing but one pot of oil. Divine power provides for the paying of the debt, and enough for her sustenance beside. Christ, the Messiah, paid the nation's debt, their iniquity was laid upon Him, by His stripes they are healed. Grace met all their need, all God's claims. The divine supply flowed out till there was no more room to contain: antitypically the perfectness of grace; every vessel filled. The Shunamite gives another feature as to the way and means of making the blessings of grace sure and eternal: fruitfulness and increase, but which is secured by resurrection. The dead child is restored to life. If Gehazi in any way may

represent the messengers of God in old time, then the prophet would be a type of Christ, whose coming could alone meet the desperate need of Israel. He alone was able. He could raise from the dead, but it was by Himself submitting to death. He, the true Bread from heaven, was the meal cast into the pot of death. Thus He abolished the power of death. The wild gourds become wholesome. And His death is not only God's remedy for the evil of the world, but blessing immediately follows; yet not without showing the power of faith. A man brings to the man of God twenty loaves of barley and full ears of corn. But there were a hundred men to be fed, and the servitor is astonished when bidden to set before the men that they may eat. So the wondering disciple said to the Lord, “What are they among so many?” (John 6:9.) Elisha's faith is strong, spite of human appearances. “He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof”-abundance, and more than enough. Here Elisha stands forth as foreshadowing what the Lord Jesus did when He fed the multitudes, and this only a little sample of what He will yet do when all Israel, like the dead child, is restored. This grace, so preeminent, and founded upon resurrection, could not be limited to Israel; it necessarily overflows, breaks bounds, and reaches, as the next chapter shows, to the Gentile leper.

That God was now in grace, and by the ministry of Elisha acting for Israel, even the enemy knows. The king of Syria makes his secret plans, and pitches his camp in such and such a place, to catch the king of Israel at a disadvantage; and God warns the king by Elisha of the danger, insomuch that the king of Syria suspects his servants of treachery. “Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?” “None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.” So manifest was the intervention of God, that even their enemies acknowledge it; at least, if they saw not God, they knew that there was a superior power in the person of Elisha which baffled all their schemes. The ignorant Syrian king, thinking to set aside this adverse power or to bring it over to his side, sends to take Elisha. But his vain attempt only serves to make more marked the wondrous interposition of God, which, if personally a deliverance for Elisha, had a voice also for Israel. The king of Israel knows not how to estimate the gracious dealings of God. The king of Syria forgot the kindness he had received, and besieged Samaria. The king of Israel forgot the display of almighty power, saw not the true cause of the famine in Israel's idolatry, and sought to visit upon Elisha his revenge for the suffering of his people. It was when Elijah knew of Jezebel's purpose that he failed and fled, and so here (if chap. 6:33 be the words of Elisha), a momentary feeling of despondency passes through the prophet's mind. Elijah's failure was close after the glory of Carmel, and Elisha's lack of trust in God not long after his supernatural deliverance at Dothan. How frequently the test of faith is preceded by a remarkable display of grace! At Dothan the prophet prayed that his servant's eyes might be opened. Now, are not his own dim? Delivered from the king of Syria, why now fear the king of Israel? There was only one perfect Man. But the cloud passes away, and he predicts victory and plenty, not by Israel's prowess; it is in a most emphatic way God alone.

All these testimonies of long-suffering and grace, these loud calls to repentance, met with no response from Israel, and God prepares His instruments of vengeance. Hazael, now the king of Syria, begins to execute the sentence of God. The king of Israel is wounded in battle, and the king of Judah visits him. What is this but the professing world going to comfort the profane world? Judgment delays not, and the text instrument of God is anointed. Jehu is called to the throne, and unsheathe the sword of God. Retributive judgment overtakes Jezebel, and every vestige of the

house of Ahab is effaced. Even with these evidences, both of mercy and judgment, Israel's sin is so inveterate, that God: says, “Ephraim is joined to his idols-let him alone.” They were a rebellious and stiff-necked race, and became increasingly so, till the Assyrian carried them all away, and gave their land to others.

(To be Continued)

Chapter 53

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 13. The History of Faith

In Judah, morally worse than Israel, God raised up some righteous kings, in order to maintain His visible connection with them, until, forced to judge, the kingdom of Judah is carried away captive, as Israel had been. They took no heed of the judgment that fell upon the sister kingdom, nor were subdued by the many mercies received from God, who lingered long over the place where His name was recorded, even while declaring the sin of Judah to exceed that of Israel. (Ezek. 23) But their cup of iniquity, though not yet full, was rapidly filling; and at last the king of Babylon executes the decree of God. The rebellious nations are carried to Babylon, and Jehovah permits His city and His temple to be destroyed.

In the dealings of God with Judah and Israel, how mercy and long-suffering shine God would be a Savior-God, and was surely controlling all for the in-bringing of Messiah, who was also to be the Savior of the world. Also how marked is His judgment, for that man is always responsible for mercies received, and righteously must be dealt with on that ground. In a moral process man's responsibility has a prominent place. The wisdom of God combines the sovereignty of grace with judging man as a sinner. Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, are seen in wondrous harmony.

While all the kings of Israel did evil, some of the kings, of Judah did right; yet the best of them presents but a checkered scene. The raising up of some who, in the words of scripture, did that which is right in the sight of the Lord, is the same grace which reserved Judah to the house of David, and kept up the external link as long as the temple stood, or at least till the time when the glory departed from it. (Ezek. 23) If more guilty than Israel, why did grace linger so long over them, and in captivity keep them from intermingling with the Gentiles, and at the predicted time bring back a remnant? To say that God delights in showing utmost grace where man has shown utmost sin, is blessedly true, but gives not the deeper reason of His long forbearance. God watched over them, and guarded them, and brought a company to Jerusalem for the great purpose of presenting Messiah to them, and accomplishing the counsels of mercy. This does account for the merciful forbearance which delayed to strike; and, even when wrath did strike them with the sword of Nebuchadnezzar, it was not a scattering that followed. Nor is Judah now, after the Roman judgment, so lost to sight as the ten tribes which were carried away by the Assyrian; so that they are, even after the sin and guilt of crucifying the Lord Jesus, reserved for some special dealing. And we know that they will be brought back to their land, while still rejecting the Christ, then to undergo the final trial and the great tribulation. For this reason the Jew is providentially kept apart from Gentiles, and carries his nationality written upon his forehead. A mark is set upon him, as upon Cain, only with this difference, that the mark upon Cain was to preserve him from human vengeance (Gen. 4:15), but the Jew is reserved for special judgment. May we not reverently say, his Brother's blood crieth to God for vengeance, for the Lord Jesus “sprang out of Judah"? They, not Israel (save in common with all men), crucified their King; and as the purpose of God kept

them distinct from all Gentiles, that Christ might be born King of the Jews, so are they now distinguished and separate, to bear the special indignation for having rejected their true King. He whose right it is will then take vengeance upon those that would not have Him to reign over them. (Luke 19:27.)

The kings of Israel were not recognized as the representatives of the nation before God; there was no outward link between God and the people. In mercy God sent His prophets to re-establish (had it been possible) the normal link, to bring them back to the place they had left. In Judah the king did stand in that responsible position-if he did right, there was prosperity; if evil, judgment followed. Many prophets were sent to Judah, many warnings, and many invitations; but neither in Judah nor in Israel did prosperity hang upon the individual faithfulness or righteousness of the prophet.

While there are examples of faith in the latter days of the kingdom of Judah, a few bright glimpses among their kings-each example coming down to us in the shape of warning, or as a pattern-yet it is not as a whole a history of faith, but the recounting of God's moral processes with a stiff-necked race, until the time come for the fulfillment of His purpose in the advent of Christ.

There was a “due time” for Christ, yea, both time and place fixed in the everlasting counsels of God, when and where He should appear, and die for the ungodly. All through, from the beginning, God was preparing for the great moment. His forbearance toward Israel and Judah point onward to the cross; even as the cross declares His righteousness “for the remission of sins that are past.” (Rom. 3:25.) But His forbearance, His merciful interpositions, His raising up right-eons men to sit upon the throne of Judah, so that the whole line of kings should not be invariably evil, while assuredly proofs of goodness for the time then, are in the moral processes of God only subservient to the one great act in the history of time-we may say in the counsels of eternity. Before there was any creation, there was the eternal thought, as expressed in, “Lo I come to do thy will, O God.” So that all the previous dealings of God were preparatory and secondary to the cross. Heaven and earth are the creation of God; but this world has a character beyond that-it is a reconciled world, soon to be displayed in all the glory resulting from redemption. The heavens rejoice in it, angelic joy is heightened by it, for the glory of the cross reaches to and affects the utmost limit of the universe of God. It is the appointed pivot upon which all turns. If, then, God, in wondrous mercy, stayed His vengeance upon the guilty inhabitants of Jerusalem, and if, when judgment did fall, His controlling hand brought them back from Babylon, it was that in due time, and at the due place, Jesus should be born King of the Jews. It was written in the volume of the book of God's eternal counsels.

Passing by the evil kings of Judah, how marred are even the lives of those who are called righteous! There is in them the operation of grace, and their faith answering to it in measure; but there is also, and very prominent, governmental discipline for failure. In all individual faith, another series of lessons in its subjective energy, and in many instances the absence of energy; faith, as it were, lying latent, instead of in righteous activity, showing itself, not on the ground of known redemption, but of faithfulness to the law and the ordinances of the temple of God. And though on this ground the sphere of faith is comparatively limited, yet there is enough for us to learn as to the power of faith and the danger of failure.

Not one but failed, not one but endured special chastisement, For God, while fall of grace, never sets aside righteousness. Even now, under a dispensation pre-eminently of grace, God deals with

believers in fatherly discipline, and makes us feel our responsibility; not, of course, as a question of final salvation, but with each one of present discipline and blessing. And if God has recorded the errors of others, it is for our profit. This is the character of God's book, that, while it reveals His ways of wisdom and grace, it also contains lessons for individual learning and daily use for practical holiness in the ways of faith. And this last is the more important. Intelligence as to the ways of God may be a great help to the understanding of what our place in Christ is before Him, and for the rendering a true corporate testimony to our standing in grace; but though there be no intelligence as to dispensational truth, though all corporate testimony break down, individual faith and faithfulness always remain as the characteristic of the saint, the importance of which is contained in the warning, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” If a man stood alone, so far from removing him from the sphere of faith, it would be an occasion for its greater exercise. Indeed at this present time corporate testimony has so failed, that faithfulness for God seems to be reduced to mere individual action, and the most faithful, the most alone-his conduct the most liable to be misconstrued (to say the least) by others. The wreck of united testimony, and of the church's visible unity, as established at the first, is the foreseen end. For while every believer will escape safe to land, it is on broken pieces of the ship.

Asa, the grandson of Rehoboam, began well. He set aside his mother on account of her idolatry, but, when in trouble from Baasha, made alliance with Benhadad. When adversity draws a man from the path of righteousness, it is more serious than when seduced by prosperity. Adversity generally drives to God a saint who has wandered. It is one of the means grace employs. It was so with David. It is sometimes used to bring the wicked to repentance, as in the case of Manasseh. But when through it one, now in this dispensation of fullest light, who hitherto seemed to walk well, turns to the ungodly-to the world-for help from trouble, it is almost positive proof that there was no reality in his profession. When all is smooth, it is easy, comparatively, to assume the appearance of righteousness. When the testing moment comes, then is the proof or the disproof of reality. Our thoughts revert to the stony ground hearer, who in time of trouble falls away. Remarkable is God's word concerning Asa; though he did not remove the idolatrous high places, yet his heart was perfect with Jehovah all his days. (1 Kings 15:14 Chron. 15:17.) Perfection is always in relation to the truth revealed. Noah was perfect; Job “perfect and upright.” To Abraham God said, “Walk before me, and be thou perfect.” But Israel and Judah had lost much of the knowledge of truth. The darkening influence of idolatry had long been hiding from them truth revealed before. God calls again, and reminds “Asa, Judah, and Benjamin” of His covenant, and their responsibility. This is much lower ground than where Abraham was Asa's perfectness did not equal that of Abraham. And the perfection of any before Christ came is far below, and different in character from, what the cross and a full redemption declares Christian perfection to be. Saul of Tarsus was, “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” if Christ had not been revealed, he would have been perfect; but this same perfection became sin in presence of Christ. All that Saul of Tarsus boasted in, Paul the apostle despised. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord made all the righteousness of the law to be refuse in his eyes. The perfection which was now disclosed to his faith is, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead.” This was the point before him, not yet apprehended by him, but God had apprehended him that he might attain to it. And the responsive energy of grace made him forget the things behind, and reach forth to the things before, and press toward the mark for the

prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And then he immediately adds, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” That is, our perfection here is knowing Christ risen on high as our measure, and that we have not yet attained to the mark. It is so high, so great, so blessed, that we shall not reach it till with and like Christ. To place it lower than this is to come short of God's standard, and to put one farther off morally from the perfection which God looks for from us while groaning in this tabernacle. It may sound paradoxical, but Christian perfection here is the looking for Christ's perfection. That is, we have not yet attained to it.

Asa could not have known this. In the earlier part of his life he walked in the path of righteousness according to the law, but he failed in his later years. He relied on the king of Syria, and not on God. “Herein thou hast done foolishly,” said the prophet. (2 Chron. 16:9.) Asa is wroth, and puts the prophet in prison. One failure produces another; he “oppressed some of the people the same time.” God visits him, and he is greatly diseased in his feet. His physical condition illustrates the condition of his soul. He formerly walked well. Did he apprehend the truth taught? “Yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.”

Jehoshaphat walked in the first ways of his father and of David, and Jehovah was with him; so he waxed great exceedingly. When he had riches and honor in abundance, he joined affinity with Ahab. This is the opposite of his father's act, but a more common case. How often, when prosperity is in outward circumstances, worldliness and forgetfulness of God mark the condition of the heart! What a blessing it is, oftentimes, to be kept poor and low. The Lord said, who knew the seductive power of worldly prosperity, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?” A prophet is sent, and rebukes Jehoshaphat: “Shouldest thou help the ungodly?” In helping Ahab he nearly lost his life, but neither the danger, nor the prophet's rebuke, kept him from repeating the same error. He made an alliance with Jehoram, Ahab's son. This defiling affinity produced its fruits. Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, walked in the ways of Ahab. He had married a daughter of Ahab. When a godly household makes friendship with an ungodly one, the consequences are very terrible. God resents the unholy intimacy, and allows the evil of the ungodly to appear in the once godly household. The nation followed in the steps of evil, and Judah became like Israel, in a way that Jehoshaphat did not mean (2 Chron. 18:3), but which was retributive judgment from God.

Hezekiah's life is largely given, because in his reign there was in Sennacherib's attack of Jerusalem a foreshadowing of a still greater deliverance from a future king of Assyria. God so controls the evil and passions of men as to make it subservient to His purpose of giving an intimation of what He will yet do for His own glory.

But beside its typical character, what a proof that God was still waiting upon them! They were apparently never in greater danger and never more visibly did God appear for them. What a magnificent display of God's power on their behalf!-the power of grace for them, of judgment upon the man who said God could not deliver Jerusalem out of his hand, who said that the God of Israel was no more than the gods of the nations whom he had already destroyed. It was in vindication of His own name that God acted. But it was a call to the people, Will they now repent, and turn themselves from all their transgressions, so that iniquity be not their ruin? They heeded not, save for a brief moment, and after Hezekiah's death the old sin of idolatry appears worse, and the love of it ineradicable. All through this period of the kingdom of Judah it is a process of mercy and

long-suffering. This was the way in which He was testing and proving man-all day long stretching out His hand to them. God's forbearance only gave opportunity for increased evil. Yet, if man was proved incorrigible in sin, it was preparatory, and a needed preparation, for the sovereign remedy of grace in Christ.

Hezekiah, like his predecessors, is tried, and, like them, fails. His miraculous healing from sickness, and the extraordinary sign given, struck Babylon with astonishment, and the king of Babylon sends congratulations to the king of Judah. His heart is lifted up, and he discovers the secrets of Jehovah's temple, and displays all his wealth to the ambassadors. Josiah is sent to pronounce judgment upon the kingdom. The fleshly things that he gloried in should become the prey of these very men. The die is now cast. Judgment may be delayed, but it is certain. God; in His wisdom, allows their cup of iniquity to run over, and the deep depravity of man, the patience of God, the need of a Savior, come out more distinctly as we pass on. Josiah was the most godly since David. His reign was the last bright gleam before the captivity, like a rift in the black cloud which was settling down upon the guilty people, through which a ray of sunlight fell upon the city, but only to make the succeeding darkness seem all the darker. In the eighth year of his reign, when he was sixteen, he began to seek after the God of his father David. For four years he sought God for himself, before he began to act publicly in purging Judah and Jerusalem. He began at the right point-with himself first. It is vain attempting to do the Lord's work, unless our own souls are right with God. Jehu was zealous, but zeal without personal piety only ends in worse dishonor and failure.

How low the people had fallen! the temple unrepaired, the book of the law lost, and its contents unknown. When found; it is read in the hearing of the king. What an index to the condition of the people, when the book of the law was hidden in the rubbish of the unrepaired and uncared-for temple! Josiah rends his clothes, and weeps before God. “Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same.” (2 Chron. 34:27, 28.) His repentance and tears brought blessing upon himself, though it could not avert judgment from Jerusalem. The effect of the new-found law is, that a passover is kept such as had not been from the days of Samuel the prophet. Bright as the appearance was, it was but external. The prophet said, “This people draweth nigh to me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” And “the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah.” After all this Josiah himself fails, and would measure his strength with Necho, king of Egypt. Why should he interfere in the quarrels of others? Why should any saint now meddle in the disputes of the world? Let potsherd strive with potsherd, a saint of God should not be mixed up in the strife. Josiah disobeyed God's word. Necho said God had sent him, and if it were only what Necho said, there would be no proof that God sent him; but the Spirit says, “The words of Necho from the mouth of God.” Josiah lost his life in the battle; though he were a good king as to his general life, God must vindicate Himself. With his death passed away all hope for Judah.

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 14. The History of Faith

In a few years of lingering agony and of ever lowering evil the cruel Babylonian carried them away, having slain nearly all who were noble and great. The closing verses in the Chronicles sum up the whole case. The utmost forbearance of God, and the continued rebellion of Judah. “And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.” (Chap. 36:15, 16.) Nebuchadnezzar was only the executor of God's sentence. No son of David has since that time sat upon his throne. Here Matthew's second period closes. The foreigner has ruled them ever since, and will until the true Heir, the next King of the house of David, even the Lord Jesus, come. Until then they lie under the judgment of God.

The truth that man, with the highest privileges joined to paternal care, cannot maintain himself before God in righteousness, is seen in clearer characters in Judah than in Israel, though in these enough was seen. But neither Israel nor Judah had the light, the privileges, and blessings which Christianity confers; and Christendom is still guiltier than those of old, and will meet with a heavier doom. The whole is a sad solemn picture of ruin, man's impotency for good, his power for evil. God must be a Savior-God, if such evil is to be met and put away. True, eternal destruction would meet it, and righteous wrath put it away forever; but God wants to be a Savior-God, to judge the sin, and save the sinner; and how can these things be? That wonderful book, which, the more we know of it, the more wonderful it is-that book of God declares it fully. There we learn how God is just, while justifying every sinner that believes in Jesus. So to the dark picture of human evil there is a bright and exceeding glorious side. The development of the evil is one part of the moral preparation for bringing in His salvation, of preparing a theme of praise for intelligent and redeemed man to sing.

But there is more yet to be done before that hymn can be sung in glory. The period of probation is not yet over. A new and very different phase of the trial now appears. The Gentile is called to the earth's sovereignty, and the chosen people must submit to his dominion till Messiah, their own King, come. Meanwhile the lessons of faith continue. It is a fresh chapter, a new sphere, where circumstances are, for the most part, adverse and threatening, but where faith is more renowned and honored on that account. The giving of the law and its teachings occupied but a limited portion of the processes of God, but faith was taught from the first. Abel was the first bright instance of it, and ever since, without law or with it, in Israel or among the Gentiles, we see examples of the power and blessedness of faith. And so it ought to be; for not law-doings, but faith and its holy fruits, are the only correlatives to the sovereign grace of God. Sin made them captives in a strange land; yet by grace the strange land was a better school for faith than the land of promise.

Daniel, a captive, is pre-eminent in faithfulness to God. Every human motive was there to induce him to give up his allegiance to God. He could plead his duty as a captive to show gratitude to the

king for the favor of being fed from the royal table, besides owing obedience to the king's command. But he would not defile himself, and trusted God for the result. He reaps the reward of faith. Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego might have shrank from the furnace which awaited them if they refused to worship the golden image. But neither the three cast into the furnace of fire, nor Daniel later on cast into the lions' den, counted their lives dear to them; and literally, of the three it may be said, their faith was as gold tried by fire. God gave the needed faith for the ordeal. And these bright examples are recorded to show the supremacy of God over all, and to make the Gentile king, to whom power was then entrusted, bow to Him who had given the power; a striking lesson, and wonderfully adapted to a heathen king. What could more demonstrate his impotency, when the expression of his fiercest anger was made harmless, and his three captives beyond his reach, unhurt, walking in the fierce flame? And who made him say that the fourth was like the Son of God? What did he know about a Son of God? Is it not a direct appeal to him by a stupendous miracle, more astonishing to him than any other exhibition of almighty power possibly could be? Here, then, behold the two things combined-a direct lesson from God to Nebuchadnezzar as to His power and Godhead, and His extraordinary intervention in baffling the rage of an idolatrous king, and setting aside the action of fire on behalf of His faithful servants. It is written for our learning, that a like power of faith might be exemplified in us. Peter (chap. 4: 12) speaks of the fiery trial which is to try us, and, whether the fire be symbolically fiery or even literally, the same God is ready to give the same faith, and lead us on to a like victory. By faith we overcome the world; moreover we have the word of Him who has overcome the world, of Him who was in the furnace with the three Hebrews, the peat Captain of our salvation-" Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The godly among the captives, who in sorrow remembered their departed privileges and greatness, must have been cheered and encouraged by the firm stand made by Daniel and his companions against the corruption and infidelity of Babylon. For if corruption-the king's food-and infidelity marked the acts of Nebuchadnezzar, the decree of Darius equally marked infidelity and its constant concomitant, the exaltation of man.

So the faith of these saints of the captivity comes out in clearer prominence than of those who had every advantage in the land. Indeed it is always. true that, the more adverse outward circumstances are, the more favorable is the opportunity for the action of faith. Therefore we are not to count it strange-foreign to the sphere of faith-when a fiery trial comes; it is God's way of strengthening faith. So, when to follow on in God's path seems to involve the loss of all here below, even life itself, then faith has a glorious opportunity to honor God. Is it too much to, say that God reserves these special privileges for those whose general walk is characterized by close communion with Him Then we may count it joy concerning the fiery trial which is to try us. God does not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. And when it comes, it is because God in grace has given faith able to bear it. And this is how saints are honored. Not to be tried, not to have our. faith put to the test, is to treat us as babes. The burden is for the shoulders of the strong. Only let us remember that our real strength lies in the consciousness of our own weakness, in our complete dependence upon God, coupled with unswerving fidelity at all costs. This dependence and fidelity marked the three witnesses on the plain of Dura. "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the image which thou hast set up."

Many a Jew on the plain would have felt no reluctance to obey the king's command-it was only what they had often done before in their own land. But no doubt there were others who trembled, and shrink from what was before them, who yet had no faith to resist and refuse homage to the idol. God did not leave Himself without witnesses, and Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego stood forth as the representatives of the godly remnant, their champions in the conflict between the powers of darkness and the one true God; and through their victory all are blessed. Nebuchadnezzar commands universal homage to be paid to the God of Israel, which, of course, meant that the Jews were to be protected. He was astonished at the miracle, and this decree was the natural result.

But the king did not cease to be an idolater, he did not deny his own gods; he praises the three Jews for not giving up their own religion, “that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God.” He owns that the God of Israel is the greatest, “there is no god that can deliver after this sort,” but does not disown other gods. There was enough done in the plain of Dura to have made him acknowledge but the one true God. For if the idol was a god, why did he not vindicate himself against those who refused him homage? The king would avenge him, and finds himself confronted by the power of the one God whom he had, like Pharaoh of old, defied-” Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?” He learns that there is One who can deliver after a wondrous sort. Satan, hidden from the eye, and far from the thought, of the idolatrous votary, is the black reality there, and, under cover of the golden image, leading the gathered masses of human souls on that plain, at the sound of music, to worship himself. It is a picture of the world's glory, the world's religion, its hatred of the worshippers of God, and of the Son of God overcoming (not then setting aside) and rendering naught the power of this world. But the haughty king is made to bow before the God he insulted, and to own the troth that God was supreme. God began with Israel in Egypt by teaching the same truth; Pharaoh hardened himself against it, would not bend, and was broken in the Red Sea. Miracles do not convert, the king's heart is unchanged, and he is soon after driven as a beast from his throne.

The hour is coming when another image will be set up, in more open and avowed antagonism to God, when the power of Satan will be unrestrained, and when, during his brief hour, he will cause the saints to be slain who have not his mark. In the plain of Dura God was with His own in the fire, and by miracle sustained them unhurt, so that not even the smell of fire remained upon their garments. In the future scene fire will descend as from heaven to confirm the worship of the image that Antichrist will have set up in honor of the first beast. The pseudo-miracle will be found then on the side of evil. The image will speak, and thus men will be carried away by a strong delusion to believe a lie. It is judgment. Then, at that awful moment, it will seem as if all that God had taught and revealed was in vain. “When the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?”

The day came for the return of the captives. Cyrus is the chosen instrument to carry out this purpose of God. In Cyrus we do not see the power of faith, but, just as Nebuchadnezzar was the executor of God's work, so is Cyrus the minister of His mercy to bring the Jew back to the land. Personally he is in advance of Nebuchadnezzar; for he says (Ezra 1:2, &c.) that the Jehovah-God had given him the kingdoms of the earth, and a charge to build the house at Jerusalem. Whether this confession of God's sovereignty was the result of faith leading to salvation is another matter. God is able to make the world confess His power and authority. Be this as it may, Cyrus is called by name, he is called God's shepherd, His anointed, though Cyrus had not known God (Isa. 44:28;

45:4), and this solely with the view to what God had called him. The point is not what Cyrus was personally, but his work.

What a grand spectacle for the Gentile nations was the return from the captivity: more than fifty thousand going back to their own land. And what is that to the great re-gathering yet future, “from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south?” (Psa. 107:3.) Well might the psalmist exclaim in prophetic strain, “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” The return from Babylon is comparatively but a little thing; nevertheless, to a certain extent, there was repentance, and the fruits of it. They gave after their ability, and offered freely for the house of God, to set it up in his place. There was zeal for the purity of God's house, and they excluded from the priesthood those who could not find their register, and prove their descent from the priests' family. This beginning was of fair appearance. But the glory that formerly crowned the house could not now rest upon it. For the Gentile had rule over them. It was grace to bring them back; but the visible manifestation of Jehovah's presence would have been like sanctioning their present captive condition as their true one, and ignoring their sin which brought them into it. This could not be. So, if the young, who had not seen the former glory, shouted for joy, the ancients wept at the remembrance of glory departed. It was a mingled scene: joyful shoutings and tearful remembrances, past glories and present deliverances, but withal Gentile servitude. Their deliverance was only partial: for complete restoration and unmixed gladness they must wait till the Priest come who will stand up with Urim and Thummim. Then the excluded priest will find his lost register, and prove his genealogy; then will he eat of the holy things.

Our High Priest has already come, and now stands for us with Urim and Thummim in the presence of God, and with far greater glory than Aaron arrayed in his beautiful garments. Our genealogy is proved, our register is in heaven, written in the book of life of the Lamb. We were children of wrath, even as others: now we are children of God.

During the time of Ezra and Nehemiah the power of God on their behalf was most manifest, yet the very way in which God appeared for them witnessed their sin. He graciously sustained them in their weakness; He controlled the mind of Darius, nor permitted him to be influenced by the representations of their enemies. But no stronger proof of their fallen condition than to have to appeal to a Gentile king against those who would hinder their building the temple, to get his permission to worship the God of their fathers. If Daniel and his companions displayed the power of faith in the presence of death, Ezra and Nehemiah did also in face of Gentile opposition. Faith is essentially the same at all times, but takes its color from the circumstances where it acts. It is the same divinely-given principle, whether seen in the glory of Solomon's dedication of the temple, or in the simple trust and confidence of Daniel and his companions, or amid the vexatious opposition experienced by those who were building the temple. But how different in its aspect! Take the prayer of Solomon. (2 Chron. 6) It is the voice of praise and thanksgiving, mingled with the appeal of faith, to God's mercy, if Israel turned aside. There is no confession of sin, no weeping through present distress; the glory of Jehovah fills the consecrated temple, and it overpowers the priests. It is like the beginning of a new era in their history, of which the first event is Jehovah taking possession of His house, and manifesting His presence by a glory too great, too bright, for human eye. But His presence there was the full answer to Solomon's dedicatory prayer, and contained the promise of unlimited blessing, of might and power in the earth, if obedient-yea, of restoration, if

they repented when in the land of their captivity. (Ver. 37.) And so we see Solomon's faith, as it were, linked on to Daniel's faith, for Daniel is in the circumstances about which Solomon prayed. The form of prayer-is changed; here is confession, owning the righteousness of God in thus judging them, bowing in humility under His rod; yet faith counts the days of their captivity. There is the extremest difference between the circumstances of Solomon and of Daniel, but their faith in God is the same, save that with Daniel the darkness of the time made his faith shine more brightly.

But if the energy of faith in the returnee captives shines not with so great luster, there are not wanting instances where all that nature holds dear is given up in obedience to the law of God. Among the names given we find (Ezra 10) those who had married strange wives. In faithfulness to God they broke with the tenderest ties, wife and children being given up; and their names are recorded in the book of God. Honorable mention is made of them, for they preferred the service of Jehovah to the endearments of home. This may be but a sample of a much greater act of obedience when all Israel shall be brought home to their land. Much more does it speak to believers now. For if they as Israelites were to be separate from Gentiles, so ought, in a far higher sense, the church of God to be separate from the world. The obedience of faith wrought in them, and the same principle operates now, and ought to be more manifest, seeing that the world is now openly the enemy of Christ, and has definitely taken that position since the cross, To give up all in entire separation to God is not only a privilege, but our “reasonable service.” (Rom. 12:1.) But God will be no man's debtor, and the Lord Jesus says of those who now give up all for His name's sake, “There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or lands for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, end mothers, and children, and lands [will it not be so literally in the millennium?] with persecution [the special portion of the church now], and in the world to come eternal life.” (Mark 10:29, 30.)

The sphere of faith was not so clear then as now, for we find Nehemiah saying, “Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.” It is not the language of Christian faith to pray for blessing because we have done good. The truth enunciated by the Lord that, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, was not then known, much less the deeper truth that in us (that is, in our flesh) there dwelleth no good thing, and that we only can do anything acceptable to God through the strength of another, even Christ. Until the true Light came, man did think of his own doings-it was characteristic as being under law. Now, under grace, we feel how unworthy such thoughts and feelings are in presence of what Christ has done for us.

But faith, whether in a higher or lower degree, and whatever the truth presented, is always the gift of God. Where it is not found, the outward semblance of repentance and humility soon fades away. So, after Ezra and Nehemiah had passed away, we see that, whether as a free nation or under Gentile bondage, their natural evil is quickly manifested. The sense of what they had lost, and of their present degradation, does not lead them to true and lasting repentance. They ceased to be idolaters, and became hypocrites. The house was swept and garnished; but it is only a preparation for the return of the old spirit of idolatry, and then with seven other spirits more wicked than himself. When the Lord Jesus came, hypocrisy was at its height. Then we see a nation, boasting of privilege and claiming to be God's people, despising others yet guilty of the greatest sin of all-even while fretting under the iron yoke of Rome, boasting that they were never in bondage to any man.

When the Lord was among them, their trial was hastening to its close. For, though the captivity had so materially changed their circumstances, they were no less responsible than when as a nation their power was highest-nay, more responsible than at any other time, for all past privilege and greatness, which ought to have bound them in obedience to God, was as nothing to the presence of Christ. In the parable, the owner of the vineyard sent his son, saying, They will reverence my son. God had a perfect right, from the human responsibility side, to expect reverence. The divine counsels in no way remove man's responsibility. The Son came to His own things, and to His own people; but what a reception!-cast out from His vineyard, and slain. This necessarily closed the trial; indeed it closes the history of man as a moral creature before God: up to that time a probationer, but ever since a condemned criminal, save as taken out of that condition through faith in Christ. Still, during that time, when man reached the climax of wickedness, God, in sovereign grace, maintained a thin bright line of witnesses, a shining thread in the tangled web of evil, and a few names are given of those who rejoiced when they saw the salvation of God. But outside the little circle of Simeon, Anna, Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, what a scene of hypocrisy and hatred did the Son of God gaze upon They both saw and hated both Him and His Father. And how much more fearful is their rejection of Christ-God's King-than their rejection of God as King in Samuel's day? Then it was to be like other nations, and their excuse was that Samuel's sons did not walk in the steps of their father. But the Lord Jesus could say, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” How patiently He waited upon them, expostulating-” Come, now, let us reason together.” How the Lord condescends to reason with the Jew, in John 5-10, and how divine and blessed. How graciously He taught among them, even when compelled to expose their hypocrisy. (See Luke 20; John 8) How gloriously He showed forth His divine power in healing and feeding them. How lovingly He invited all to come to Him and be saved. But they would not hear, neither would they be persuaded. They rejected and crucified the Holy One and the Just. The Lord's sojourn among them was not only the last, but the most momentous, phase of man's trial: short, compared with the previous periods, except the nearly equally brief time when the prophet Samuel judged. And there is this analogy between these two times: then they rejected God as King, and chose to have a man; now they reject Christ, and choose Caesar; in each case, not mere failure, but deliberate rejection. Christ being refused, no further test would be righteous: for all is made manifest. The supreme love and grace of God is nowhere seen but in the cross-there, too, is man's horrible hatred, and his irremediable evil-irremediable, save by that one thing that shows it most. There meet infinite grace, inflexible justice, man's extremest evil, Satan's utmost rage: God's best, and man's worst-these two make the cross. Yet this was God's purpose, for it was, it is, the only foundation on which He can be declared a Savior-God.

While God was thus dealing with Israel and the Jew, the nations were, up to the time of the captivity, left comparatively to themselves, without God, and without hope. Yet not absolutely without a witness of His grace. Though not many, yet in the world here and there are traces of individuals, not of Abraham's race, but Gentiles, who worshipped the true God, or even the special objects of His mercy. Melchisedec is king and priest of the most High God, and blesses victorious Abraham. Jethro was a priest of Midian, but he confessed the supremacy of God when he saw His goodness to Israel. Rahab, a most touching and prominent instance of God's richest mercy to a degraded Gentile. The widow of Zarephath, Naaman-these all were evidence that God would not be confined within the limits of Israel, although His special dealing was there. He was then showing, what Peter declares afterward (Acts 10:35), that in every nation, he that feareth Him, and

worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.

But these instances of mercy and grace to the Gentile were only exceptional, and in no way changed their condition as a whole; they were, as scripture declares, without hope, and without God. That is, as in contrast with Israel, who had a hope, and the presence of God. But when the Jew rejected God in the Person of the Son, when he had shown himself no better, but rather worse, than the Gentile, then the word of grace went out to all, and the command to repent went out to all men everywhere. This universal aspect of grace could not be before the Jew had had his final testing. The cross was his final test, and it makes grace to be righteousness; so now the invitation is unto all.

Matthew's third period closed with the birth of Christ, viewing the family period as distinct from the wilderness history, that is, from Abraham to the exodus, distinct from the exodus to David, the presentation of Christ to the Jew, make the fifth phase of their history, and Matthew gives it, chapters 2-12. It was soon abundantly plain that the Jew had no heart for Christ. The Baptist heralded the kingdom, and proclaimed the King. All seemed to obey the call, great was the gathering that met on the banks of the Jordan. It looked well. But their idea of the kingdom which was heralded by the Baptist was not righteousness. And when the King came who is to reign in righteousness, they were totally unprepared, and would not have Him. There was a large following at first; not only all Galilee had Him teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, but His fame went throughout all Syria, and great multitudes followed “from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and beyond Jordan.” (Matt. 4:23-25.) But these crowds were astonished at the doctrine of the kingdom. (Chap. 7:28.) Not authority and dominion as yet for the heirs, but contempt and persecution, though this was joined to a blessedness which no prosperity in the world could give. It lets us into the secret, that, notwithstanding their alacrity in responding to the call of the Baptist, there was unreadiness, which ripened into personal dislike and hatred of the Lord Jesus. The multitudes dwindle away. It is but a little flock to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. Fruits meet for repentance were not found in the mass, and the kingdom in full display of power and glory had to be deferred. The hypocrisy of those who would not submit to the righteousness of the kingdom is brought to the surface, and with it the hatred of all that was truly good. And the evil of man, his opposition to truth, ended when alone it could end when unrestrained. The works of grace and love, the miracles of power, were ascribed to the agency of Beelzebub. What a proof here of human blindness and unreason, and also of Satanic malignity and craft! But at this point the purpose for which God sent His Son into the world is seen, and the dawn of a new dispensation begins to break. The word, as good seed, is sown, the separating ordinances between Jew and Gentile begin to disappear, and Christ, apart from law, is alone presented to man as the one Object of faith. No longer by types and shadows, as under law-and necessarily so-but now in His own blessed Person-the Savior of the world.

Alas! the more distinct the Object of faith, the more opposed is man. Faith as a means is despised by the great, because it affords no scope for the display of those qualities which make up a great man; on the contrary, it places all upon one indiscriminate level, and that the lowest. Much more is faith despised because the Object of faith-Jesus crucified-was lowly and scorned. The path of the Lord Jesus through this world was one of increasing hatred. At the beginning multitudes followed to receive from Him healing, though astonished at His teaching; at the end the whole city shouted, Crucify Him, and led Him to the cross. In this downward path, where each step widens the

distance between the humbled One and the proud teachers of a soulless religion, the priests of a God-discarded ritual, in this path which from the first pointed to the cross, and openly so when Jesus was rejected, faith keeps pace with Him, and learns to love the place of contempt, since He is there. Always cleaving to Him, whether He, in the majesty of divine power, be raising the dead, or retiring from the murderous hatred of His enemies. And while cleaving to Him-yea, because of it-faith takes its form from Him; that is, when the Lord Jesus was presented as Messiah, the King of the Jews, it was a different form of faith to believing in Him when He was, as Son of man, ostensibly on the road to the cross.

Nothing but divine power and grace could give faith strong enough to bear the strain put on it at that time; for it was the setting aside of their cherished hopes. If the Messiah were going to die, what becomes of them, what of their temple and ordinances (for the godly in Jerusalem were not freed yet from the old thing)? It is this which gives significance to the Lord's doing most of His recorded works on the sabbath-day. If the Lord of the sabbath was rejected, its observance was only mockery, and only made bare their hypocrisy. Every other institution fell with it. It was the knell of all they boasted in-it reduced them to the level of the Gentiles-it made their temple no longer the house of God, ordinances and sacrifices were annulled, their whole service, though originally ordained of God, became worse than worthless through rejecting Christ. Henceforth, so long as the Lord was here, He forbade them to tell any that He was Christ-though, when faith confessed Him as such, He always responded. Faith meets Him in this path of sorrow, and anoints Him with precious ointment for His burial. Not all who loved Him had this faith; it was seen in a woman. But Peter, who felt that if his Master was rejected, he also was, and who naturally clung to the Messiah-glory of the Lord, when told by Jesus Himself that He was going to Jerusalem to die, said, “This be far from thee, Lord,” and was sharply rebuked, and called Satan.

Even when the great work was done, and victory achieved over the grave by resurrection, when faith could raise its head, and sing the triumphs of the Lord, not at first could all the disciples realize the victorious aspect given to faith. The two sad disciples going to Emmaus could only say, “We trusted that it had been he that should have delivered Israel.” They were slow of heart to believe the prophets. There was like slowness in Peter and John; the fact of the resurrection was plain when they entered the vacant tomb. The folded napkin, and the careful order of the linen clothes, showed that it was no surreptitious taking away of the body of Jesus, but that by His own power He had risen. No doubt they were amazed, but they went to their own home-there was no corresponding action on their part to the immense fact of the resurrection. Why? Because as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise from the dead. Scripture is now the resting-place for faith. No matter what the external evidence, there is no true faith apart from the written word. The disciples had known neither His word, nor the written word.

Faith in Christ was tested every step of the way, but never left to stand alone; there was always a divine warrant for every new demand made upon it. The immediate result of the Jews' hatred is, that the kingdom is put in abeyance with His rights and title as Messiah. The Lord calls Himself the Son of man, and this implies suffering and death. The first mention of the name is in connection with “not where to lay his head,” and soon with death. But it is after taking this name that the Lord shell's His power over death. No one was raised from the dead before He was ostensibly in the path to death, thus showing that He was no unwilling captive, but voluntarily submitted to death while holding power over it, of which He gave proof when He left the grave. It was impossible that

He should be holden of death.

Chapter 55

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 15. The History of Faith

So, when He came as Messiah, there was proof in His works of grace and miracle of His birth as Son of David, for the faith of all who would follow Him, and own Him as King, spite of lowliness and poverty. And when openly rejected, and going to the cross, a greater proof of His power and dignity is given, to sustain and invigorate the faith of His own. He who was going to be put to death by man, had power over it, and able to make death disgorge his prey. So there was the necessary resting-place, a fresh place-so to speak-for every new demand. Many received Him as Messiah who left Him when He was the object of man's scorn and hate. Even the true-hearted were in despair when death came in between them and the kingdom restored-the object of their hopes. Not one was prepared for this; not till after death and resurrection did they learn that this was the only foundation upon which their hopes could rest. Not only spiritual and heavenly blessings come to us through the cross, but all the glory of the future reign of Christ over the whole earth are founded upon His death and resurrection.

Long before the Jew was completely, though temporarily, rejected, the Gentile was brought forward. Not the Jew alone, but also the Gentile, must bear the test of the coming of Christ. Indeed the Gentile was raised to the position of power and dominion for this purpose. He was not tried because endowed with authority, but he was endowed with authority that he might be tried. The coming of Christ is the last and great test for man; and so it was seen in the fact that Jew and Gentile unite in denying and, rejecting the Lord-the one hating Him, and clamoring for His death; the other indifferent, and giving Him up to death, while finding no fault in Him. What a scene! Jewish hatred and Gentile indifference combined, and Jesus, the Holy One, is led forth to death. The Gentile was only a little less guilty than the Jew. In vain Pilate washed his hands.

The trial of the Gentiles commenced on a larger scale, and on a different platform, from that of Israel. Such dominion as Nebuchadnezzar had was never given to Israel. Not even Solomon's kingdom was anything like the extent of empire that Nebuchadnezzar had. “And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all.” (Dan. 2:38.) Nor has the Gentile ever realized this enormous gift, for the largest empire that ever submitted to the sway of one man never embraced the fullness of the gift as declared to the Gentile king. Yet, as it was, it was a weight of glory and power he was unable to bear; he was, as it were, crushed under it. There is a Man coming, the Man of God's right hand, who is able and worthy to bear it. The government shall be upon His shoulders, for He is the Mighty God.

Israel's trial was partly in being constituted guardians of the truth of the unity of the Godhead. They were the depositary of the oracles of God. To the Gentiles Was given power and dominion. Israel's failure was a religious failure, the Gentiles' was rather what may be called secular. God's promise secures earthly supremacy to Israel at the right time, but for this a special training was needed. The unfitness of man to rule is seen in the Gentile, the purpose of God in grace to put him there is

seen in the Jew. Hence the different phases of their history, and the varied lessons of faith. God is preparing the Jew for his destined place, and preparing the place for the promised Seed-the Son of Abraham, the Son of David. He will be King, and His power will keep them so that Israel will never again forfeit their blessings, which are now secured through redemption. Even their past failure under priest, prophet, and king will then, through grace, be occasions for praise; when delivered from their enemies, purged from their sins, and sprinkled with clean water (cf. Psa. 103), they will enjoy the place given them by God, under the rule of Him who will be Savior-Priest, Savior-Prophet, and Savior-King.

Here, in the Gentile, is the exhibition of man in another and new aspect. The proof of ruin seen in Israel, and now confirmed in the Gentile. The glory of dominion and power entrusted to him was represented to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream. In the image that he saw there was gold and iron-splendor and strength. Doubtless the different aspects of power are symbolically given in the change and descent from the glittering gold to the hard iron; the former attracting by its splendor, the latter subduing all by its strength. But there it all was, expressive of what power and dominion would be in the hand of the Gentile. This is the appearance from a worldly standpoint. Very different symbols are given when that power is looked at from God's standpoint. To man it is of excellent brightness, and of terrible form, but in the eye of God the rulers of this world are beasts; nor is there in nature any creature that fittingly represents the full character of the evil, and the cruelty which would ravage the earth under their sway. This dominion was not given to man to he a blessing, and to ensure peace, but to prove him, and to demonstrate the necessity of bringing in God's King, if peace is to be established upon the earth. It is a new moral process, proving man's incapacity to rule in righteousness. Here, as in all the previous dealings with Israel, there is, and of necessity, inevitable failure. God's object in all, we may reverently say, was to bring out the absence of all good in man, and so complete failure is the natural and sure result.

With the Gentile, God begins with the fundamental truth of His Godhead-we may say the simplest principles of natural religion. This was the test applied to the Gentile king-it was the right one for him. If Israel were tested by a revealed law, the Gentile was by what needed no revelation. “For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” (Rom. 1:20.) God was recalling this to their minds; truths which, though forgotten, left man without excuse. Now that Christ is revealed, mere natural religion becomes infidelity. God has revealed Himself in His word, in Christ. Men talk of nature, and of God as the God of nature; and though this is true, and man responsible on that ground, there is no salvation in it. In effect it is denying Him and His word. Even in Adam, while untainted with evil of any kind, we have proof that natural religion, in its pure form and when all was good, did not preserve him from sin. How willful the ignorance and pride of the infidel, who, denying plain fact, assumes to be on the ground where Adam fell He had dominion given him, but soon became a slave. Sin made him the lawful captive of Satan. The serpent at the first gave the lie direct to God, and though Adam did not believe the devil's lie-” Adam was not deceived” (1 Tim. 2:14)-yet he preferred the creature to the Creator, and thus he fell under Satan's power. And here is evidence that Satan's power is unbroken. The Gentile king is no sooner invested with authority than he commands the whole world, under pain of death, to worship his image. The first act of universal power was to decree universal idolatry. “And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” (Dan. 3:6.) In the arrogance

of pride he forgets that it was the “God of heaven” who had given him a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory; he defies God, and daringly says, “Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” Pride was the condemnation of the devil (1 Tim. 3:6), and Satan employs that which caused his own fall to effect the ruin of the Gentile. The first State religion established by man was idolatry.

The book of Daniel is a brief but comprehensive outline of the times of the Gentile, and of the carrying out of God's purposes, given in prophetic words of most solemn import, while veiled under supernatural imagery. It is also morally the history of the complete and immediate failure of man. It tells the same tale as Gen. 3. Adam, just created, becomes a sinner; Nebuchadnezzar, just invested with power, becomes an idolater. In the former case there was all that was good and beautiful in nature, fresh from the hand of the Creator, where man could rise from nature to the God of nature in acceptable adoration; in the latter case, the astonishing power of God who preserved His worshippers from the fury of the idolatrous king. Man broke through both. The circumstances of each widely differ, but the spirit of man is proved to be the same. Adam innocent, or Nebuchadnezzar idolatrous, show that nothing short of new life, a life above nature, even in its pristine condition, can suffice wherein to work righteousness and be obedient.

God begins with declaring His sovereignty. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges it (see Dan. 2), but his conscience is not, touched, and he learns next that God is not only a revealer of secrets, but also One who can, and does, deliver by almighty power. And in these two facts are manifested two of what are called the natural attributes of the Deity-that is, the Omniscience and the Omnipotence of God. And do we not see the wisdom of God, who adapts the revelation of Himself to meet the conscience of a heathen who could hardly apprehend the moral attributes of God—goodness, love, and truth-but who could, and did, confess Him as the Omniscient and Omnipotent God? “Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret.” Here is the Omniscience of God acknowledged. And when the three Hebrews came out of the fire untouched, the amazed king confessed the Omnipotence of God: “There is no other god that can deliver after this sort.” But in the deliverance of the three Hebrews a deeper truth appears, and at once flashes across the mind of the king. Not three men, but four, are walking, unhurt, in the midst of the furnace of fire, the flames of which slew the ready ministers of his rage. Who taught the king to say, “the form of the fourth is like the Son of God"? Was not this a direct revelation to him of the Being and Personality of God? I doubt if the words, “Son of God,” express any intelligent apprehension of the king's mind, or anything beyond the fact of a divine person; but there is certainly this, that God made the king use the words which reveal to us the way in which He afterward revealed Himself. The idea of absolute power and Omniscience, unconnected with a person, is intangible, a mere abstraction. A person was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar-not the vague idea of a Supreme Being, unseen and unknown, but a fourth Man-form walking in the midst of the fire. The truth of God Omniscient, Omnipotent, and who deigned to be seen, though where it was death to approach, was the suited test for a heathen. So debased was man, and sensual, that he could form no idea of God, save what he could see and touch. Hence he made idols. God met this degraded condition of mind by presenting Himself to the king as the “fourth.” There was a visible Object, yet not then to be approached. Not till Christ had been here could it be said, “which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life.” The Son had to humble

Himself in becoming a real Man before such intimacy of approach were possible. But enough was displayed on the plain of Dura to have banished idol-worship.

There might have been some even there who secretly despised the image which they openly worshipped, but they remained idolaters. The wonderful display of the power of God was in vain. The truth which glanced for a moment upon the king's mind was immediately forgotten. Another means was used before Nebuchadnezzar could speak as he does in chapter 4: 2, 3, 37. This chapter is his narrative of an event which happened to himself, and which puts his history far apart from every other man. Infidelity, in its far-seeing reason, which is able to account for all that the Bible contains upon the most approved rationalistic method, says it was only madness, and his being driven from the haunts of men, and having his dwelling with the beasts of the field, is mere poetry for being put into an asylum! On the contrary, it was plain, literal fact. Moreover, besides its moral effect upon the king, it is symbolic of the times of the Gentiles, who, after being like the beasts of the field, shall in the end be restored to “reason,” and “clothed, and in their right mind,” will, like this king, “praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” This wonderful close to his life raises the thought whether it is the evidence of personal salvation. We can say that a man is judged according to that which he hath, and not according to that he hath not. To look for anything like Christian faith, or even Jewish faith, would be very unintelligent.

But it is man we look at here, not Nebuchadnezzar individually; and the next phase of his evil and misuse of power, is the bringing of the holy vessels of God to serve in his idolatrous orgies. And this was not ignorant desecration, but boasting against the God of Israel. They praised the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. Even a piece of wood, or a stone, was better than God. Did that impious Belshazzar know no better? Had he never heard of God's ways with his father? Nay; “And thou, his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knowest all this,” &c. In that same night he was slain. Judgment delayed not its avenging stroke upon one so daringly impious. Nebuchadnezzar, while worshipping other gods, yet dared not to desecrate the vessels of God, like this Belshazzar. The former put God above all gods-this one ignores the testimony of His power, of all that God was known to be, and insults Him to the utmost. The vessels of God are used to keep the devil's feast. Then comes the hand and writes upon the wall. As in Israel in the wilderness, when a man sinned presumptuously he was stoned. Belshazzar sinned presumptuously, for he knew better, and he was slain that night.

If Nebuchadnezzar gives a picture of Gentile idolatry, such as existed before the wide-spread profession of Christianity, there is something analogous to the impiety of Belshazzar, in what now has taken the place of paganism in the sphere of Christendom, where the great and aggravated sin is the making of the revealed word of God a means for the attainment and enjoyment of the world's pleasures and honors, doing in a spiritual way what Belshazzar and his court did in a physical and vulgar way. But this is man, religions man; for the feast the king made was a feast before his gods, whose praises they sing. Religious evil is worse than worldly corruption, and, just as the Babylon of old was taken and suddenly destroyed, while in the midst of revelry, so will the mystic Babylon be thrown as a great millstone into the sea. “In one hour is she made desolate.” (Rev. 18:19.)

There is a third phase of Gentile evil, and the worst of all-it is the deification of man. Historically Darius was entrapped by those who hated and were jealous of Daniel. The king was personally sorry, and had some sort of faith that the prophet would be preserved. “Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.” Or it may be that he did not fully apprehend the words of faith and comfort that God caused him to say to Daniel. He was grieved nevertheless, and he had “labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.” He passed the night in fasting, and hastened early in the morning to the den, and there his own heart-love for Daniel-speaks, not faith. He had said on the night previous, “He will deliver.” Now he says, “Is thy God able?” The joyful certainty of Daniel's safety works so mightily upon his mind-but it was God's judgment upon Daniel's foes-that those who so entrapped him are themselves subjected to the fate they had planned for Daniel. But, although this is highly interesting as history, and morally instructive, the whole scene is Gentile advance in wickedness, and more than failure in the place of dominion where God had put him. This first part of the book of Daniel gives in Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius, three distinct characters of the evil resulting from Gentile supremacy, which cover the whole period of the “times of the Gentiles” that are now running their course. Rampant idolatry, religious corruption, and, lastly, defiant and open denial of the rights of God; and these not only distinct, but consecutive. The darkest time is yet to come, then it will be death to pray to Him. (Rev. 13:11, &c.) Then, all who have not, in one way or another, the mark of the beast will be killed, and the Antichrist will assert himself to be God, and claim the homage of men as his due.

The decree of Darius (chap. 6: 26, &c.), in one particular, goes beyond that of Nebuchadnezzar; there is a millennial note in his praise— “His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.” We have here, in brief, Gentile history; God beginning with the declaration of Himself as God in heaven, and, by the wonderful display of His power, demanding the worship of man, and man ending with denying God, and appropriating to himself the homage which belongs to God alone. It is the worst, if not absolutely the last, phase of man's evil and rebellion.

But if God has put the earth under the dominion of man, has He ceased to control the actions of men? Nay; but another, feature now appears in His moral processes with man during the times of the Gentiles. Empire was not, and could not, be given to the Gentile so long as Israel or Judah retained their position in the land, with a king of their own, even though a wicked king. When they were carried away as captives, and Jehovah's presence had left the temple, room was made for the Gentile. No ritual or formal law was given to them, but God was a revealer of secrets, and therefore He knew their hearts and secret evil. He was of infinite power, they could do nothing against Him, and His power was exerted to preserve His servants. There was no intelligence in man to lay hold of these truths, which yet made him responsible, and be became like the beasts. But though the glory had departed from Jerusalem, and no divine presence given to the nations as had been to Israel, God still governed the world-not visibly, as before, but by an unseen Providence, as real, but not so self-evident, save to faith, which is taught to trace the ways of God, where man sees nothing but mere contingency and fortuitous combinations. The book of Esther, which is no record of faith, affords an instance of how God watches over His ancient people, and brings to naught the machinations of their enemies. In this book there is no temple, no priest, no service, no visible manifestation of power, such as had been, yet faith sees the overruling hand of God as certain as when in more favored times God visibly interposed. All was the result,

apparently, of mere human agency, that is, by that which we should now call providence. It would have been a loss to the empire if Haman had succeeded in his intention.

But the king, Ahasuerus, on one night could not sleep, and one of his attendants reads to him. This is extremely natural. But that the attendant should read the preservation of his life, that the preserver of it should never have been rewarded, that Haman, the plotter, should be waiting in the court at that very moment to obtain the king's consent for the destruction of Mordecai, the man who was the means of saving the king's life, the man most hated by Haman, and the one to whom Haman must now be servant-for so was the king's pleasure now to honor him, an honor which Haman's vanity thought could be only for himself-is a combination of circumstances which man calls most wonderful, if not very improbable. We know that the unseen hand of God was surely guiding all, marvelously preserving His own people, and making the wicked eat the fruit of his own doings. Thus it is how God works behind the scenes of this world's activities. The scheme so cleverly arranged for the simultaneous massacre of the Jews throughout the whole empire is frustrated by what appears to be a mere accident-the king could not sleep-but by it God performs His will.

Man not holding the gift of dominion from God becomes the prey of Satan, who can only use what he finds with man as a means to effect his ruin; and, from the days of Nebuchadnezzar to this present time, the lust of power has been one of the most fruitful sources of human woe. There is no spring of action in the natural man so strong as this. The history of the four empires are abundant evidence. Their struggles for supremacy tell the perversion of God's gift. All that God gave to man as a responsible creature has only brought out his sin, and made him more guilty. God gave Israel the truth of one God-they became idolaters. He gave the Gentile dominion, and they became tyrants, and scourges to the earth. But while the empires existed, the mind taught of God sees in all the contention and struggle the fulfillment of God's word, and the means by which He accomplishes His purpose. Every event foreseen and controlled by Him, yet not the less appears man's pride and self-exaltation. It is part of the moral process by which man in any position is brought out into the light, and his incorrigible nature made manifest. In the use, or rather abuse, of conferred power, he became vile, and God to the prophet revealed the result. The rulers of the world became beasts, and as such will be destroyed. This is the end of Gentile power. At the beginning they were weighed in the balances, and found wanting; at the end they will be found in open rebellion against the Lord.

We have seen that the first test applied to the Gentile was God making Himself known as the “God in heaven.” But that was not the greatest, nor the final one. However much their guilt appeared in this, it was a far more solemn trial when Christ came. It was specially as the King that the Roman condemned the Lord. The Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman had each tried their hand at ruling the world, and naught but misery, war, and increased iniquity were the result. God sends His King, who will bring peace upon the earth. The Roman was reigning when Christ appeared. The Roman cared not for the truth, but when Pilate's friendship for Cesar was challenged, be consigned the Lord Jesus to death rather than be thought to fail in his allegiance to the Roman emperor. Both Jew and Gentile unite in this point, both reject God's anointed King. The Jew, from other motives, more guilty than the Gentile, joins with him in saying, We have no king but Caesar. Man, in that awful moment, is brought face to face with God, and be deliberately refuses God. True, God was veiled under humanity, but enough was seen to prove Who the Lord

Jesus was.

Chapter 56

Thoughts on Ephesians 1

Is Ephesians, although the church is put in the highest place it can be, yet the doctrine is individual, and is used for the building up of individual souls. Being a heavenly thing, the place where it is spoken of as being already is heaven—its proper place—and there only it is seen; yet it ought also to have been manifested on the earth. “He gave some apostles, and some prophets,” &c “for the edifying of the body of Christ.” That is the end, and ought to be always kept in view. Paul always speaks of the church as a body on the earth; he treats it so in Ephesians, although numerically it will only be in heaven, when complete. But the Holy Ghost is sent down to form the unity of the body down here, and this is “the mystery” of Christ and the church.

It ought to be looked at more as a body on earth. Through neglect of this, the unity of the body down here has been lost sight of; and this makes the language one hears about what is really union so unsatisfactory. I want unity-I want to see that manifested which is spoken of, “for by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body;” seeing the heavenly character of the church will lead to this, and that is the object in this Epistle. Till the glory comes, the church must be contemplated on the earth, though a portion of it is already in heaven, and, seen by faith, happy up there, “absent from the body, present with the Lord.” Those that are gone before, although their position is most desirable, and blessed, nevertheless are not in a condition in which they can glorify Christ now, because this must be down here; but they are gone, and are with Christ. They do not form a part of that body which ought to display Christ down here. When the day comes, they will be brought back, and all will be then displayed together.

The church is looked at in Ephesians in its individual character, as seated in heavenly places in Christ; and therefore the coming of the Lord is a truth not mentioned. The manifestation of its unity should be as a body on the earth. In Ephesians we get that which belongs to the whole church-the church; in 1 Thessalonians it is local. Ephesians speaks of children and the Father, not the bride of Christ, though as the bride of Christ they will also have a peculiar place in relation to the Father as children. In Hos. 1:10 I believe the Christian calling is alluded to, and that it does not apply to Israel in that day: “in the place where it was said to them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.” We find another use, as quoted in 1 Peter 2, in reference to Hos. 2:23. “I will say unto them which were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God.” But the apostle Paul, in applying it, says, “In the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the Children of the living God.” (Ver. 26.)

The Gentiles were always “Lo-ammi,” and he says to Israel, “Lo-ammi;” so all are “Lo-ammi.” But now we get a new principle. “In the place where it was said unto them, Lo-ammi, there shall they be called the children of the living God.” And this is going on now. When Israel is restored, it is as “the people of God.”

In the third verse we get the condition and standing; in the fourth verse our present condition; in the fifth verse relationship and standing; and in the sixth and seventh, our known actual condition

before God as a realized fact. He has done this that we should be something, but something before Him. It is a great thing to have the consciousness of being this in His sight. When I know God is looking at me, I am not occupied in looking at myself, but thinking that God is looking at me; and this acts upon the affections, and I know God is interested in me. So it speaks of the “good pleasure of his will.” “Adoption of children to himself,” not merely adopted us as children-He wanted something for Himself. “Chosen us in him before the foundation,” &c. It is not the eternity of the predestination that gives it its sovereignty, for it would be as much an act of sovereignty if chosen to-day; but that takes us clean out of the world. We have precedence of the world, where we are manifested. So in John 1 get life that He had with the Father before the foundation of the world, “for thou lovedst me before the foundation,” &c. Now the world is against Me, you must take Me without the world. The election was before the creation of the world. Christ was loved before it, so that the church is outside the creation of the world. The world has its creation in time. This is spoken of as before it was founded.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He speaks as man of God, as Son of the Father. Thus whenever He speaks of God, it is as a man whom God has raised from the dead, of His God and our God. He has gone up, and taken the place of the risen man, even as Son of man. In verse 17 it is, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ;” in chapter iii. 14 it is, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is His title, and in the same sense applies to us. It is taken in connection with Christ as risen and gone up. Now the Jews' place of blessing is the earth; we are blessed in heavenly places. There are a few passages in the New Testament where “Lord” means “Jehovah,” and where it means Jehovah it is simply “Lord;” but not in every instance that it is simply Lord does it mean Jehovah, but merely His name as exalted Man. Jesus means, Jehovah will save, as Joshua meant of old. “Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory that thou hast given me. The glory that thou hast given me, I have given them.” The link in the beginning of the chapter connects them. He takes this glory in display as a man, and He can therefore share it with us. The glory Thou hast given Me-not given to Him as the Son eternally with Him, but as the Man. So He speaks in John 17 as a Man, and yet as equal with the Father. “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me"-and “all mine are thine, and thine are mine"-showing He is one with the Father, and at the same time that it is a truth that as a Servant He receives everything. Yet the Father was morally indebted to Him for all this glory. “I have glorified thee on the earth.”

His Lordship is conferred upon Him as Jesus, a Man, though it means Jehovah. The conferred title is because He is Jehovah. In reading the New Testament, Christ is often taken as though it were part of His name (it is so in two or three places), and it loses much of its effect when it is so read. Jesus is the name; Christ is the title, and means Anointed. Jesus means Jehovah-Savior, and it is His glory that is spoken of in Isa. 6 “In the year that king Uzziah died,” quoted by John. (Chap. 12:41) In Hebrews also we read, “whose voice then shook the earth,” but now He has promised, saying,” Yet once more I shake,” &c., declaring it to be the same voice in Hebrews to us now that spake in thunders at Mount Sinai. Where Lord and Christ are used together, it is the risen Man. Where Jehovah is meant, it is simply Lord (not always meaning Jehovah). In Hebrews the word, “by his Son,” does not convey the meaning fully-it is, “in the Son.” Wonderful grace, to become a man and a servant for us! “Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers,” &c. “And to the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God,” &c. When He is in the highest place, and He owns Him as God, God

makes Him our fellow. But when He is in the lowest place, smitten as man, God calls Him His fellow. “Awake, O sword, against the man,” &c. (Zech. 13)

In this verse 4 God has chosen to have the saints before Him. He is pleased to delight Himself in us. He can delight in His creatures, but in us He has special delight, “holy and without blame before him in love,” thus surrounding Himself with us. If we really believe the saints are loved by Christ, we do not get the measure of His love unless we love them too-” love to all saints;” then we may look to have our mind filled with all the intelligence of His glory. Here is special relationship in Him. He not only predestinated us to be holy and without blame before Him in love, but to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself; and here we get the character of sonship; He “the firstborn among many brethren.” We are put into the same position as Christ. He has taken this place before God as the Son, and He has been pleased to give us that place. It is in Christ He gives us all the grace, and before Him; and thus we take His position, “made us accepted in the Beloved.”

The whole character of God's grace is set forth in this word, “in the Beloved.” But it means more in the original than can be expressed by an English word. It is more than acceptance, including all His dealings in grace. “Dealt with us in grace” will not do, for it is more than that: He put us in the same position with Christ really, but it is, perhaps, best expressed as we have it, after all. Thus we are made partakers of all the Father's grace and love. “In whom we have redemption,” &c.-this is the introduction to all else. He has made this grace abound unto us in all wisdom and prudence, that the church should understand what He has done for it in Christ-revealed all His thoughts to it. As a part thus He has put us in grace, and has abounded over all this by giving us now the knowledge of what His pleasure is in the fullness of times. He has established something for the fullness of times, as now He tiles been, and is, preparing the joint-heirs to reign with Christ. God's plan, when everything is complete, is, that Christ shall be Head over everything in heaven and in earth. (Ver. 11) “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.” We have got redemption and the earnest of the inheritance, and are waiting for the inheritance in the fullness of times.

How much he speaks of saving grace in the beginning! “Sealed” is introduced to show the special care of God, to secure to the Gentiles, and show them they should have part, specially to the praise of His glory. We who have anticipated the time, and have taken part in the suffering, we are to be to the praise of His glory. God sealed the poor Gentiles after they believed to show them that all was sure to them also. In reading Ephesians you have to pay attention to the “us,” sometimes meaning Jews, and sometimes meaning all, as in chapter 2:7.

“You,” in chapters i., ii., means Gentiles (we were both dead together, and He raised both up together), in verse 13, “in whom ye also trusted:” when the sealing of the Holy Ghost is brought in, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. “Out of his fullness have all we received grace for grace,” heaped benefits on benefits. Sealing means God has put His seal to say, That is Mine. Jesus was sealed by the dove descending and abiding on Him at baptism. The disciples were sealed with cloven tongues of fire. They were to go forth to all nations, and they needed the tongues to set right the confusion of Babel. But of Jesus it was written, “His voice shall not be heard in the streets.” He was not to raise His own voice. Tongues are signs and gifts too. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are not to be confounded with the Holy Ghost Himself. The use of the tongues, though they were the gifts of the Holy Ghost, might grieve the Spirit whereby they were sealed,

who exercised the gifts to the day of redemption.

A good man full of the Holy Ghost, like Stephen, can act according to-God in the outward circumstances, instead of being acted on by them. “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. We have to watch ourselves, if God gives a certain energy of service, that the moral state of our soul keeps on a level with it; otherwise one may go on and on, and when there is much power of service, without the inward communion, he is suddenly spent, and breaks down. Take Elias, &c. After praying to God in the presence of all the priests of Baal and the people, and God answering by fire, he slays them all, so that not one priest escapes, and the name of the Lord is proclaimed. “The Lord be is God.” Yet Jezebel does but threaten, and Elias runs away, and hides himself from the face of a woman. God says, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” It is a great thing to have our souls at the level of our service, or we shall get trouble somehow. The apostle asks, “Do all speak with tongues?” They were special signs-not of universal gift or conferring. The consequence of Christ's ascension, the Holy Ghost is received in a new way. He seals us in virtue of Christ's redemption, but He sealed Christ as being Himself perfect in His personal excellence as Son. The oil is upon the blood in us. We must receive the redemption of the Son before we can be anointed with the oil. Aaron was first anointed without the blood.

The powers of the world to come are spoken of in connection with tongues and miracles. Like Abraham, we have left our Father's house and kindred-come into the inheritance too, but yet we have got nothing. He had got into a Canaan, but had not so much as to set his foot on. There is not a single thing I shall get in heaven, except the glorified body, which I cannot by faith say I have got now. Eternal life, entrance into the holiest, Christ's righteousness, the Holy Ghost, as the power of enjoyment. The distinct realization of this gives us to see what a thin veil there is between us and heaven-only the body. The first-fruits of the Spirit is spoken of in reference to the pouring out of the Spirit in the latter day. So it is said, the “former and the latter rain.” We are the first-fruits of the Spirit now. We are called to know what is the hope of “his calling"-not your calling-and what the riches of God's inheritance, for all things He inherits in His saints. The apostle wants us to see not only the things to which we are brought, but the power that has brought us there: “and what is the exceeding greatness of his power,” &c.

What a thought! if we get the truth of God by the Holy Ghost into our minds, how all the world's vanities fall before us!

Ephesians 5:17-21

One thought was particularly on my mind in reacting this portion-the astonishing grace implied in such an exhortation as this: “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is not a mere duty. I need not say we cannot deny the duty part; but it is evident that the Holy Ghost supposes that the saints will feel and understand it is rather the directing of the heart than the exacting something from it. There is great difference between these two things: so legal are our hearts naturally, that even with the knowledge of God we have, we are apt to clothe the words of our God to us under the form of a law to which we have to bend, instead of seeing that such being the goodly portion God has given us, this thanksgiving always for all things is naturally the expression of the heart taught of the Holy Ghost. It is indeed pure unbelief, wherever the heart is not thus able. The hindrance lies here-we can readily acknowledge that if God were giving us nothing but what we could see and own as the fruit of His love, Christ, and the Holy Ghost to make Christ known-that then we can thank Him for all things, for Himself-He has created us for Himself.

The exhortation in Colossians is, “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” But here the Holy Ghost goes much further, “Giving thanks always, for all things, unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is not giving thanks in all things that we do. It is more. No matter what God does, or permits to be done, I am entitled by faith to receive it as a blessing to my soul, and for this therefore give thanks. Whatever the trial may be, disappointment, scorn, distraction, the thousand influences that come from an evil world; it is not that I am to thank for these, but for the blessing that God designs for me through them. We are called of God to be outside the camp with Jesus. We find things there to try our faith, things that test us whether we have come out for one another, or because of certain truths received and enjoyed in common, or whether it is that we may be where Jesus is, sharing His reproach, having fellowship with His sufferings. And if we see that God has given us this portion, we can say that God Himself could not have given us anything better. He has not called us out to a partial blessing, but to a complete one. He calls us to enjoy what he is to us in Jesus-to learn His love more and more. He is leading on His saints in this: that through which we learn it, involves the crushing of nature, the denial of self, and if there is one single thing, however small, in which we should like to have a little reserve, it is the very thing we have to pass through and yield. For God desires we should know our full blessing. If we are looking after the well-watered plains, as Lot did, we may be suffered to get them, but there we shall have sorrow, as Lot had. And we see cases like his now. Indeed for one Abram we see fifty Lots.

But where the heart is made up to cleave to Jesus, let what will come, where Christ is known as the portion now for us, for walk as well as for salvation, God would have us to know not only that He has written this, but that there is not one word that He will not make good to the heart that desires it. God has sent the Holy Ghost to be in us, and what can there be beyond the power of the Holy Ghost? The flesh? Whatever the strength of the flesh may be, the Holy Ghost is stronger. There is no such thing as that we must fail. It is not so in the mind of God. There are not certain

things in which we may not expect to get the victory. Therefore the Lord grant that in looking at Christ we may always have good courage that this word may be before our hearts continually, by night and by day, whenever we are able to think at all. God would have our hearts to enter into this goodly portion, that there is not one thing He allows about us, but what He turns into a stream of blessing, if we only look at it in the presence of Jesus.

Chapter 58

Exodus

“The Lord brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt.” (Deut. 4: 20.) “For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.” (Isa. 62:1.)

I purpose in this paper to give a short view of the order and contents of the Book of Ex. 1 shall not attempt to interpret any part fully, or to take up any incidental or occasional matter, but I shall notice only such parts of the book, and interpret those parts only in such measure, as may give us to see the order of the book and its general character. Others may follow such labor as this with an exhibition of its more hidden treasures, and a fuller application of them to the comfort and edification of the church. But may the Lord graciously keep all our thoughts under the control and guidance of His Spirit, that we may speak as the oracles of God! For the word of God is our only instrument of safety, and should be carefully used as such in days like these, when man's thoughts are very busy, and Satan very ready to take occasion by them to corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ.

The ends of the age are come upon us, as the apostle speaks (1 Cor. 10:11); but we who are placed therein are not now receiving the same external exhibitions of God's will as Israel of old had; things happened to them, but words are written for us-from what happened to them we get admonitions. “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” Wherefore it is “to God, and to the word of his grace,” that we are commended, even in the worst of times-times both of wolves from without, and perverse men within. (Acts 20:30-32.) It is to the word that we are directed, as to “a light that shineth in a dark place” (2 Peter 1:19); and mindfulness of the words of the prophets, and the commandments of the apostles, is the saints' security in the last days of infidelity and scoffing. May the sword of the Spirit make a passage of light for us through the darkness, brethren. “Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” (Eph. 6:17, 18.)

In order to enter on the Book of Exodus with my present design, it is needful that I should look back at some of the earlier ways of God.

In the opening of Gen. 15, we hear the Lord encouraging Abram; and Abram, thus encouraged, letting the Lord into the deep desire of his heart. “What wilt thou give me,” says he, “seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?” All was nothing to Abram without a child. He would have his house fixed in one out of his own loins, and not in a servant. It did not satisfy Abram, as we may gather from this, that the promised inheritance should stand united with anything less than the adoption; and the Lord answers his desire, saying, “so shall thy seed be.” Though old and stricken in years, and his body now dead, he is promised a son; and he believes the Lord, and it is counted to him for righteousness.

Abram, thus secured in the seed, immediately gets a renewal of the promise of the inheritance; for the purpose of God runs thus, “if children, then heirs.” And He said unto him, “I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.” Upon this the patriarch's faith becomes bolder still. He desires, as it were, to read his title-deed touching this inheritance, saying, “Lord God, whereby shall I know that I inherit it?” He did not stagger at the promise of the inheritance, any more than he had done at that of the seed; but he desired to search out the ground of his confidence, he would know the covenant of his God. And the Lord hears him in this also; He directs the solemnities to be duly prepared, and then, as it were, reads and seals the covenant by which his seed was given the land, from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates. (See Jer. 34:18.)

The seals of this covenant were a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. These seals were significant, bearing on them the impressions of God's proposed dealings with Abram's seed, which were now revealed to Abram; “affliction” being, as it were, written on the one seal, and “salvation” on the other. (See Vers. 13, 14.)

Now the Book of Exodus will be found to unfold the full meaning of these emblematical seals. It may be entitled, “The Book of the Smoking Furnace, and of the Burning Lamp.”

This will be seen by a simple exhibition of the book in its different parts.

Chapter 1-This chapter presents to us the smoking furnace now kindled for Israel, the seed of Abram, in the land of Egypt. As Moses says to them, “And the Lord brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt.” (Deut. 4: 20.) And as Solomon afterward says, when commending Israel to the care of the Lord, “For they be thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron” (1 Kings 8:51); and as indeed the place of affliction and trial is again and again called. (See Isa. 48:10; Jer. 11:3, 4; Ezek. 22:17-22.)

Chapters 2-4—In these chapters we see the Lord arising to prepare the promised burning lamp; that is, to bring salvation and deliverance, according to His covenant with their father, to the long-afflicted children of Abraham. “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." (Ex. 2:24, 25.)

Chapters 5-15:22—The smoking furnace, which had waxed exceeding hot through the urgency of the king's command, is here by the Lord's own hand completely quenched; and the burning lamp, which, of old had passed in vision before Abram, is here seen to shine out brighter, and brighter, till the full glory of it breaks forth. Now is the ancient word of promise accomplished in behalf of the seed of Abram-” that nation whom they serve will I judge, and afterward shall they come out with great substance” (Gen. 15:14); and the thankful, joyous praises of Moses and of Israel now confess the love and faithfulness of the God of Abraham.

Chapters 15:23-17—But here we listen to other sounds altogether. Their songs of praise and triumph had scarcely died away, when the sound of a rebellious cry was heard among them. It was now no longer the voice of them that shouted for mastery, but the voice of them that murmured was heard. Their works of darkness began while they were still under the fullest shining of the burning lamp of God's salvation

Chapter 18-This scene is rather of an occasional character, but I would at least say this of it, that it gives us another instance of the Lord's care of His people Israel; for the order and comfort of Moses and the congregation are here consulted and provided for. It was, if I may so speak, a little trimming of the lamp, a fresh acting in grace and kindness by God their Savior, though the people had been proving themselves so base and unworthy.

Chapter 19-But what shame and sorrow have we here! The seed of Abraham are willingly exchanging the glory of the burning lamp for another furnace, even fiercer than that of Egypt. (See ver. 18.) They willingly forego Jehovah as their salvation, to trust in their own flesh; they become, of their own accord, debtors to do the whole law, saying, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do;” thus refusing, as it were, to know that “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.”

The seed of Abraham are now about to be put under the covenant from Mount Sinai, that gendered bondage. But I must notice this—that the Lord makes no mention whatsoever of such a thing in all His previous dealings either with them or their fathers. The affliction in Egypt had been noticed in the revelation of the divine purposes, touching his seed, to the patriarch Abram (Gen. 15), but no other affliction is at all alluded to. Egypt was to be the scene of the suffering which was to prepare them for becoming the people of God's covenant. The Lord's promises to the fathers were all of grace. “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” is the title of the God of Israel, as full of grace, and having salvation, and it was in that name that He claimed His people from the Egyptian king (Ex. 3:6, 8), and with that name He had marked, as it were, all His dealings with them from the Red Sea to the foot of Mount Sinai, where they are now, in chapter 19, standing. I say, throughout the execution of all this mighty deliverance, which He had begun, continued, and ended in His own strength, there is no mention of Sinai terrors, no hint at anything of the kind. The counsel and expectation, which are ever and faithfully kept in view, are simply this-the people holding a feast to the Lord in the wilderness, and then going up to the land of promise. (See-among other passages-Ex. 5:1; 6:1-8; 10:9, 26; 12:25; 13:5.)

But Israel (as we have observed under chapters 15:22; 17.) proves mistrustful of God. They did not answer His grace (the way in which alone it can ever be duly answered) with confidence; and thus they ceased to be “the children of Abraham,” not doing the works of Abraham, though, of course, they were still his seed. (John 8:37, 39.) And this disobedience of theirs is that which calls forth the covenant from Sinai. And necessarily so, for being now not “of faith,” they cannot be “blessed with faithful Abraham;” and even more than that, instead of repenting of this their unbelief and disobedience, and seeking the grace of the God of their fathers, they willingly become “of the works of the law,” saying, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do” (Ex. 19:8); thus choosing bondage, and taking their willing place under the dark terrors and consuming fires of their own covenant. Therefore the glory, which in the cloudy pillar had stood for them in the face of Pharaoh and his host, and had guided them hitherto in grace, now changed its aspect, and stood against them on the top of the burning mount. The Lord, it is true, was about to be far better to them than they were thus proving to be to themselves; He was about to cast on all this darkness many a fair token of coming mercy (chaps. 25-31), to set His bow in their cloud; to join with the ministration of death and of condemnation (into which they were now willingly entering) many a pledge of life and righteousness; but this was His doing, the other was theirs. As of old, Sarai's unbelief brought Ishmael into the house of Abram, but God's love and power afterward brought in Isaac.

Chapters 20-24—In consequence, then, of this unbelief and hardness of heart, a second furnace is prepared for the seed of Abraham. They trusted in themselves-let their own arm now deliver them; let it be seen if any can be “of the works of the law,” and not also “under the curse.”

The terms of the covenant are here settled, the covenant itself dedicated and sealed, and Jehovah shows Himself as “the God of Israel.” (Chap. 24:10.) The nation thus solemnly affianced to Jehovah is put under the ministry of an angel, who was to prove himself either an avenger or rewarder, according to their desert. (Chap. 23:20-23.)

Chapters 25-31—But here we are introduced to other things altogether, the Lord's doings, and not the people's. The Lord's purposed salvation is here revealed to Moses. While the people, abiding in their own covenant, stand under the mount, looking on its devouring fires (chap. 24:17), Moses is called into fellowship with the Lord's covenant of grace and salvation, and he is therefore made to take a place away from the people in the midst of the cloud in the mount, in a region that lay quite on the other side of all those devouring fires. (Chap. 24:18.) The thunder is now behind him, the storm to him has passed by, and he dwells in the calm sunshine of the presence of Christ. (2 Cor. 3:14.) In quietness and assurance, he receives token after token of that grace which has virtue to quench the flames of Sinai. The testimony of Jesus was the spirit of all that he saw there. Shadows of good things to come are made to pass before him, the same, in meaning, as the burning lamp of old before the patriarch.

Chapters 32-34—These chapters are parenthetical, as will at once appear by reading chapter 35 in connection with chapter 31. For it will be found that they may be read without interruption, so as to exclude the chapters that lie between them, that is, the chapters I am now considering. But although these chapters do not therefore constitute any part of the direct subject, and form a parenthesis, yet it is a parenthesis of great meaning and importance, which I will therefore consider more fully.

They begin with an act of full apostasy, which the seed of Abraham commit while Moses was in the mount. (Chap. 32:1-6.) This working the forfeiture of all the blessing engaged to them on the terms of their own covenant, the Lord therefore at once stands against them, disclaims them, and prepares to execute consuming judgment upon them. (Vers. 7-10.) But Moses as speedily stands for them; and as mediator he pleads the Lord's ancient promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And the Lord repents when He thus hears the voice of the mediator. (Vers. 11-14.)

Having thus secured ultimate grace and salvation, but not till then (as in the garden of old, the promise of the woman's seed was made before the curse was pronounced, and Adam was clothed with skins before he was driven out of Eden), Moses comes down, and correcting but not consuming judgment is executed on the transgressors. (Vers. 15-29.) He then, as mediator, returns to the Lord, laden with the sin of the people, in order to make atonement for them, and turn the wrath away; and the Lord hears him in this also, and mercy is again promised. (Vers. 30-35; chap. 33:1-3.)

We are then given to look at the people thus convicted and judged, and also at their mediator with the Lord. In the first place we see their present loss of visible glory: for the tabernacle is taken from the midst of them, and they, in the attitude of repentance, stripped of their ornaments, listening to the righteous rebukes of the Lord. But still there is blessing among them, for they are bumbled;

they willingly take the place of shame and dishonor; they worship and wait while the mediator is settling the great question between them and their offended God. (Vers. 4-11.)

We then see and hear the blessed way between the Lord and the mediator; and the pleading of the mediator prevails, till the full goodness of the Lord is made to pass before him, till the name of his God and Savior is proclaimed to him, and his soul is satisfied. He knows that he has now got his Lord on the side of the people; that though their iniquity and their sit were so great, yet still the Lord could take them for His inheritance; and satisfied with this mercy, be bows his head towards the earth and worships. (Vers. 12-23; chap. 34:1-9.)

It would not be to my present purpose to pursue what here opens about the ways of our mediator. May we all have grace to know them more and more, to the glory of His name, and our own great and endless comfort!

My Advocate appears

For my defense on high:

The Father bows His ears,

And lays His thunder by;

Not all that hell or sin can say

Shall turn His heart-His love away.

The Lord then, in pledge of the mercy, again enters into covenant with Israel (vers. 10-28); and the parenthesis thus contained in these chapters then closes with the mystery of Moses' veil (vers. 29-35); which is indeed the summary of the whole matter: presenting, as in a glass darkly, the whole way between Jehovah and His Israel. For Moses veiled (as we learn from 2 Cor. 3) typifies Israel as they now are, in the flesh, under law, and in consequent blindness of heart; Moses unveiled typifies Israel as they shall be hereafter, in the Spirit under Christ, and in the light and liberty of the new covenant. Moses, when in the mount, was turned to the Lord, and then took his veil off; and so shall Israel hereafter turn to the Lord, and walk unveiled in the light and joy of the same countenance.

And when Israel is thus turned to the Lord, what shall it be to the world but life from the dead? The covering that is now cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations shall be then destroyed also. (Isa. 25:7.) For God's salvation, God's burning lamp shall be “a light to lighten the Gentiles,” as well as “the glory of his people Israel.”

Chapters 35-40— Here, as I have just suggested, the subject of chapters 25-31 is resumed, or rather continued. We may remember that the purport of that portion of our book was to verify, by many witnesses, the final grace and salvation that is to be brought to Israel through Jesus; in other words, the return of the lamp of the Lord.

The patterns there shown to Moses are here copied by the hand and art of appointed workmen; and all these ordinances (as indeed we all must know) were no part of the clouds and thick darkness of Mount Sinai; they were not the hidden meaning of its thunder and fire. But they were the witnesses of grace and salvation, the shadows of good things to come; or, to express them

according to the analogy of this book of Exodus, they were the faint gleamings of the then distant (and, to Israel, still hidden) lamp of the Lord.

Thus does our Exodus open with the smoking furnace, and close with the passing in vision before us of a burning lamp, brighter, far brighter than that which of old led the ransomed of the Lord-the seed of Abraham-out of Egypt. We may then, in faith, say, that the Lord has ordained a lamp for His anointed (Psa. 132:17); and with comfort and confidence listen to the intercession of the great advocate; “For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.” (Isa. 62:1.)

Chapter 59

A Few Remarks From a Private Letter in Reply to a Friend Who Enclosed the Paper

Let me assure you that, were I ever so sensitive, I am too inured to the hardness a soldier of Christ must endure, if in any measure faithful through grace, to take amiss the little extracts from A. N. Groves' Memoir.

Further, I admit and deplore the tendency of not a few in our midst, “especially novices,” to diverge from the grace and wisdom of Christ-which is to me a more serious thing than the late Mr. Groves' spirit and practice-in relation to other Christians. United testimony against all who differ is to me a principle and practice of stiff and narrow dissent, readily imported and inherent in our nature, but in no way conceivable for such as love the church as such according to Christ in their little measure. It might be their melancholy inconsistency, if they became false to their principles. I am sure that I have in my affections nothing to boast; but I dare not belie the fixed conviction and purpose of my life as a Christian, in dropping Anglicanism, to abjure all party and to cleave only to His name in the present most difficult times of Christendom. I would hear 2 Tim. 2:19-22, and every other scripture which contemplates and provides guidance for our actual disorder and complications; and I pray that grace may be with all those that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptness. The idea or feeling of greater love for such as see with me practically (i.e. Brethren so-called), I do not think ever consciously rises in my breast. I would know nothing, in addition to Christ Himself, but the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and would diligently keep it.

Mr. Groves' seems no bad witness, however, of his mistake as to Brethren; for he was welcome, though first and last he materially differed from them. He never recognized the assembly, the body of Christ, as you know Brethren do, though in no way forcing it on or from a single member of Christ, who is received simply and solely in His name. He never understood the baptism of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the new birth, nor saw that while this is common to all believers from Abel (or Adam) downwards, that is special to God's dealing in sovereign grace since redemption and Christ's going on high. (John 14, 16, Acts 1, 2, 1 Cor. 12 &c.) Mr. Groves used to cite (as you may see in his Memoir) Matt. 13:30, in a way which destroys ecclesiastical purity and annuls discipline, just as Papists did against Protestants, but rejected by Chillingworth, &c. before us. So far from being a “chief originator” therefore, he was always especially opposed to those who affirm that, while grace is the power, separation from evil is the necessary and spiritual principle of unity according to God. He was a unit, but never understood unity.

Mr. Groves' was a devoted man, of a practical turn of mind, confused and incapable of analysis, and so he thought that separation from evil, which is another way of expressing holiness, was made by us the power and aim of unity, instead of being (as it must be) its principle, if God had to do with it. Attractive grace in Christ, the one object and center, is the power in the energy of the Spirit. Yet, though differing as to this from us, and finding out that there was a difference which he never discerned truly, either where or how it lay, he went along with Brethren who never thought of troubling him, till he went off himself with his brother-in-law in the unhappy Plymouth-Bethesda

rupture.

But, apart from himself, what can be less intelligent than these statements of Mr. Groves? Not life, as he says, nor light, as he erroneously imputed to us, is the bond, but the one Spirit, who has baptized us, whatever we might have been before, into one body. This is not a slight distinction, but fundamental. And therefore, while striving (I trust) as much as Mr. Groves to maintain brotherly love, and fully believing in God's gracious action by His servants in all orthodox denominations, I still humbly but firmly maintain that the very principle of different denominations is dead opposed to the “one body and one Spirit” of scripture; and scripture cannot be broken. The sanction of distinct communions is irreconcilable with God's word. That is the point of Mr. Groves' difference from Brethren, who stand decidedly for the rule the Lord constitutes with which the Spirit's order (though I prefer calling it His action) ought to coincide; which I feel assured is the simple truth on this subject, as revealed in the word, the only safeguard against all delusions.

I do not differ from the late Mr. Groves in abhorrence of narrow-minded arrogance and bigoted assumption, which are altogether at variance with the only becoming ways of the Christian, the lowliness and meekness and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, in which we are called to walk together, as individually. Nor do I deny the grave occasion we (Brethren I mean) have given by our grievous failures in times of controversial struggle. But this is due, not to a mistaken principle, but to our state of unjudged carnality and to worldly love of party success, and to other humiliating evils inadequately watched against, which have too often tarnished the testimony of Christ in our midst. But Mr. Groves is wholly mistaken if he supposes that his laxity as to Christendom even admits of anything like the same horror of schism, of heresy, or any such sin against Christ and the church, as those brethren must feel who seize the body of Christ according to the written word as he never did.

Surely, my dear brother, we do owe it to Christ to be “exclusive” of all that offends Him, of which His word abides the test; as one's heart would be “open” to all that pleases Him according to the same word. More or other than this I desire not.

To the Rev. —— D.D., &c.

Chapter 60

For She Loved Much

To explain the expression, “Her sins are forgiven, for she loved much,” we must distinguish between grace revealed in the person of Jesus, and the pardon He announced to those whom the grace had reached. The Lord is able to make this pardon known. He reveals it to the poor woman. But it was that which she had seen in Jesus Himself, which, by grace, melted her heart, and produced the love she had to Him-the seeing what He has for sinners like herself. She thinks only of Him: He has taken possession of her heart so as to shut out other influences. Hearing that He is there, she goes into the house of this proud man, without thinking of anything but the fact that Jesus is there. His presence answered, or prevented, every question. She saw what He was for a sinner, and that the most wretched and disgraced found a resource in Him; she felt her sins in the way that this perfect grace, which opens the heart and wins confidence, causes them to be felt; and she loved much. Grace in Christ had produced its effect. She loved because of His love. This is the reason that the Lord says, “Her sins are forgiven, because she loved much.” It was not that her love was meritorious for this, but that God revealed the glorious fact that the sins-be they ever so numerous and abominable-of one whose heart was turned to God were fully pardoned. There are many whose hearts are turned to God, and who love Jesus that do not know this. Jesus pronounces on their case with authority and sends them away in peace. It is a revelation-an answer-to the wants and affections produced in the heart made penitent by grace revealed in the person of Christ.

If God manifests Himself in this world, and with such love, He must needs set aside in the heart every other consideration. And thus, without being aware of it, this poor woman was the only one who acted suitably in those circumstances; for she appreciated the all-importance of the One who was there. A Savior-God being present, of what importance was Simon and his house? Jesus caused all else to be forgotten. Let us remember this.

The beginning of man's fall was want of confidence in God, by the seducing suggestion of Satan that God had kept back what would make man like God. Confidence in God lost, man seeks, in the exercise of his own will, to snake himself happy: lusts, sin, transgression follow. Christ is God in infinite love, winning back the confidence of man's heart to God. Removal of guilt, and power to live to God, are another thing, and found in their own place through Christ, as pardon comes in its place here. But the poor woman, through grace, had felt that there was one heart she could trust, if none else; but that was God's.

God is light and God is love. Revealing Himself, He must be both; so Christ was love in the world, but the light of it. So in the heart. The love through grace gives confidence, and thus the light is gladly let in, and with confidence in the love, and seeing self in the light, the heart has wholly met God's heart: so with this poor woman. This is where the heart of man and God always and alone meet. The Pharisee had neither: pitch dark, neither love nor light were there. He had God manifest in the flesh in his house, and saw nothing—only settled that He was not a prophet! It is a wondrous scene to see these three hearts: man's, as such, resting on false human righteousness, God's,

and the poor sinner's, fully meeting it as God did hers. Who was the child of wisdom? for it is a commentary on that expression.

And note, though Christ had said nothing of it but bowed to the slight, yet He was not insensible to the neglect which had not met Him with the common courtesies of life. To Simon He was a poor preacher, whose pretensions he could judge, certainly not a prophet; for the poor woman, God in love, and bringing her heart into unison with His as to her sins and as to herself, for love was trusted in. Note, too, this clinging to Jesus is where true light is found: here the fruitful revelation of the gospel; to Mary Magdalene, as to the highest privilege of saints.

Our Lord was accustomed to be heard, to look to be heard. A groan in the perception of difficulty is often power in it; it has lost its power in the groan, and the eyes will follow thoughtfully to that God in the secret of His love, who is present in the answer of His love shown in His presence.

Chapter 61

Fragments: Dependent Being Elevated by Want

A dependent being or a revolted one, perhaps a revolted dependent one, is elevated by its wants, not by its powers. Its powers may develop it, but cannot elevate it. But if I have a want, which is not power, and there is that which meets my want outside myself, I become acquainted with it. I appreciate it, not by power, but by dependence on the quality by which my want is supplied. Hunger is not power; but it enjoys and appropriates food which gives power. Weakness is not power: but if my languid body leans on kindly and supporting strength, my felt weakness-makes me know what strength is. But I learn more by it. I learn the kindness, patience, goodness, readiness, help, and perseverance in helping, which sustain me. I have the experience of independent strength, adapted, suited to my weakness. I know its capacity to sustain what is beyond itself, which is not my power elevating itself in internal development-self-filling power. There is love.

Now this relationship of wants to that which supplies them in another is the link between my nature and all the qualities of the nature I lean on, and which supplies these wants. I know its qualities by the way it meets my not having them-my want of power. It is a moral link too. I know love by it, and all the unfolding of goodness: self-power never does. The exaltation of what is human in itself is the positive loss of what is divine; that is, infinite positive loss. There is immense moral depth in the apostle's word: “When I am weak, then am I strong.” And the more I have of God, and the more absolutely it is so, the more I gain. All is appropriated, but self is destroyed. It is not that I cease to exist, or to enjoy. It is not a Buddhist or stoical pantheistic absorption into God. I am always the conscious I forever; yet an I which does not think of I, but of God in whom its delight is. It is a wonderful perfection-an absolute delight in what is perfect, but in what is perfect out of ourselves; so that self is morally annihilated, though it always is there personally to enjoy. This is partly now in the form of thirst, though there be enjoyment-hereafter, for those who have it, perfect enjoyment face to face.

Chapter 62

From Gilgal to Bochim

The Book of Judges is the book of the unfaithfulness of Israel after God had performed the promises made by Joshua. The Israelites had to sojourn in Egypt until the iniquity of the Amorites was full. God only pronounced His judgment, on the world since the world rejected Jesus. The Book of Joshua contains the account of the accomplishment of the promises. The Canaanites represented the influence of Satan, the prince of this world. God gave judges to Israel to chasten him for his unfaithfulness, and to deliver him from the hand of those that spoiled him. It is the history of man from the beginning. Every time that God has set him in blessing he falls immediately into iniquity. Such is what happened to Israel from the entry into Canaan. How? This is what we must examine for our instruction.

It is only when iniquity comes to its height that God judges. The death of Christ is the height of the iniquity of the world. God withdraws His children from the world because the world is judged. Therefore God acts in grace and sends His gospel. God would give a law if the world were not condemned, because it would need a rule of conduct. God has employed all the means possible to act on the heart of man before condemning men. Before the condemnation came on the race, there was no grace to receive. Before Jesus God sent prophets to withdraw men from evil; since Jesus God by grace would reconcile the world, His enemies, to Himself. The friendship of the world is enmity against God. If I had seen yesterday the city of L—crucify my father, it would be impossible for me today to be their companion, or to retain friendship under such circumstances. The gospel of grace is the sole language which one can hold. The disciples of Christ found themselves in this situation. They could not make themselves friends of the high priests, and of the chief men; but they proclaim to them the grace and the mercy of God.

Nothing is changed at bottom. We have the proof of what the heart of man is. All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. There is a barrier which cannot be crossed. As regards our affections and our habits, we are often of the world. Israel wished for Canaan, but in the wilderness pined after the potherbs of Egypt. To have heaven one must vanquish the world and its habits in the circumstances where we are. There is only the grace of God which can give us strength. It is in vain that one desires heaven if the perseverance which is produced by the Spirit of Christ is not in us to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye. One must often break ties the most intimate. The approbation of God can alone sustain and suffice us.

God enters into alliance with us, and wishes us to break every alliance with the world, because the world is judged. One cannot be of the world and of Jesus at the same time. God had fully manifested His power in favor of Israel; the walls of Jericho fell. But the sin of idolatry enfeebled the people; Israel makes leagues with their enemies. Every time that he fought his enemies, the Eternal was with him, and he conquered. The enemy was vanquished by the power of God. But in place of relying on the Eternal, they let in the heathen to live with them, or they lived with the Canaanites. They made alliance with the judged enemies. But God cannot be with His children

when they join that which God has condemned. If the church makes concessions to the world, the world is often an aid to the church, but the church becomes its tributary. There is no longer the feeling of the almighty power of God; and the church falls.

It was at Gilgal that Israel was sanctified to the Eternal. The angel of the Eternal was there, because He honors faithfulness. Bochim signifies tears. The alliance of Christians with the world leads them to sorrow and tears. The Eternal had made Israel come out of Egypt, and had accomplished all for him. God has also accomplished all for us, He has conquered death for us. “Ye have not obeyed my voice; why have ye done this?” God then leaves the Canaanites among the sons of Israel: it is a judgment He pronounces against them. God cannot sanction the world which has condemned His Son. When the heart fails in confidence in God, it treats with His enemy, but it cannot be at ease with God. He who has had beside him the altar of a false god, cannot go up to the sanctuary of the Eternal. Communion with God and discernment are lost. Conscience even cannot any longer condemn evil, because it has got hard. From him who has not, even that which he has will be taken away. Then comes continual sorrow. If the soul finds itself at ease, it is that the Spirit of Christ is not there. To recognize the principles of the world there is the source of the fall of Christians and of the church; it is to recognize that which God has condemned.

That which leads us from Gilgal to Bochim is this unfaithfulness. God permits the slipping back, but does not sanction it. Our enemies and worldliness are there in order to test our faithfulness and to teach us war, until rest comes. God acts in us, and Satan in the world; therefore we are the stronger. If there is even an error of judgment, it is because the eye was not single. And because we have come out of Egypt to be the people of God, we ought to combat all the deceitful habits of the world.

O that by the presence of the Holy Spirit we may see clearly. “Ye are not of the world,” says our Lord Jesus, “as I am not of the world;” and this whilst in the world.

Chapter 63

The Galatian Error

The occasion of the Epistle to the Galatians was the evil effect of the activity of certain Christians, who contended for the permanency of the Jewish law, asserting that true faith in Christ was not sufficient for salvation. Thus they taught, that, after having abandoned paganism and idolatry, and after being baptized (thus linking themselves with the Christian assembly), those who believed must be circumcised, and must observe all the precepts of the law of Moses, otherwise they could not be saved. (See Acts 15:1.) To this false and evil teaching was added the rejection of the ministry and apostleship of Paul, who, said they, had not been sent by Peter and the other apostles. They insisted upon apostolic succession, as is so much done in these days.

Now Paul did not retreat before this attack, an attack, moreover, which he encountered everywhere. But in this case all the Galatians were led away by the evil, and Paul presents the point of the sword to the enemy—for it was indeed the work of the enemy of souls-in order that the truth of the gospel might remain with these poor deceived ones. He insists that it is impossible to combine the law and the gospel, although the latter fully confirms the authority of the former, as given of God. He who is under the law must needs fulfill it, and do all that it requires, but then it follows that Christ is dead in vain.

Moreover, he declared apostolic succession to be a fable, that ministry has not its source in a mission of men, nor by men, but is, on the contrary, derived immediately from Christ Himself, and from God, by the power and operation of the Holy. Ghost. Paul boasts in his independence of Peter and the other apostles, with which they reproached him, as though he lacked something, refusing his apostolic authority, which Paul drew immediately from the Lord. It is thus he begins his epistle.

It is remarkable that Paul was more troubled when considering the state of the Galatians, who were putting themselves under law, than he was as to the Corinthians, who were walking very badly. He would not go to Corinth, but he said all the good he could of them, in order to recall them to a walk becoming Christianity. But here he at once sets himself against the evil into which the Galatians had fallen, without one gracious word (if we except the blessing with which he began all his epistles), without one salutation at the close, without one word of affection, which nevertheless filled his heart: all is dry and severe. Was it because the apostle's love had grown cold? On the contrary, it was because he was full of love: he clearly shows it, for he was ready to travail in birth again with them, and he does it. Moses had not been able to bear the burden of the people, and had refused the thought of having begotten them even once.

The Galatians were abandoning the foundations of the Christian faith, with respect, at least, to the means of applying its efficacy to the soul. They had not forsaken the truth as to the person of Christ, nor the faith which owns Him, but, as regards the justification of the soul, they had totally abandoned the ground of faith. They did not believe in the sufficiency of the work of Christ, without adding to it the observance of the law of Moses: Source of all the corruption that has been introduced into the church-not, perhaps, under the same form, and openly, but the same in its

governing principle. According to this principle works are necessary for justification, and blessing is obtained through ordinances.

And the difference is a fundamental one. The one system makes life flow from the operation of the Spirit of God by means of the word, the other from ordinances and works of man. The one presents man as a sinner who needs to be born again, which is effected by the Spirit of God and by the word; it shows that, having been called by the grace of God, the believer finds himself perfectly and forever justified through the blood of Christ (that is to say, through the work which He has accomplished on the cross), and is accepted in Him before God-a new man, created in Christ unto good works, which manifest the life he has received. The other system teaches that sinful man is born again in the ordinance of baptism, and is forgiven when as yet he has committed no sins; then he receives grace through various ordinances, is from time to time pardoned afresh through the sacrament of penance for some small venial sins, and also when he receives the host; and finally he goes into purgatory to be punished, so that God may be satisfied by the amount of suffering according to the sins committed. In this system life is obtained by one's own works, with the help of sacraments. The other teaches that the believer has a perfect justification before God, through the work of Christ, in whom he believes: and partaking of the divine life, and being sealed by the Holy Ghost, he has peace with God, and he awaits the coming of Christ to take him to be in heaven with Himself, where He has gone to prepare a place for us. The apostle insists upon this truth of justification by faith, and that there is in us a new creation, a new life, asserting that if anything is added to Christ, salvation being sought by one's own obedience, Christ is dead in vain.

Chapter 64

Brief Words on Genesis 17:1-8

God brings good out of evil, and in every kind of the trial of our faith He finds occasion of ministering to us, not only according to His heart, but according to our own. Of this there was none in innocence, as none in heaven. He brings all the fullness of His grace into trial to prove there is One who is interested in us in our varied sorrow. He has brought Himself nearer to our hearts in trial than at any other time, showing the perfectness of His heart of love to us. He has purged our consciences entirely. Without this our hearts could never reflect upon all that He is.

There are two characters of our intercourse with God. In Canaan Israel dwelt in God's land, in the desert they did not. In them God dwelt in ministering to their need, and in blessing them. Through daily life the Christian learns what God is for us in the desert; here God especially shows His grace and mercy, but it is not quite right to rest here, in what God is to us, in ministering to our wants in the desert. Whether in the desert or in Canaan, we are with God; but it is a different thing to have God abiding with us in the desert, and we abiding with Him where He is. Christ comes down here; He bears our sicknesses, and carries our sorrows. There is not a sorrow of the human heart that Christ does not enter into it-tried in all points like as we are. This wins the affections, because it speaks to our hearts. Cain was in the place of what you call duty, he had not a sense of sin, nor of the new thing. There is not a single thing in the character of sorrow into which Christ did not come. Trial ought not to be needed; but yet God has to put us through all kinds of sorrow and trial, that we may feel our need of God, so proud and self-sufficient are we. Jesus says, Come to Me; I stand wholly alone and out of the world. If you have a want, come to Me; if you have found the world is toil and labor, come to Me. I have tried the world, and find not one thing in it; if you have found this too, come to Me.

I meet self in its wants, sorrows, and trials. God comes to meet us where we are; but we are not to stop here.

If a friend help me in difficulty, and supplies all my need, I do not stop here, I seek fellowship and communion with that friend. God came, and said to Abraham, Fear not; this world is a place of fear. We want a shield: God says, I am thy shield. We are poor: God is our reward. Walk before Me, be with Me according to what I am-perfect, walking with God according to the revelation that God gives us of Himself. God comes into the heart, and there is not a fiber but He puts in tune by His own grace. You will have sorrows where self-sufficiency is at work; you will have trials where self-will is not judged to show you what is in God, and to ripen you for heaven; to make us think of the sorrows of others, and love others, caring for the wants of others, and not our own. When God talked with Abraham, he fell upon his face; ha did not ask God for anything. When He has emptied us, and we have learned Him, He talks with us, telling us of Himself— “I am the Almighty God.” He expects us to care for Himself. He cares for us surely. Whatever your trial, come to Himself; do not reason about it, but bring it to Him. God talks to you of His plans and purposes, of His own blessedness. I put Myself into this blessed relationship with thee, that I may bring thee into enjoyment with Myself. Abraham falls upon his face. This is holy reverence, the spirit of worship.

God is not ashamed to be called your God.

How far can you intercede for others? I find this often a test to my own soul. God would have us live in the knowledge of Himself, and in the blessed enjoyment of Himself, in a spirit of intercession. If I am in the presence of God, I shall fall on my face and be nothing-God is everything.

Chapter 65

Glory and Virtue

There is an expression of the Spirit of God here that brings out our true blessedness now in contrast even with man before the fall. We are often in the habit, and rightly so, as it is with profit to our souls, of contrasting our place with man fallen; but it is also certain that the grace of God has given us a wholly different place from man unfallen. And there is an expression at the close of this verse that brings out the difference in a way that I think the Lord may use to help our souls and strengthen our faith. The whole runs thus: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to (by) glory and virtue.” Now such was not at all the case with Adam in the garden. There he was made the head of creation, and everything around him was very good. God looked upon it, and pronounced it good, and Adam's place was simply to enjoy with thanksgiving. He was tested in one small particular, but still he was tested, adequately and wisely, by this point whether he would obey, as in the place of subjection to Him. To abstain from the fruit of one forbidden tree was no hardship, but a real acknowledgment of God's authority, in itself small indeed, so to speak, compared with what was left entirely and thoroughly at his disposal. Just as among men: it may be a person has a vast estate, and all he pays to the sovereign is a peppercorn-that is, it is a pure and simple acknowledgment that he is not independent. Certainly in divine relationships there is sought to be on man's part subjection to One above him, because without this man would be altogether wrong. This accordingly had to be remembered by man, and was maintained by God, who put him to the proof in this particular point. But for man otherwise it was a question simply of enjoying what God had given, and the only spiritual exercise that Adam or Eve could have known in such a state of things was thankfulness of heart in owning the gifts of God's bounty and goodness.

But there was no setting forth at all at that time of heaven or hell. God at first never said anything about either. He warned of death, but not a word more. There was no revelation about another world for man. Consequently their way of looking at God and the things of God was wholly different from ours in every respect. The only point of contact between Adam in that state and a Christian now is this: God to be acknowledged with thanksgiving, God to be obeyed absolutely. In itself the test might be a very small point, and so it was. It was not all the giving oneself up to God in the way we are now called on to do, as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. Obedience is now of a far more absolute nature than it could be then, because it is tested at every point, instead of being only tested at one. There is not a single thing that we are called upon to do in the course of the day, but what is intended of God to exercise our hearts, not merely that the end should be to Him, but that the way of it should be always according to God too. And Christ is both the only means of knowing the end and the only one by whom we can see the way. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Now Christ was not unveiled to Adam at all; he, unfallen, had no knowledge of Christ whatsoever. He knew God above him, enjoyed the fruits of God's mighty hand, and his heart was to return in thankfulness to God for the enjoyment of all that was his, abstaining from that one tree in the middle of the garden which God had prohibited from his use.

But our place is wholly different. Now we find “his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” There is no restriction whatever in what God gives us. He rises up in His own majesty, and in His divine power gives us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. We have not so much creature gifts for this life-indeed these seem hardly included in what is here said to be given with a spiritual end in view. Outward mercies are around us; and we have whatever share of them God is pleased in His providence to give. We confide in His wisdom, and are sere that He knows what is the very best thing for us, and He never fails. He puts us exactly in that place which is the best for us, as well as for Him. Confidence in Him is what makes the heart perfectly happy, because, whatever comes, whether trial, or difficulty, or sorrow, we can never as believers suppose that it is haphazard. It comes from Himself, and there is not a single form of trial or grief but what God can turn, as He means that we by grace should turn it, to His own glory. This is a part of what He calls “all things that pertain unto life and godliness:” because the dispensation of trial and difficulty is the path in which that life has to be exercised, and that godliness to be maintained.

Here, too, we have the manner of it-” through the knowledge of him that hath called us by glory and virtue.” It is not merely certain things around us. When the various animals came before him, Adam knew and gave the appropriate name for each animal that was put under his dominion. He discerned their nature, and assigned to them designations, according to the wisdom with which God endowed him. But our privilege is to know Him who has called us. It is the knowledge of God Himself, and of God Himself, not merely as a Creator, but as the God of all grace. “Through the knowledge of him that hath called us by glory and virtue.” What did Adam know then about these things? There was not even a question of a “call” of God in Adam's case at that time. There could not be the call of a man unfallen. Calling does not apply to an innocent, but necessarily to a fallen, creature; because calling means that God speaks to take that creature out of the condition in which he then is, and put him into a better. Adam was to magnify God by honoring Him where he was, and by enjoying what was given around him, not by seeking something unseen or greater, and that was why Adam, seeking in disobedience to be greater, lost everything he had so bountifully. Listening to Eve, and really to the devil, he sought to be as God; but in this vain search after becoming as God, he became a sinner. In a certain sense he did become as God, namely, as knowing good and evil; but this is what the creature, as such, could not bear. Only God can have in Himself the knowledge of good and evil, without leaving the good and falling under the power of the evil. If the creature, left to itself, have the knowledge of good and evil, the result is that the evil overpowers and carries him away: he gives up the good, and falls a prey to the evil. The intuitive knowledge of good and evil, apart from law, was what Adam gained by sin. This is not lost to the Christian.

The believer is met by God in the midst of his ruined estate, and the grace of God sends a call to him. This is what God does in the gospel. He calls us, and we hear His voice, and come forth from the grave of our sins at His call, and we are thus the fruit of the resurrection-power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are thus called out of that misery, and distance, and death before God into which our sins have plunged us. This does not apply to Adam unfallen. He, while innocent in the garden, was not at all in that state: and consequently there was no call to him. Afterward there was a call. After he had sinned God did call to Adam, who trembled at the sound, and hid himself. There is where the call comes in; but the call of God is not to the conscience only, it is the revelation of His

grace and as a deliverer. God's grace accordingly always wrought by the revelation of this coming Deliverer. But now He is fully revealed as well as come; and our chapter supposes this, but still brings in the great principle that is true ever since the fall, though brought out incomparably more fully since the Lord Jesus Christ and redemption have been revealed. We are now called to (or, rather, by His own) glory and virtue Adam was not. He was simply to enjoy what he had, and what God had given him: but we are called out of everything here, and the force of Christianity, as a practical thing, depends upon our souls entering into this. A man of the world is one that sets himself down to enjoy present things. He has got his good clothing, and his good food, and his good retinue, and everything good around him, or at least what he calls good. But he has not a thought or feeling that all has passed under sin; and it is in his case sanctified in no respect by the word of God and prayer.

All this is a denial of the fall, and this is the whole character of man's course here below. When fallen, he denies the fall. He acts in a way that would have been suitable if he were not a fallen creature. It was Adam's place to enjoy what was around him, and to own God in it, and the worldly man now has his own way of owning God's hand. He perhaps says grace before a meal, or gets another to do it for him, for he generally likes to do religion by deputy. Such is fallen man. There is no real knowledge of God, no knowledge of Him that calls, because, in point of fact, he is not called, he has never heard the voice of God-never met Him in his conscience to own his sins to God, or God's grace to him-and so he is entirely outside the grace of God; having heard with his cars, he has not heard. It has not entered mind, heart, or conscience-nothing but the outward ear. Now the Christian has heard, and he is called through the knowledge of Him that has called him by His glory and virtue. He is called not to repair the world, not to improve man, not to make a better state of present things; this is not the place of a Christian, but the very reverse. It is just what infidelity attempts to do, because it does not believe in the ruin that sin has brought in, or in God's judgment, any more than His grace in Christ. And wherever a Christian is carried away by the world, he always slips into this.

If any of us who are in this place were to tamper with such thoughts and efforts, we should become worse than anyone else. We should be doing so in the face of truth that condemns it all, and with better knowledge of what God's mind is; and therefore should go back from all we have heard and confessed as the testimony of God. There are none that would so completely bring shame on the truth, and who would lose all conscience, so much as those who are familiar with truth without obedience. The persons who dishonor the Lord most are those who know the truth, but are not subject to it. We find this in the case of the Corinthians. They were true saints of God, and yet there was evil amongst them, such as was not even named among the Gentiles. This did not at all surprise the apostle. It horrified him, but did not take him at unawares. The greater the truth you know, if you deal lightly with it, the worse will be your conduct; and therefore no persons require so earnestly and perseveringly to watch against sin, and to use every means, whether of prayer or of the word of God, for the purpose of our souls being kept pure, simple, and uncompromising. Adam was simply to enjoy what he had in his unfallen state. Man, now fallen, attempts to do the same; which is contempt of God in every way. The character and full picture of this we see in the rich man with Lazarus: “Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things.” There we have the selfishness of the heart blotting out God and man, and only living to gratify self. Is it not an awful, but a common, spectacle in a ruined world?

But the Christian is called to another thing altogether, perhaps to be as Lazarus; but, whether he have evil things or not, he is called by God's glory and by virtue. And, oh, may we think of this, and lay it to heart, that this is what we are called to, every day of our lives God has, by and in Christ, unveiled heaven to us; His own presence there is our hope. He does not give present enjoyment of things around us. And there is what the grace of God brings out of the fall, or rather from the fall out of Jesus Christ the Lord. Thus has God, so to speak, taken advantage, in His own unbounded grace, of the fact that sin has spoiled the first creation, to bring in a better one. There is no good around us now to act on our souls, nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit; but God has unveiled to our hearts in Christ above a scone where vanity will never enter, and where vexation of spirit cannot be known. And therefore, instead of this being something that will bring praise to ourselves, it is entirely His grace and His calling-" by the knowledge of him that hath called us by his own glory and virtue." Thus does He put His own presence in glory before us, and calls us out by faith thereby. This is why it is said in Rom. 3, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"-an expression that has perplexed many. Before there was sin, no such thing as the glory of God was set out in any way before man; but when sin came in, this is the standard and measure; and for this Christ's work fits us. It is not a question of whether I am fit to stand on the earth-sin has spoiled that; but am I fit to stand in the glory of God? The answer is, that only the man who has received Christ, with faith in His blood, is fit for that glory. We are called out of all that we see and are in; we regard and love Christ, who first loved us, as our only Savior and Deliverer. He is in the glory of God, and we rejoice in hope of it.

Following, but along with this, comes the "virtue," or moral courage, which does not allow the gratification of self, which does not turn the grace and the promises of God to a selfish account. Does faith ever say, Now that I have in hope the world of glory, I must try and enjoy the present world of self? He has called us by His own glory and by virtue. If saved by hope, we have, as the treasure of our hearts, Christ and the glory before us, it is incompatible with Him to seek this world also. The best of this world is a thing to be slighted for Christ, even if we could command all its treasures. And I pray God that we may live upon that which is unseen, assured that, having Christ, we can well afford to be forgotten and cast off, because we cleave to the name of the Crucified in the glory of God.

Chapter 66

Thoughts on Revelation 22

The prophetic, part of the Book of Revelation closes at chapter 21:8. Then we get from verse 9 a description of the heavenly city, in that shape and form. As to what it is-what cannot enter into it, and what it reveals-this chapter gives more the outgoings of it, the river of the water of life, tree for healing of the nations, &c. This closes at verse 5, and ends entirely at verse 7. Then it was, “I, John, saw these things,” and certain addresses are given which I desire to speak about; also a general truth, bringing down the light of the heavenly city on us now.

The Lord put Israel under the law, and there was complete failure; but still He will accomplish, in infallible power, what He had promised to Israel, for “He will write his law on their hearts,” He will accomplish in power to Israel what He had given in responsibility. The same in regard to the church-He has set it in responsibility among men now.

The practical application we should derive from these promises is, that there is nothing here morally that we ought not now to be looking for. By the power of the Holy Ghost we should have a present anticipation or realization. Of course, when there is the full result, there will be a great difference-the body freed from sin and death, &c.; but still more, “The river of the water of life;” for it is said now, “He that believeth, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” The tree of life was the manifestation of grace, the leaves being for the healing of the nations-a beautiful character of the church, to be ministering the healing power of grace. In Israel will be seen, when reigning, righteousness-” a Savior that is an hundred years old, shall he die?” &c. But here I find, even in the glory, the blessed principle of divine grace through which we came there. The earnest is given us now. Christ “having been made a curse for us,” the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it: the immediate throne of God is now within the church. Do we not judge those who are within? The Holy Ghost also sets up His throne in the heart of a saint, because it is the witness that there is no curse; he is not judged for sin, the word of God being the judge, a discerner between good and evil according to God. When this is not accomplished, it is a testimony against the saint. “His servants shall serve him.”

Then there are many hindrances and conflicts with the enemy in service, but still, what I am called on to do now will then be fully accomplished; now, as far as we are spiritual, we enter into the anticipation. His name shall be on their forehead. By-and-by there will be a perfect display of Him whom we serve; but now all men ought to see the display of Christ's name in us—to speak, and walk, and meditate as He did. In the glory it will be Christ reflected in everything. So now it ought to be. The more we search into the details of the glory in this blessed book, the more shall we learn the higher blessings to enjoy. The Holy Ghost brings it out for us to anticipate now, learning the grace that comes in, and the life that flows out. God will accomplish the highest desires that now we have for our comfort and joy to anticipate; all will be accomplished. God produces desires within us that nothing but the glory can satisfy. The Holy Ghost produces the power now to enter into these things. This shows the importance of our minds dwelling there. The lovely fruit then is seen, “Whatsoever is lovely” or “of good report, think on these things.” How bright the heart would

be! What growing up to the knowledge and preciousness of Christ, if accustomed to be where God dwells! Christ was one over whom circumstances had no power, except to draw out God's grace; and so should we be, for He is our example. Mark the outgoings of His grace to those in need. Christ was not governed, though of course acted upon, by circumstances to show grace, the power of His affections being drawn up to His Father—there was no effect in Christ, only expressive of what was in Him-the very fountain of life, the source of all He did.

“He that testifieth of these things saith, Surely I come quickly.” At the end of the chapter three times it is repeated. What has the Spirit of God declared? Two things have been shown in this book. The terrible history of man's pride, and God's judgment against it. Then he takes the saint out of that scene, and sets His heart at the end of these things, even bringing before him the heavenly Jerusalem. This has always a sanctifying effect, it stops many a haughty word. In the former part of the book I see God knowing everything. This I might not be able to explain, but I see the result of all. We are called on to “keep the sayings of the book.” The soul has given a sort of gravity in the world, not to be meddling with what will be judged. The next thing, beloved brethren—it is a step further He goes, when addressing you, or what has been before, or going on now, or is to be hereafter: whoever receives these things may find this stay for his soul, “I am Alpha and Omega,” &c. There is the rest, as to all that has been performed, and what is unaccomplished. The heavenly Bringer-in of the light that is to shine in the world-the Star of heaven to arise on this benighted world.

What is the spiritual feeling of the church after all has been gone through-after the terrible schism between light and darkness! What does the church say? “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Those who have the place of the bride desire the Bridegroom, having the blessed fellowship together. Look at chapters i., iii.; there you see the full expression of this. As the Faithful Witness He was seen on earth, for no man could see Christ on earth, but saw God in Him. Whether He took the little child in His arms, or comforted the poor widow whose son was stretched on the bier, all exhibited God, and I know Him as such. He is also “the First-begotten from the dead,” witness to God for us, hereafter as “Prince of the kings of the earth.” What does the church cry at this contemplation The Spirit of God in her breaks forth at this revelation of joy, and says, “Unto him that loveth us; and washed us from our sins in his own blood,” she testifies to the world, “Lo, he cometh.” The church's own position is of the testimony for Christ. The Spirit cannot speak to the saint's heart without the saint giving a response. We get the result of all the testimony, closing with what Christ is in Himself. It turns from the city now to Him who is the center. Why am. I in the golden streets? Because Christ is in the Midst of the city, not now washing my feet, for the place I walk on cannot defile, for it is righteousness and true holiness. In the whole scene all is summed up— “I, Jesus.” He must have the heart of the church, He may tell the church many things, open to them His mind. As to Abraham, it was said, “Shall I hide from Abraham the thing I will do?” Also says Christ, “Ye are my friends.”

After He has communicated what He was going to do, and done all, He says, “I, Jesus.” He Himself comes and addresses the church. Beloved brethren, when the Spirit of Christ works in the heart, it says to Christ, “It is You I want-come and bring in the glory.” “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Not merely the bride, but the Spirit. The source and substance of what is in the heart is the Bridegroom. What is the next desire? “Let him that heareth say, Come.” He calls on the saint to join and say, “Come.” Those who have entered into the full apprehension say to others, “Come.”

This is the next step. The church at the same time has the blessing in itself, that is, the water of life, and turns round and says, “Let him that is athirst come,” because we have the waters of life-not yet in all the blessed fullness, but we are sure the river of life is flowing in the heart of each saint, however feeble. Christ said this first, in John 7, “Whosoever is athirst,” &c., and now sets the church in the very same place of invitation, because it has got eternal life. Perhaps some here would not say this? See here the blessed consciousness of what the church has got: salvation no uncertainty, though many may pass through trial in getting it; but I speak of the portion of the church. Do you doubt that Christ has life? Is there a word to the contrary? But what is the record? Not one of uncertainty, “but this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

There is the gospel, the answer of peace given by God to those whose souls are working in this way. Peter, in his address to the Jews, shows this. The gospel, the revelation of what is in Christ, and the answer of peace to the conscience under all the anxieties produced by having neglected Him. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit; so the Christians can say,” Let him that is athirst come” —not merely say it, but go and testify to Christ as hard as ever he can.

“Whosoever will, let him come,” is another step. There is the same certainty of having life. It comes fresh from the throne of God and the Lamb. Having the water of life, I ant looking for the glory in saying all this. “Behold, I come quickly.” The way in which, both importunate and solemn, Jesus presses it on the hearts of His saints, to say, “Come quickly,” as much as to express, “I leave on your hearts the last words;” with which He closes the book, and solemnly adds, “Amen.” The Christian again breaks out, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Whatever has been testified about, this is to be laid on the heart of the church. Could your heart say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus"? Having heard this word of comfort and encouragement, can you say this? If you are not at peace, you cannot say so, but rather the Lord would come and take you to-morrow, and not today. If I look for Him as a Judge, I cannot say, “Come.” if the conscience is at peace, it does not enter into the question of sin. Having blessed me with every spiritual blessing, Christ comes without sin to receive me to Himself. In practice the affections enter in. You may see a person truly in Christ, and not happy in God, not before God; the conscience active, but the affections not right there. I must have my affections in my conscience. The effect of His work is to bring me to God. The Holy Ghost sets an His throne in the heart, and judges what we are not to be judged for.

If, by careless walking in the flesh, or having my interest in the world, I cannot discern my state, the Holy Ghost takes these things that are in my heart, and makes me see what 1 have allowed, and I get exercised, troubled, and ashamed. I doubt not of being saved, but have lost the fountain of joy. My heart cannot be in this state, if I am doing things in His house that are not pleasant to Him. I shall not like for Him to come and see I am neglecting Him. Any one of these things, contrary to His mind, will hinder our looking to God. There ought to be that sifting in the heart, that the desire of our souls may rest in confidence in the work done for us; and the desire too, that the Holy Ghost may drive away everything from our affections that is not of God, and our affections may be so brought into our conscience, that we may say, Come, Lord Jesus; even so come.

There is peculiar graciousness in this invitation to the world to come and take of the river of the water of life. Here is the authority of the church for considering herself as the bride before she really is so manifested. The angel (in ver. 16, and other passages) is the representative of the

Lord; even though declared to be an angel, he stands as the distinct messenger of the Lord Jesus, and speaks as His representative.

Chapter 67

God's Comforts the Stay of the Soul

Psalms 90-100 are connected together, and seem to me to describe the dealings of Jehovah with the Jews, &c., in the latter day, on the earth. But I am not going to speak of that now. We may often derive comfort from principles which we find in such portions of the scripture, revealing to us, as they do, God's character, &e.; but it is important to know the mind of the Spirit in the primary sense, as we shall then be able to discern what God is teaching us through them with a great deal more clearness and certainty.

The two principles which form the basis of what is dwelt on here are, that the workers of iniquity are allowed to lift up their heads and flourish, but that Jehovah is, and will be, Most High for evermore.

There is the clear perception of this throughout. Under the temporary exaltation and prevalence of wickedness the godly are in a very tried state, the righteous suffer; but vengeance belongs to God (not to the sufferer): therefore the cry in verses 1, 2.

To such a height are the workers of iniquity allowed to go, that, in the consciousness that Jehovah's throne could not be cast down, the question comes in, “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?” (Ver. 20.) So completely has wickedness got place in the earth, that there is a sort of inquiry raised, whether the throne of iniquity could exist in companionship of judgment with the divine throne. The answer is that judgment is coming: “Jehovah our God shall cut them off.” (Ver. 23.) Judgment shall return to righteousness in the place of trial and suffering.

The point on which I would dwell a little at present is the consolation of the saints during this time of trial—God's “comforts.”

In the first place we have the assurance, “Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.” (Ver. 11.)

Then “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Jehovah,” &c. (Vers. 12, 13.)

As to the pride and purpose of man, it is settled in a word. The “thoughts of man” are not only inferior to God's wisdom, but they are “vanity.” This settles the whole question. All that begins and ends in the heart of man is “vanity,” and nothing else. Whatever the state of things around, though there may be a “multitude of thoughts within,” as what will all this come to?” how will that end? and the like-every barrier we can raise, all our strength, all our weakness, whatever the wave after wave that may flow over us-Jehovah's thought about it all is, that it is “vanity.” All is working together to one object-God's plan, that upon which His heart is set-the glorification of Jesus, and ours, with Him. Every thought and every plan of man must therefore be “vanity,” because it has not this, God's object, for its object; and God's object always comes to pass. There cannot be two ends to what is going on. Let men break their hearts about it, all simply comes to nothing, the end of it is “vanity.” God's object is, that “all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.”

Take a man of the world, the shrewdest calculator, the ablest politician, or the greatest statesman: a poor bed-ridden saint is wiser than he, and more sure of having his plans brought about; for the heart of the simplest feeblest saint runs in the same channel with God's; and, though the saint has no strength, God has.

In this Psalm we find, first, the tumult of the enemies; and, then, that God has done it. So with the saint constantly in trial: he sees the work of Satan, then God's hand in it; and he gets blessing. All the present effect of these dealings of “the wicked” is “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Jehovah, and teachest him out of thy law; that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.” The pit is not yet digged, the throne of iniquity is not yet put down.

If, in chastening, the power of the adversary is against us, Jehovah's end in it all is to give “rest in the day of adversity,” &c.

I speak not merely of suffering for Christ-if we are reproached for the name of Christ, it is only for joy and triumph and glory to us-but of those things in which there may be the “multitude of thoughts within,” because we see that we have been walking inconsistently and carelessly in Jehovah's ways. Still it is, “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Jehovah,” &c., Jehovah does not chasten willingly, without a needs-be for it. And when there has been failure or inconsistency that brings chastisement, He turns the occasion of the chastisement to the working out of the heart's evil that needed to be chastened. Jehovah, in chastening, throws back the heart upon the springs which have been the occasion of the evil. The soul is hereby laid bare for the application of God's truth to it, that the word may come home with power. It is taught wherefore it has been chastened; and not only so, but it is brought into the secret of God's heart-it learns more of His character, who “will not cast off his people, neither forsake his inheritance.” (Ver. 14.) What God desires for us is, not only that we should have privileges conferred upon us, but that we should have fellowship with Himself. Through these chastenings, the whole framework of the heart is brought into association with God. And this establishes and settles it on the certainty of the hope that grace affords.

Look at Peter after the enemy had sifted him, though his fall was most humbling and bitter, yet by it he gained a deeper knowledge of God and a deeper acquaintance with himself, so that he could apply all that he had learned to his brethren.

The Lord gives our souls “rest from the day of adversity” by communion with Himself, communion not only in joy but in holiness. We are thus brought into the secret of God. Circumstances are only used to break down the door, and to let in God. God is near to the soul, when He, in the certainty of love, comes within the circumstances, and is known as better than any circumstance.

Jehovah never chastens without occasion for it, and yet “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Jehovah.” There is not a more wonderful word than that! I do not say that a man can say this always while under chastening, for, if the soul is judging itself, there will be often anxiety and sorrow; but the effects are blessed. What we want is that all our thoughts and ways and actings of will should be displaced, and that God should be everything. All chastening must have in principle the character of government in it, for it is His dealing with His people in righteousness (as it is said, “If ye call on the Father who without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's

work," &c.), not in the sovereign riches of grace. It is God's allowing nothing in the heart inconsistent with that holiness of which the believer has been made partaker. It is indeed most blessed grace that takes all the pains with us, but that is not the character it assumes.

What we exceedingly need is intimacy of soul with God, resting in quietness in Him, though all be confusion and tumult around us. When the man here had God near his heart, though iniquity abounded, it was only the means of making God's "comforts" known to his soul; as it is said, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul." (Ver. 19.) Our portion is not only to know the riches of divine grace, but the secret of the Lord, to have intimacy of communion with Him in His holiness. Then, however adverse the circumstances, the soul rests quietly and steadfastly in Him.

If, brethren, you would have full unhindered peace and depth of fellowship with God and one with another, if you would meet circumstances and temptations without being moved thereby, it must flow from this: not merely the knowledge that all things are yours in Christ, but acquaintance with God Himself, as it is said, "being fruitful in every good work, and increasing by the knowledge of God."

May we, through grace enabling, let God have all His way in our hearts.

Chapter 68

The Guidance of Grace

We have here the blessing of the Lord which precedes always our miseries and our complaints. God ever begins with grace. He promised redemption after the fall before it was a question of repentance of sins. We have also here the history of our privileges. The people were guided by the Lord. We are led by grace. From the moment that God owned a people, He abides in their midst. God abides in the church by the Holy Spirit. The sin of the church is to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit, to extinguish the free action of the gifts. The Israelites were to be guided of the Lord, as we should be; they are the picture of what we are. All that happened to them as recorded in scripture was written as types.

The two privileges of the church of God are to have the purpose and will of God written in the word, and the Holy Spirit to make us understand it.

Redemption places us in the wilderness with God. It is the presence of God Himself that conducts us. The presence of God must be owned if we would be strong and courageous in crossing the wilderness. “On the day that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony.” The presence of God is attached to His law. “At even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire until the morning. In the darkness and difficulties the presence of God is even more manifest and visible.” So it was always; the cloud covered it [by day], and the appearance of fire by night. When the cloud rose, Israel journeyed; where it abode, there they encamped. “At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed. And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not; but when it was taken up, they journeyed. At the commandment of the Lord they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed: they kept the charge of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord, by the hand of Moses.” (Chap. 9:18-23.) They marched or encamped at the Lord's will. Nothing simpler or more beautiful than the manner in which Israel if faithful attended each moment to the will of God.

That which does us most harm is our attending to our own will, even doing the things of God according to our own will. Israel knew not whither they were going, but they marched without question or hesitation, following the movement of the cloud. Circumstances make no difference to the child of God: he does the will of God in all circumstances, he has no other rule than God's will. How could they find the way night or day in the wilderness without a way? Circumstances were

nothing. It was needful to attend to the Lord.

Philip was extremely blessed at Samaria; but in the midst of all that the Spirit says to him, Arise, and go southward on the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza (which is desert). And he arose and went. God had a sheep there. He obeys, and when the work is done, he is found at Azotus, preaching the gospel to all the cities till he came to Caesarea. His obedience is a fine example of the guidance of a child of God. To obey is more important than all the rest. Christ comes to do the will of Him that sent Him. When it is necessary to act, He does act. He says, If one walketh in the light, he stumbleth not. To rise, to rest, all this ought to be done according to God's will. In Matt. 11:25, 26, Jesus gives His Father thanks, because it was His good pleasure to hide the things of God, from the wise and prudent, while revealing them unto babes. He adds, Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. Take My yoke upon you: submit entirely to the will of God. The child of God ought to have unswerving confidence in God, and to obey Him completely.

In the midst of the night the fiery pillar moves; God says, Go. They go without knowing whither, but knowing it is God who guides them. It is no question then of taking account either of time or of circumstances; God gives the word.

In John 10:7-9 Jesus says, I am the door of the sheep. When He has put forth all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, because they know His voice. It is our privilege to be guided at each moment by God. But it is necessary to pay heed to the Lord: if not the cloud might rise, and no one perceive it. It is thus in paying heed that one goes onward when the cloud lifts; it must be done in the details of each day. If the aged Simeon, guided by the Holy Spirit, had not come into the temple, he would not have had the privilege of meeting with the child Jesus there. The least circumstance may have serious results, and we are the purchased of the Lord without anything to do if it be not to pay heed to the Lord and to march when He leads the way.

The silver trumpets were the testimony of God. (Chap. 10:1-10) To own openly, frankly, the truth of the Lord concerns us much, because the Lord puts Himself forward to render testimony to His truth. Here the main object was to gather the people of God around Him, or to make them journey, though other purposes were served, as for the chiefs to gather and for alarm in war, besides for joy over the sacrifices. But the alarm in war was to remind them of God's intervention. Let us sound the testimony without fear. He will not fail to appear.

For the march the prescribed order is modified (vers. 11-28) from chapter 3:27, when we come to fact. Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun went first; then the tabernacle was borne by the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari; then came these other tribes, Reuben, Simeon, and Gad; then the sanctuary with the Kohathites; after them Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, and Dan, Asher, Naphtali in due place.

Moses besought his father-in-law to be for Israel instead of eyes (vers. 29-32); but here again grace acts extraordinarily. (Ver. 33) The ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them in the three days' journey to search out a resting-place for them. God knows very well that even in the desert we need rest before Him.

See what God's faithfulness does for us. When Israel had to cross the Jordan, the ark of the covenant goes before them and is set in the midst of the river, which is clean dried up. Yet did it

then overflow its banks, as it was the time of harvest. There it stays till every Israelite had crossed. The passage is an image of our death and resurrection with Christ. God accommodates Himself, not to sin, but to the effects of sin. When Israel failed in faithfulness and was affrighted by the Canaanite, He turns them away from Canaan, but the cloud turns away also. The most faithful souls must suffer from the state of the whole church. (So the faith of Elijah was extraordinary; but he could not go to Jerusalem.) Caleb and Joshua must for thirty-eight years accompany Israel in the desert and undergo the exterior consequences of sin. We must in the wilderness not follow sin, but undergo the painful consequences of the state of the church. But we can count on the cloud, on the faithfulness of God. When the Holy Spirit has been grieved, He cannot sanction the evil, but He does not fail in His faithfulness toward us. Jesus was isolated; He passed through the wilderness Himself. He understands and feels the state of the people of God and prepares them in the wilderness places of rest.

We can always count in the wilderness on the goodness of God. We cannot see then on the road. Moses wished to find a guide in Hobab: this was to forget the guidance of the cloud. There, is no way in the wilderness; but God is there. It is because we do not discern the cloud when all is easy, that we do not see it when all is difficult. After sin what is not more difficult. Two things give us confidence-the written word, and the Holy Spirit. For human reason cannot sound the word; without the Spirit it comes to nothing. The Holy Spirit guides us by the word. The two things are necessary: neither the word only without the Spirit, nor the Spirit without the word. The Holy Spirit is needed to have the desire to understand the word, as well as the strength to walk and obey. We need God and the word of His grace. And we have God to instruct and conduct, us. The child of God may, when he is attentive to it, discern clearly the direction of the Holy Spirit. One cannot be guided of the Spirit when one does that which is contrary to the word; we can, if we can make it say like Moses in verse 35, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered.

Chapter 69

A Happy Close

2 Tim. 1:12

The words of “such an one as Paul the aged” would at all times be pregnant with deep interest; how much more so when they are his parting words, his paternal legacy What marks this epistle is the blending of the most solemn truth with the greatest tenderness. It is the utterance of chastened affections, and the language of a man who, in the midst of unparalleled trials, can look into the past without regret, and into the future with the confidence of triumph. Yet nothing looked more unlike triumph than the circumstances in which the apostle was. From chapter 1 he states that “all in Asia had turned away” from him, and such was the contagiousness of defection, that his own beloved son himself needed the exhortation, “Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner.” When we come to the last chapter, the sight is that of a battle-field, where, when the fight is over, a list is drawn, not alas! of wounded only, but of deserters as well, the commander himself heading the first class. But faith rose above appearances, and then it was that the victorious prisoner could say, “I know,” and “I am persuaded.” Blessed confidence!

Great is that end of the journey which resembles in what can be imitated that of our blessed Lord. He, the Author and Finisher of faith, resisted unto blood, striving against sin, but did it by self-surrender. So His faithful servant Stephen, whose end Paul recalls long afterward in these touching terms, “And when the blood of thy martyr, Stephen, was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiments of them that slew him.” And so now the persecutor of that day, condemned and worsted in human eyes, can with inexpressible satisfaction say, “I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure [release] is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.” Like his Master,

“By weakness and defeat

He won the meed and crown.”

No end is more sweetly triumphant than this. He had fondly cherished it before, when he said, “I count not my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus.” He was now being gratified in this respect. The few years that elapsed between his last interview with the elders of Ephesus, and his last defense before the Roman tribunal, had been, as he knew beforehand they would be, fraught with many a danger and sore temptation; hence the charm, now that the last contest was over, of saying, “I have finished.” This means he was conscious of having left nothing undone, or half-done, of his extensive service, “That by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear.” O that each of our days went towards such an end! that we knew more of this holy and sober confidence as regards our feeble service!

In the first epistle we find the apostle in the full active energy that produced such immense labors, and, in beautiful consistency with it, we see a spirit not slow to rise in indignation against those who gave up “a good conscience,” and the indignation sternly expressed in these words, “Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme;” but in the second, whilst his estimation of a “pure conscience” has in nowise been lowered, he seems to feel that it was now best to leave it to the Lord to deal with such cases as that of Alexander; and although the latter had been frightfully bitter and wicked towards the apostle personally, he calmly says, “The Lord reward him according to his works"-not in the least anxious to have the last word himself.

Then, next, when he thinks how the ranks of his fellow-soldiers had been thinned by desertion, he sorrowfully says, “Only Luke is with me,” instead of qualifying the conduct of the deserters by withering words as it deserved, he enters into the difficulty of standing the storm, and gently adds, “that it may not be laid to their charge.” So with the blessed Master, in the hour of His incomparable trial, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” The servant said, “Only Luke;” but that was one to watch with him; whereas the yet more deeply tried Lord had none-no, not one. And, then, the gentleness of His rebuke! “Sleep on now, and take rest.” How true that in all things He must have the pre-eminence, even in sorrow, and in the patience that tribulation worketh! Yet it was the faithful apostle's lot to have, at this trying final moment, the precious words made good to him, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord;” and thus the conformity is completed by linking together these two blessed utterances: “Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me;” and, “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.”

This much for his immediate circumstances. But the scripture heading this paper takes in a wider range yet. It was not merely in the face of death that he could say, “I know,” “I am persuaded,” but in the face of rapid declension in the church, which would culminate in nothing less than the awful picture so faithfully drawn in chapter 3: 1-5. And why not? Man is at the best but a broken reed, and when the last page of his sad history is read, faith turns towards another, and says, with immense delight, “He is able.” Steadfast peace and perfect confidence are thus maintained, the clouds not allowed to weigh the spirit down, nor to dim the light of His blessed countenance. We are so foolish, and so forgetful of our good-for-nothingness, that we often need trials, in the shape of disappointments, to cast us more absolutely upon the Lord. Were our faith stronger, the trials would not take this shape. With Paul it never came to that. He was given to witness that which was most painful, and to predict that which was most terrible; yet the peace of his spirit and the confidence of his heart remained unmoved, undisturbed. He knew “WHOM” he had believed. The abstract way in which he speaks of the Lord is very telling. It is the peculiar feature of John; and the way of one who is so engrossed with His person, that he cares for naught beside. “Whom” and “Him” convey the thought of profound, yet holy, intimacy.

It was not only, I apprehend, with regard to his own individual safety that he said, “I know,” and “am persuaded.” We may fairly conclude that the “deposit” alluded to in this verse is more than himself. The very manner of his conversion had taught him Christ's estimate of and love for the church” Why persecutest thou ME?” and ever afterward was this the prominent feature of his own character. It was by this standard that he measured his former life and path. To him there was nothing so humblingly had as that he had “persecuted the church of God.” How these words tell of

the intense love he now bore it, of the beauty and excellency he now saw in it, when looking upon it with the eye of Christ! Oh, for more of a kindred feeling in us! We need it pressingly. Much of our dryness and narrowness is due to the lack of it. We need not fear lest this feeling should produce indifference to the evil of the church. Is Christ indifferent to it? Nor shall we be; but tenderness will cause us to make more frequent use of the basin and towel, and more unfrequent use of the stone and of the sword. We shall not lose thereby. I cherish the thought that this “deposit” comprised that church which, next to Christ, Paul loved most. When he had committed it to the care of its Nourisher and Cherisher, he could calmly speak of the worst times, saddest departure, and darkest evil, as powerless to sever it from that diligent care. And beyond this present dark and evil day there is a day mentioned-” that day"-when all will look different from now.

“THAT day.” How suggestive It needs no other qualification; it stands alone in the estimate of Christ, as His “hour” stood alone in the estimate of God-this for suffering, that for joy. It is the time when He will “present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” The spots and wrinkles tell of failures and cares with which we are sorrowfully acquainted. Do you want comfort in the midst of this heart-breaking scene? Think of “THAT day.” Our apostle thought of it, as well as of the present faithfulness of God's grace, and the sufficiency of His word, when he spoke to his beloved Ephesians, even then yet so fresh in their first love, the words of Acts 20:29, 30. Wolves and perverse men might, and would, make a fearful havoc in that best and most fertile of the apostle's fields, where a labor of “three years and a half, night and day, with tears,” had produced such an abundant harvest; and in the field would grow tares, in the shape of giving “heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith.” But, notwithstanding all, he who knows the love of Christ to the church does not faint, because he can reckon upon Christ being fully gratified in “that day;” and if He, surely we also.

Faith never surrenders anything to man and his unfaithfulness, and when God prepares it by His word for dark shadows and blighting winds, it refuses to stop therein, and passes right beyond, where Christ is seen, unchanged and unchangeable, and where the church stands as closely connected to Him and as cherished by Him as ever.

May our hearts be more filled with this enlarging love! And while we grieve and sorrow over our own faults and the faults of all, let us remember that God has not given us the spirit of cowardice, “but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” C.

Chapter 70

The Heavenly Calling Foreshewn: Part 1

The apostle addresses his brethren in Christ as “partakers of the heavenly calling.” (Heb. 3:1.) This calling, in another scripture, is styled “the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:14.) And again, it is spoken of as the calling of the Father of glory. (Eph. 1:17, 18.) In those who are the subjects of it God is to show in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace (Eph. 2:7); and in them also the Lord is to be chiefly admired in the day of the presence of His power, though that is to be a day in which all His works shall praise Him, a day of clouds of witnesses to His glory both in heaven and earth. (2 Thess. 1:10, 11.)

This participation of the heavenly calling, thus bestowed on the saints, was not made known in other ages as it is now revealed. For it is only to the church that God has abounded in “all wisdom and prudence;” unto the saints only it is that “he hath made known the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself.” (Eph. 1:8, 9.) In a wondrous manner it is for them to testify, “We have the mind of Christ.” His deep things God has revealed to them by His Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:10.) The mystery of God [and of the Father, and of Christ], it is for them, with full assurance of understanding, to acknowledge. (Col. 2:2.) And their title to all this high endowment stands in this-the Son is their Prophet. They have been spoken to by the Son, who is “the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person;” and “All things,” says the Son, “that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” (John 15:15.) Israel never stood in such privilege as this. God, in sundry measures and in divers manners, spake to them by His prophets; but their prophets were not the Son, they came not from the bosom of the Father. They were of the earth, and spake of the earth (John 3:31); for Israel were God's earthly people, having their citizenship and their place here. But the saints, or the church, are the heavenly family, and their Prophet is therefore He who has come from heaven, and testified what He has seen and heard there. He who was “full of truth” dwelt among us—the Son from the bosom declared the Father, and gave us an understanding to know Him. (1 John 5:20.) In Him and by Him the blessed God is revealed, for we get “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. 4:6.)

The prophets, who spoke of the earth, have given us many a notice of the earthly glory of the Lord, and sweet and gracious and wondrous is the intelligence. Isaiah speaks of Jehovah's reign in Mount Zion, and before His ancients gloriously. (Isa. 24:23.) Ezekiel, who first saw the Son of man in the glory above the firmament, afterward saw the same glory returned to the earthly city of the great King. (Ezek. 43:1, 2.) And Daniel is very specially the witness of the glory of Christ in the earth, taking a kingdom and dominion here. Indeed the prophets generally could speak of Christ as the King of Israel, and as such the God of the whole earth also, the heathen being given to Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. But all this, though to the glory of the Son, was of the earth still. The circumstances in which all this glory is to be revealed must be earthly. But the Gentiles, being “fellow-heirs, and of the same body,” was a mystery of which it was not given to the prophets to speak particularly. Co-heirship of God with Jesus the Lord-spiritual blessings in the heavenlies—the sanctified and Sanctifier being all of

one-the church as the body of Christ and the fullness of Him that filleth all in all-these are “the heavenly things” which the Son of man alone has revealed, for He alone came down from heaven, and alone has thus ascended into heaven. (John 3:18.)

It is not that there is any new purpose with God; no; but there are due seasons and appointed ministries for the manifestation of His purposes. The church is nothing new as to purpose, but new as to manifestation. Jesus, the Messiah on the earth, was the proper expectation of Israel; and therefore the songs which either ushered in, or accompanied the birth of the Lord, welcoming Him to the earth, were all in celebration of good things to Israel, and announced nothing heavenly. Neither indeed did the resurrection of the Lord, any more than His birth, necessarily take Him beyond earthly glory and Jewish hopes. For the earthly people have their interest in Messiah's resurrection as well as the church. Their prophets foretold it, and the promise, grounded on resurrection was that to which the twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hoped to come. (Acts 26:6-9.) The hopes of David's throne are identified with the resurrection. (Acts 2:30.) It is the resurrection that makes David's mercies sure mercies. (Acts 13:34.) And therefore, when the death and resurrection of the Lord were accomplished at Jerusalem, it was to Israel that the testimony was first sent. And even more than this: the ascension did not at once take the Lord Out of Jewish connection, for it put Him into possession of the gifts which He was to receive for the rebellious, that is, Israel, and which under the new covenant He is to give to Israel. And we are taught that it is from His ascension-place that He is to give repentance to Israel and remission of sing. (Acts 5:31) But the ascending into heaven after Him, and not waiting here on earth for His return, is beyond all Jewish hopes—that is, the new, or the heavenly, calling. Mansions in the Father's house, and the special joys and honors of the saints, as the brethren of the Son of God were before left in a mystery. But such is the high railing to which the church is called and it is made known to the saints by the Spirit sent down from the Son, thus ascended into heavenly glory and when He had be n rejected in His resurrection by His earthly people Israel. Till then the time had not come, the ministry had not been prepared, for the revelation of this calling.

But though it were thus, as to express revelation, kept secret, yet from the beginning God had been pleased to signify and shadow it, and the saints are now able, in the light of the full revelation of it, to trace out and read such signs and shadows. They see themselves thus as the heavenly family kept in remembrance, even in the midst of the Lord's dealings with the earth and the earthly people.

And I will not refrain from stating here what has lately impressed my own soul with some fresh comfort—that, amid the increasing anxiety of these times, and the deepening of the world's darkness around us, the light of our God shines pure and steady as ever. This is comfort. The pillar was the same to Israel through whatever part of the desert they passed: that land of the shadow of death might have been gloomier to them in some stages of their wondrous march than in others; but the pillar of God was the same. On it went, the same steady, sure, unvarying guide. It gathered none of the gloom of the desert around it; and I can believe that the more lonely the wilderness became to them, the more steadily did Israel eye it as their abiding companion and friend. And so now with us, beloved. The way to the saint may become lonely, very lonely, but the word of the Lord endureth forever. There is no darkness there, no uncertainty there. This would he our sorrow indeed, if any of the present darkness of which we complain were in Jesus; but it cannot be there. The candle shines on the candlestick; God has not put it under a bushel; it gives

light, as ever, to all that come in. The darkness is only in the world that surrounds us, and in the evil eye of our own body. (Luke 11:33-36) And therefore, though the night be dark and lonely. there is light to guide us and to cheer us, and the simple obedient saint finds it so. (2 Peter 1:19.) The foundations may be destroyed, but the righteous still know what to do, for the light of God remains undimmed. (Luke 11:36) This, brethren, is our comfort-the word of our God endureth forever; and may the gracious hand that gave it to us ever control and guide us in using it!

It needs not to be observed, that the different typical persons in scripture set forth the Lord only in certain features of His glory. No one stands out as a full exhibition of Him. Indeed the limited sphere in which they severally moved, under the hand of God, would allow of nothing more than this. In each of them we may get traces of Jesus, but that is all; one after another takes up the wondrous tale, but the half is not told us. (1 Kings 10:7) But still we learn, and learn much from them; and something, as I would now show, of the deep things of God, which the Spirit alone searches out, and which God has revealed to us by the Spirit, are made known, as in figure, by them.

In the union of Adam and Eve, and in the law of marriage, in Eden, the oneness of Christ and the church was from the beginning declared. In the dominion of all things there, Eve being the associate of Adam in his lordship, the joint inheritance of all things on earth by the Lord and His saints was set forth. In the structure and combination of the parts of the tabernacle, much of the same purpose of God was exhibited. The holy places, with the outer courts, were all according to heavenly patterns, presenting the union, and yet distinctness, of the heavens and the earth; as that same union and distinctness had been previously revealed in the vision-of the exiled patriarch of the ladder set up on the earth, but whose top reached to heaven? And much like this will be seen in the structure and combination of certain typical persons: for in the laying of them together, the one after the other, as the parts of the tabernacle, it will be found that that order of heavenly and earthly things, which in the end is to he displayed, has from the beginning been foreshewn. Of this I have lately been strongly assured. And indeed it is the duty of the saints, as it should be their delight (ever looking to God for wisdom) to discern the ways of God under His works-to see His mind and purpose under the moldings and fashionings of His hand-to speak of “the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world.” (1 Cor. 2:7.)

I would notice this combination of typical persons first in Enoch and Noah.

The earth at the first was given to Adam; “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the face of the earth.” (Gen. 1:28.) But in, his hand the earth became corrupt, and thus corrupted it passed into the possession of Cain and his family, as will be seen in Gen. 4. They buy, they sell, they plant, they build, they marry and are given in marriage. They stamp their own name upon the earth, and furnish it with all that was good and pleasant in the judgment of the flesh. They were “the world” of that day, and “the things that are in the world” they loved and cultivated. But in the midst of this Cain-earth there was gathered from Seth (appointed to Eve instead of Abel, whom Cain slew) a household of faith, who “call upon the name of the Lord.” (Gen. 4:26.) This is their only record. The world knew them not, for they were not of it. They died, generation after generation. (Gen. 5) They had no inheritance here; they toiled at the cursed ground, as submitting to God's righteous

ordinance, and only looked for a new earth and a future rest. (Gen. 5:29.) They lived by faith, and they died in hope; of whom it may be said, “the world was not worthy.” They were the heavenly family—they acknowledged God in the midst of that world which had willingly estranged itself from His presence to seek out its own inventions.

But in process of time they also corrupted themselves, and the Lord had to testify of their apostasy and loss of heavenly character, and to say of them (as giving them up), “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” “Then did it repent him that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart, for he saw that the wickedness of man was great, and that all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.” (Gen. 6:1-8.)

But ere this Enoch had been found among them faithful to his high calling. In the power of the heavenly hope of this Seth-household, “he walked with God,” and, according to the end of that hope, “God took him.” “By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” This is a simple record of this holy and honored patriarch; but it is large enough to warrant us to say that in his day Enoch was the witness of ascension glory and of the heavenly calling; in him death was abolished, and life and immortality were for a passing moment brought to light; he was not found on earth, for God had taken him. The mansions in the Father's house, as it were, were already prepared, and he was seated in them; and the saints were seen in him as caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

And, in perfect character with all this, Enoch prophesied of the coming of the Lord with His saints to the judgment of the earth. Delivered in spirit out of the evil of the world, he was delivered afterward in person out of the judgment of it; and he beheld from his elevation-like Abraham in such a case-(Gen. 19:23) the smoke of the country going up as the smoke of a furnace. “Behold the Lord cometh,” said Enoch, “with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment.” (Jude 14, 15.)

But Noah, on the other hand, is not taken away from the judgment, but carried safely through it. The same hand which had raised Enoch out of it conducts Noah through it. (Heb. 11:6, 7.) He prepared an ark to the saving of his house; the waters rose around him, wave upon wave; the end of all flesh was shown to him, but he lived to rise up the inheritor and lord of a new earth, and with him the covenant that to this day establishes the earth was made, and God set His bow in the cloud for a token of it.

But this was not Enoch glory. Noah was left on the earth still. God remembered Noah assuredly, but it was only to open the door of the ark, and let him forth upon the earth again. He was found here again; for God had not translated but only preserved him. His faith carried him through the flood into a new world, while Enoch was carried above it up to God.

And such are the divers glories of the church and of Israel; such, the several callings of the heavenly and the earthly families; such, the children of the resurrection and the children of the circumcision; and such, too, are the several seasons ordained for the revelation of these glories. Enoch came before Noah. Enoch was translated to heaven before Noah condemned the old world, and inherited the new. So will the saints be caught up to meet the Lord in the air first, and then will come the judgment of the nations and the manifestation of the Lord in His Noah

character, in His glory of earthly rule and inheritance.

But this Noah-earth quickly became corrupt, as the Adam-earth had before it; and within a little while “the children of men” became again vain in their imaginations, following the pride and naughtiness of their hearts to the very full. Flesh again proved itself to be flesh. Man was the same still, the waters of the flood had not cleansed him, but, big with the old desire to be as God, “the children of men” were now for making themselves a name, and building themselves a city and a tower, whose top should reach unto heaven.” (Gen. 11)

But, as before in the person of Seth, the Lord had raised up a heavenly man in the midst of the Cain-world, so now did the God of glory raise up, in the person of Abraham, another heavenly man in the midst of this Noah-world. Government of the earth had been given to Noah, but Abraham is called away from the earth, away from his country, his kindred, and his father's house, to walk with God; like Seth or Enoch, a stranger and sojourner here. Abraham, like them before him, got no part in this corrupted earth. God gave him none inheritance in it, “no, not so much as to set his foot on.” His tent and his altar accompanied him wherever he went, and marked him as a stranger on the earth with God. He had, in the character of his calling, done with the world. He dwelt here with his children in tabernacles, and died in faith, desiring a heavenly country. He took no part with “the children of men” in their building of cities, and getting themselves a name; but he looked for a city whose builder was God, and waited, according to promise, to have his name made great by Jehovah. But God was eminently with him; his candle, as Job speaks, shined upon his head, and wondrously and blessedly indeed may it be said, the secret of God was upon his tabernacle. This was all his present glory, but it was holy glory. The Lord told him of His ways, and promised him everything. By the hand of Melchizedek heavenly and earthly treasures were pledged to him, and by the word of the Lord heavenly as well as earthly mysteries were made known to him. He was to be the heir of the world, and the father of many nations. He was admitted to the divine presence, and walked on earth as “the friend of God.” The judgment of the world was made to pass before him, but it did not come nigh unto him, only with his eyes did he behold and see the reward of the wicked. The smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace, while Abraham looked down from on high upon it, and that too from the very place where he had “stood before the Lord,” that is, where he had been in intercession with the Lord (Gen. 19:27), and which ever is, in principle and character, heaven itself.

He was thus, like Enoch, the elect one-drawn out from the world before the judgment came. In the crisis of the earth he had nothing to do. But Lot, his kinsman, his inferior and younger kinsman, is left as a remnant in the world after the judgment. He was sent, with sure purpose of love, out of the midst of the overthrow, when God overthrew the city of destruction, in the which he dwelt; but he did not stand on Abraham's elevation. He and Abraham never met afterward; for he was found, as it were, on the earth still, the remnant that survived the judgment, like Noah before him, while Abraham was above it and out of it altogether, like Enoch.

Chapter 71

The Heavenly Calling Foreshewn: Part 2

Such knowledge of the mystery of God's will, purposed in Himself from the beginning, and to be manifested in the dispensation of the fullness of times, by the gathering of all things, whether in heaven or on earth, in one, even in Christ, was thus in types foreshewn to, and left among, the patriarchs, whether before or after the flood. And just at the beginning of the Lord's subsequent dealings with that nation which He had chosen for His own out of the earth, we may find the same purpose again foreshewn-I mean in the combined types of Moses and Joshua.

Moses came from Egypt through the wilderness; as it is written of him, “This was he that was in the church in the wilderness.” (Acts 7:38.) He stood on the borders of the land of promise, which was destined soon to be God's world, or that part of the earth which God was about to separate to Himself. But Moses was to go no further. There was to be nothing in this world for Moses but the wilderness and a sight of Canaan. The earth to him was to be no Canaan. His foot was never to tread a land flowing with milk and honey. “Die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people,” said the Lord to him. (Deut. 32: 50.) And Moses did so. He went up from the plain of Moab unto the mount of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, and died there. But did he die the death of all men? Died Moses as a fool dieth? No, it was the Lord Himself who put him asleep; the dead may bury the dead, but the Lord buried Moses. “He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor, but no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day.” (Deut. 34:6.) Though He showed His care in another way, yet was it equal care for the body of Moses as had been shown for that of Enoch, and because they were to be equally children of the resurrection. Some sleep, but they which are alive and remain shall not prevent them which are asleep, but all shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. 4:15-17.) The earth does not, to this day, own the body of Moses.

Like others, it is true, it has returned dust to dust, but the Lord Himself buried it with sure and certain purpose of giving it a resurrection unto glory. It was not the power of death that had oppressed Moses. Though a hundred and twenty years old, his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. The Lord could have said of him (as of all the children of the resurrection), “If I will that he tarry till I come;” for death is abolished to them all. But He was otherwise minded, and graciously so; for in Moses He has given to all those who may be called to “sleep in Jesus” a sure pledge that their bodies are not forgotten in the grave, but though sown in corruption, they shall be raised in glory; though once in the image of the earthly, they shall be found in the image of the Heavenly.

But there is in Moses much more of a church or heavenly aspect, if I may so express myself, than even all this-as indeed it is only while they were traveling in the wilderness that Israel bears analogy to the church of God on the earth. The stricter analogy ends when Israel gets into Canaan, and is there organized and settled as God's nation; and therefore all things that happened to them as examples, and which are written for the church's admonition, happened to them when in the wilderness, and are found written, all of them, in the book of Numbers, which the

Jews called, and properly so, “the book of the wilderness.” (See 1 Cor. 10:1-10.) And Moses was their leader, and the companion of their joys and sorrows, only while they continued in the wilderness; and thus in the very character of his position while on the earth, his course, as we thus see, ending in the wilderness, and he himself never taking his place among the people of Israel, when organized and manifested as God's nation, we clearly discern in Moses much more of the heavenly than of the earthly calling-more of the church character than of Israel.

Besides, Moses was constantly with the Lord Jesus in the heavens, dwelling unveiled, like the church, in the presence of Christ beyond the region of the lightning and thunder, from whence the law was delivered (Ex. 34:34; 2 Cor. 3:18), and in the presence of which Israel stood. (Ex. 24:17.) He was in the peaceful sunshine on the top of the hill of God; there he walked amid the fullness of Christ, receiving token after, token of His grace and salvation. He saw face to face, he beheld the similitude of the Lord, and was spoken with mouth to mouth, and he shone with the heavenly glory of Jesus in the heights. And according to all this, he is afterward seen in the holy mount, in company with Elijah, occupying the place which is characteristically the church's place. (Matt. 17:3.)

And I would add this, that Moses got a wife and children when he was, through their unbelief and resection of him, separated from his brethren, the children of Israel, and when, consequently, as he says himself, he was an “alien in a strange land.” (Ex. 2:22; 18:3.) And so has the Lord been brought in among the Gentiles through the unbelief and rejection of Israel, and is gathering a church, a wife and children, out from among them. And thus, in all this, Moses is strikingly in character with the Lord in the present dispensation and calling of the church, bearing upon him ninth more of the heavenly than of the earthly calling, exhibiting the Lord in connection with the church rather than with Israel. “This is he that was in the church in the wilderness."

But Joshua, who comes after Moses, presents another thing altogether. He stood in the land, the good land, which the Lord gave for an inheritance to Israel. The heathen were given to him, and the kings and rulers of the earth he broke in pieces like a potter's vessel. He divided the land by lot among the tribes, the children of the circumcision, and their reproach he rolled away. Joshua raised the altar of the Lord in the land, taking possession of it in His name, and the earth smiled around them, the garden of the Lord, again. Joshua was thus the man of victory, and the heir of the inheritance here; Moses had been but the man of Egypt and the wilderness, who died on the other side of Jordan. But Moses was laid up by the hand of the Lord for resurrection) while Joshua still stood upon the earth. Like Enoch and Noah of old among the patriarchs, Moses and Joshua now in Israel tell out the same wonderful tale, the purpose of God concerning the heaven and the earth, and in the same order of time also. For as Enoch was translated to heaven before Noah inherited the earth, so Moses was buried by the Lord in Mount Pisgah before Joshua crossed the Jordan, and took possession of the land of promise. But in their turn, under the guiding hand of God, they each take up the same mystery, and foreshew the dispensation of the fullness of times, and of the gathering of all things in Christ, whether things in earth, or things in heaven. The glories are two, but the same Lord is the center and sustainer of both. In a glass darkly we see the heavenly family, whether alive or asleep at the coming of the Lord, in Enoch and Moses, and we see the earth restored and inherited again in Noah and Joshua.

Again, in the combined histories of Elijah and Elisha we shall find the same testimony among the prophets, another foreshewing of the same mystery; every age being thus made to witness this purpose of God. Elijah, like Enoch before him, stands in an evil day. He is called forth in a day of deep apostasy, in Israel, and, in the spirit of a righteous reprover, he suddenly breaks in upon Ahab and all is iniquity with a voice of judgment. “As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.” (1 Kings 17:1.) The Baptist's voice in another day, “Repent ye, O generation of vipers,” was, as it were, but the echo of this voice of God's prophet before Ahab. The same spirit and power were in both. And their course on the earth was of one character also. The prophet suffers for his testimony; this was his only portion here. There was, it is true, a rejoicing in his light for a season, as afterward with the Jews in the light of the Baptist. The people fell on their faces, acknowledging the Lord God of Elijah, saying, “Jehovah he is the God, Jehovah he is the God;” and the prophets of Baal were taken down and slain at the brook Kishon: (1 Kings 18:39, 40.) But the burning and shining light of God's prophet was quickly disowned, as afterward was John, his companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. Another Herod and Herodias are confederate against Elijah, and he is exiled, afflicted, and destitute; the world hates him, the hand of man is against him. The Lord acknowledges His suffering witness, and comforts him, but it is the comforting of one who is cast down, cast down by the enmity of man. The still small voice of love meets his ear, but it is in that wilderness out to which the hand of a persecutor had driven him. His enemies are strong and many, and from the beginning to the end he continues to be the suffering and exiled one, the righteous witness of God cast out by an evil generation. This was his coarse on earth; till at last, when the suffering was all accomplished, and he had fought his fight, and finished his course, and kept the faith, he is made to enter into glory. Having believed, he lives; having suffered, he reigns. Earth disowns, but heaven receives him. Another cloud takes him out of our sight. (Acts 1:9.) The chariot and horses of Israel seat him as a child of the resurrection among the angels (Luke 20:36), and the world, which had troubled him for his righteousness' sake, now only knows that his reward is great in heaven. (Matt. 5:12.)

I need not say how all this is characteristic of the Lord and the church. The rejected One walking by faith on earth, there knowing the enmity of man, and the consolations of God, is at length glorified among the angels in heaven. All this tells us of that heavenly family who walk here in faith unvindicated and disowned; but who, believing, are to live, and who, suffering, are to reign. And as in the case of Moses, Elijah is seen in the holy mount, the companion of the glory, as he had been of the sufferings of Christ, occupying that which is to be the place of the church, or the heavenly glory.

But in Elisha we have something altogether different. No suffering for him after his master was taken from him. He stands before kings, and is not ashamed. It is not with him as it had been with his master; the wrath of the king prevailing to exile and to trouble him, but chief captains wait at his gates, and kings send presents to him; he discloses the secrets of one of them, disappoints the purposes of another, gives pledges of victory to a third, and grants supplies to combined armies of them. Chariots of salvation fill the mountain as attendants on the prophet. Every path on which he treads wears after him some trace of the greatness of him who had been traveling there; famine, disease, and death seem to own him; mercies and judgments are dispensed through his hand. He stands above all difficulty, going onward still in the Lord from strength to strength. Nature changes

its course at his bidding; and at length even his dead body puts forth strange and surprising virtue. (2 Kings 13:21.) It sends forth the prisoners out of the pit, that they might not die, but live, and walk on earth again, as before the Lord, in the land of the living.

All this was a traveling in greatness of strength; but it was a traveling in greatness only upon the earth. The things that Elisha did were great things (as it is said of them, 2 Kings 8:4), but still they were only things of the earth. It was the earth that witnessed the power of God in the prophet; his was not, with Elijah, glory among the angels in heaven, but glory in the earth, power amid the resources and over the circumstances of the world. And thus again, in these two prophets, the same wondrous tale is told out, the same purpose of God concerning the heavens and the earth in the world to come. And the very same seasons may be observed here as we have observed above. Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven before Elisha received the double portion of his spirit, and went through the earth in the greatness of the strength of it. All this being to foreshew the heavens receiving the church; and then, but not till then, Israel and the earth receiving blessing again in the restitution of all things.

Such are, to me, very distinct and significant foreshewings of the heavenly calling, and of the purpose of God, which in the dispensation of the fullness of times is to be manifested. But it must not be understood that in this comparative view of Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and Elijah, with Noah, Lot, Joshua, and Elisha-I mean to present the first rank as individually and personally belonging to the heavenly family, and the second rank of them to the earthly. Surely not. I speak of them only in their typical bearing. They stand, when thus combined, as foreshewing the two departments of the coming kingdom of our Lord-the church called up to heaven and the throne-Israel seeded in honor and in blessing, with the attending nations on the earth or the footstool. But as Enoch will be found among the children of the resurrection, so will Noah; and Joshua will appear with Moses, and Elisha with Elijah, in the true mount of transfiguration.

And this is just what we may observe upon that typical mount itself. There Peter, James, and John, in type, presented the place which the earthly family is to hold in the kingdom; for still, in bodies of flesh and blood, they stood merely before the heavenly glory, and not in it. But we know that in the antitype, or the kingdom, they will hold the other place, and be where they then saw Moses and Elijah, in the glory on the heavenly mount with the Lord. Himself; this St. Peter clearly declares. (2 Peter 1:16.) The inheritance of all the saints is in heaven. (1 Peter 1:4.) The patriarchs looked for a “heavenly” country. (Heb. 11:19.) The Lord is to come, and all His saints with Him, as Zechariah prophesies. (Zech. 14:5.) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets are to be seen hereafter in the kingdom of God. (Luke 13:28.) I do judge that scripture instructs us that all the elect, as well those who came before the Son was revealed, as well as those who are now under the ministry of the Spirit of the Son glorified, will be found together in the heavenly glory of the kingdom-for all are of one body. Until the Son was sent forth, they were as children under tutors and governors, under the rudiments of the world but still they were of the Father, as we are. No better than servants, but still lords of all, as we are.

In their measure, too, they continued with the Lord in His temptations, standing each in his day faithful, like Jesus among the faithless; and therefore their place must be that of the children, and their reward that of the faithful witnesses. They lived by faith, and they died in faith, and are laid up surely as children of the resurrection; no longer of the earth, earthy, but to bear the image of the

Heavenly, in the day when death is to be swallowed up of victory.

And now, in closing, let me, while having that, sought to know the deeper parts of God's ways and purposes concerning us, call to your remembrance, brethren, the ever fresh and blessed truth of the love of God our Savior. The command to you is, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength;” and again, the command is, “Rejoice in the Lord alway.” Now, never would He have thus commanded us, if He had not forgiven us, and would have us to know this forgiveness. For it were but a thankless task to try to love Him thus, and to rejoice in Him thus, while we know not that He is ours in the full joy of forgiveness. It were a commandment beyond obedience altogether, if we were not to know Him in the reconciliation. He who commands us to love and rejoice in Him, commands us to know Him to be at peace with us. He never would have said to us “Give me thy heart,” if He had not addressed us with “My son.” (Prov. 23:25) The call tells us of the relationship; the demand made upon us implies the grace which has been brought to us; and in this way we may use the sweet words of our Lord, “I know that his commandment is life everlasting.” It is His command that we believe in His forgiving love. God is disobeyed if we receive not the blessing with joy. Our obedience to God, therefore, thus depends on our receiving the reconciliation.

But not only this, our godly use and apprehension of the things around us depends, in like manner, on knowing the reconciliation through the death and rising again of Jesus. It is this which the new creature in Christ apprehends in them all, as the apostle speaks, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new, and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ.” And not only so, all that which as saints is our service to others depends on this likewise. For instance, our ministry flows from it: for it is to us, as the apostle further speaks, who are reconciled that the ministry of reconciliation is given. (2 Cor. 5:18.) “We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.” Our intercessions flow from it, for it is only in the consciousness of our own acceptance that we can intercede for others. Abraham drew near to the Lord when he prayed for Sodom. The high priest under the law went into the holiest of all. The altar of incense stood close to the second veil. And therefore, when the church is exhorted to make prayers, supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men, she is, doubtless, by that very exhortation commanded to know her own full acceptance, and thus to pray without doubting. (1 Tim. 2) So blessedly thus, dear brethren, does everything help to assure our hearts before God our Savior, and keep us in the sense of His forgiving and accepting love. The very commands He has delivered, the spirit in which He calls us to walk, the services He requires, all are made to witness to us the reconciliation. The full abiding sense of the reconciliation we should bear about with us everywhere; as Adam, though sent out to a world which his own sin had defiled, and which was thus a constant witness against him, bore on his shoulder the coat of skin, the pledge and witness of grace and forgiveness towards him from the hand of God Himself.

And I would add one other thing, which has touched my own soul with comfort while writing these pages-that if we even now rejoice (as surely we do daily), and that in a world of such offense and trespass as “this present evil world” is—if the sunshine and fruitful seasons, and a thousand other springs of constant, ever-flowing joy be such as they are to us here, what must be the joy when the offense is forever removed,-and all is subjection and service! when God again rejoices in His

works! when in the dispensation of the fullness of times He has gathered together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him! May the brightness of that day be much before us, and our hearts know more and more what it is to long for His appearing.

(Concluded.)

Chapter 72

The Holy Spirit in Relation to Testimony Corporate and Individual

The latter part connects itself with the former, with this difference: the one is His presence in the church; the other in individuals. We must bear it in mind, to understand the doctrine of the Holy Ghost; we must not confound the working of the Holy Ghost in the church with the general working of God. It was not a question of dwelling in creation. By the Spirit God garnished the heavens. In scripture, whenever there is any act of God upon creation, it is the Holy Spirit that does it, not shutting out, of course, the agency of Father and Son. By the Spirit Jesus cast out demons. We must bear this in mind to understand what was said “The Holy Ghost was not yet,” and may cease to be in one sense, as Jehovah created the heavens and the earth long before He dwelt in Jerusalem. Jehovah was acting in the same power long before He dwelt in Jerusalem, and He is working in the same scene since He left it. Therefore no extent of the Holy Ghost's operation in individuals is necessarily connected with its being the “habitation of God through the Spirit.” Now the church is the habitation of God. The Trinity having been manifested, we in a special manner come to be God's dwelling-place in the church. There is the operation of the Spirit, for which man is responsible as a natural being, and also the record of this which increases man's responsibility. In the same way the law was given to Israel; and they were responsible for this and the testimony. So now there is the whole Bible, for which we are responsible, even where there is not life.

It is not merely the existence of creation as a natural thing, but that there is in it a testimony for God. For though man's will is opposed to God, yet all His ways and doings are absolutely and excellently adapted to man, as there are natural feelings which show out God's relation as a Father. Thus the existence of certain things is not only a testimony, but the Spirit of God intends them to teach certain truth. So with the Jews-” Hear ye my voice;” and Stephen said, “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost"-not a question of giving life, but of responsibility. We must remember that the effect of the fall facilitates all this. Two things came in by the fall-the knowledge of good and evil. In the very act of guilt man got this. Secondly, in the fall Man got into a state of certain wretchedness and ruin for the life of God; we see there was wretchedness, which gave him the opportunity to make known the knowledge of His kindness. As Jesus, perfect in grace, could reach man in his sorrow, in times of death and hunger-raising the widow's son, feeding the multitude, &e. The miseries of human life came as an available opportunity for love to minister to.

We must distinguish between responsibility, will, and power. “Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.” They are not necessarily connected. If I told my child to come, and he would not, and it was afterward proved that the door was shut, this would make no difference. If he showed the will to come, perhaps I might have opened the door. God never supposes there is life in conscience. There is a knowledge of good and evil, but Satan can act altogether on the conscience of a Hindoo widow, or of a Paul conscientiously opposing Christ; but still there is such a thing as conscience on which the Spirit of God acts. There was a sense of responsibility before the fall, but conscience, as discerning between good and evil, came in with the fall. The communication of life is a distinct living thing. Even in paradise there was the tree of good and evil, and the tree of life. The knowledge is one thing, and another is the sustaining power of Christ.

There is such a thing as conscience on which the Spirit of God acts, and presents the claims of God-even on fallen man. The law took up man in this state—that side of responsibility without life at all. Christ comes in the scene of life, and instead of putting man into the responsibility, takes it Himself, and charges Himself with it. There was the grand final question answered of the knowledge of good and evil. Christ thus gives man the responsibility of love, not of judgment. Any light previously given increases condemnation, as now when Christ is rejected. Christ not only becomes a testimony to the Jews, but that which applies to man in every possible condition of the human heart. The perfect Light in Himself, besides the perfect universality of it. I take Simeon, Anna, the thief on the cross, a godly Jew, the most wretched sinner called a dog: to the wisest man He was made wisdom-Christ to all comes in as light, to those in every position. So man is left without excuse; so we have done with the knowledge of good and evil. The law presents what we ought to do; but cannot produce the power-cannot touch the springs of men's hearts. We cannot love because we are commanded. Take a man in every condition: Christ must touch the spring, though he may resist it, and this demonstrates the perfect ruin. But still Christ is adapted to meet the affections-everything is in Him to touch the heart.

The tree of life could not heal man-if he had been allowed to touch it, he would have perpetuated his misery. Christ is another Man. The Lord from heaven, He became the source of a new life, communicating life on the ground of forgiveness. Not that we have always the consciousness of it when we first have life, though it is said, “Having forgiven you all trespasses.” That is the principle. Everything that the old man produced is looked on as dead in the grave of Jesus. Christ, having risen from the dead, has atoned for all the sin for which man is responsible. The conflict coming brings in the exercise of Mediatorship, teaching us to know God by wants. It is of great importance to know God by wants.

The moment that man separates from God, he is ruined. In this sense we are above angels. Angels were never made the center of a system as man was, and man therefore is always aiming to be a center, and Christ, the new Adam, is truly the center of a system, and it becomes horrible sin for man to be the center. The sinner is not only one who has fallen away from God, but when fallen, and everything is presented to call him back, he will not come. Here is the condition of man. Christ came into the world; man hated Him, and turned Him out of it-the extent of sin. Everything that God could present to man, He has, and man has failed when put into responsibility. This is the demonstration of the Son of man, not being merely turned out of paradise.

When Judas went out, Christ said, “Now is the prince of this world,” &c. “The judgment of this world.” Jesus died to be the source of a new life, has risen from the dead as Master over the consequences of sin, and put hereby a new ground of responsibility to man. Christ is the center of a new world and system. Now I go to a sinner, not to reclaim him, but to show him there is pardon obtained by the blood of Christ, the new ground of responsibility, as having rejected Christ. Still, there is grace in the gift offered. There is the accessibility of the place, and capability of man to enter. All may come to a room, but some may be lame, and cannot. distinguish between responsibility and the giving of life. God comes in as a Giver, and there is no responsibility in this, only as based on what is given. God was in forbearance till Christ came, because the atonement was before His mind; but the whole measure of man's responsibility was filled up before He declared His righteousness. Romans fully opens this. The life never could have been declared till the work of Christ was wrought. The consummation of man's sin being seen in the death of Christ,

God brings in His own righteousness, and faith owns it in producing all manner of fruits, but only recognizing that Another had done everything. Hezekiah could only speak of the darkness of death. There was no declaration of life, any more than of righteousness. Hezekiah said, “There is no remembrance or thee.” The prophetic notices are no declaration of life.

It was only consequent on the death of Christ that God manifested life. Christ brought life and immortality (that is, incorruption) to light by the gospel, as in 2 Timothy. “Except a corn of wheat die,” &c. The Son of God becomes the life-giving power by which God acts, and the word. We get a new thing-the fact of life. The second Adam becomes a living Spirit, quickening by resurrection,” having forgiven you all trespasses.”

When God's righteousness is declared, the whole course of the saints is based on the knowledge of it. In the first sermon of Peter, in Acts, there is the full conviction of sin, and immediate joy, and now we look for fruit to the glory and praise of God. “Therefore be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Christ having the double character of taking up the law, and taking up the righteousness of God, He becomes light. The latter is our responsibility. Another thing: Christ being set up as the Head of all things, we come to the counsels and purposes of God, even that the church is to be the bride of His Son as the glorified Man. Not only Jesus glorified God, by perfect obedience, but God was glorified in Him, and we are associated with Him in His fullness. God communicates this life to the church through Christ, and the Holy Ghost thus associates with Him on the basis of the glory. In our bodies all this is to be displayed; God has been pleased in the meanwhile to display all this on the defiled earth. The church has righteousness and life, and in the world it is associated with the power of God's life, and having all the sympathies. The Holy Ghost comes into the church to dwell in it, in the energy of Christ at the right hand of God; not merely as gifts-that is not the highest-but God was there. The Holy Ghost being there, the effect is seen in the judgment of Ananias and Sapphire. They thought to have the credit of grace, when they had not grace in their hearts. The sin was the same, whether there was gift to adjudge the punishment or not. The same as Dagen falling down-God there acting for Himself. Also the power over creation, seen when the cows went straight up with the ark. Nature was not changed, but God turned it. The ark was there, whether they lowed or not. The indwelling of God in the church was not made known before the coming of Christ.

David said, “I will build God a habitation.” Now when this was said, it was a mistake, but it sprang from love, and the Spirit always notices the affections. (Psa. 132) The heart's desire was to be near His habitatation-to make Him one; but the truth is, that His own hands will make Himself a habitation. I was a defective thought, though not a wrong one. The Holy Spirit leads to holy desires. Read the song of Moses for this. “Thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation.” There is a created scene into which God will bring His people, as in Ex. 29: “I will sanctify and dwell among,” &c. Redemption and deliverance make the way for God to dwell amongst them. God dwelt with. them in a certain sense then, and so He does in the church now. In 2 Sam. 7 you will see the same thought brought out. Until the true Solomon builds, God is going from tent to tent, till He builds a house. “Unless the Lord build the house,” &c. The church is not in a place of its own, for God has set it in heaven. In the meanwhile we are “builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.”

The giving of gifts, and all other privileges, flow from this-God the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church. Timothy was to stir up his special gift, because God had given him the Spirit of power, love, and a “sound mind.” The Spirit of power, love, and a sound mind was to control the gift. Particular gifts were thus used by the intelligence of the saints as superior to the gift in the man, God acting for the saints; and we ought to have a spiritual intelligence. Better have five words in the Spirit than the finest discourse without; and you ought to have a spiritual judgment to see the purpose to be edification. The Holy Ghost, the demonstration of God's power and goodness in the midst of the evil, is not gone away. The Holy Ghost displays God in the midst of all the wickedness of Jew and Gentile, giving us our place around Christ, the heavenly center, and surmounts the miseries that sin had brought in, in the confusion of tongues, and uses them as a proof of the wonderful works of God, proving that He was the God of Jew and Gentile. God has taken His dwelling-place here because righteousness is established in heaven. Weakness may flow if they do not walk according to His presence, and God will say, as He did to Joshua, “Ye cannot stand before your enemies.” Thus thirty men fell before Ai; and so should we in fact see manifest evil, if saints own the presence of the Holy Ghost, and do not walk consistently, more than where He is not owned.

Difference there is in gifts: those personal, such as ministry; and those He has put into the church as signs of His presence-the church set in unity with Christ. He gave persons, such as apostles, prophets, not for the display of the Holy Ghost in creation, but for the edifying the church in love (χ■ρισμα is used in various senses); Christ has given one to be an apostle, another to be an evangelist, &c. The ministry to the church is not displayed to the world. The Holy Ghost may make a man speak with tongues, or lead to the most common act of kindness. (See Rom. 12) Do not think you are here told to cultivate gifts, but that every act should be the working of the Holy Ghost, according to the measure of individual faith. Do not go out of your gift-ministry; wait on ministry, &c. Do not go out of your sphere-be sober. The working of the Holy Ghost is in all the various developments of the church of God. How far the sin of the church has hindered the display, or edification may be a question; but whilst the church is here, the Holy Ghost is here.

Restoring grace is not bringing back to the same place, but bestowing that which is suited for the present remedy-the deeper sense of God's grace. It is not needful to pass through sin to know this; God always prepares the vessels.

Barnabas was full of the Holy Ghost. He took up all his faculties, and, instead of thinking or acting as a man, the Holy Spirit took him up and used him for Christ.

“The truth as it is in Jesus.” This applied to doctrine. It is the new man, instead of having corrupt lusts; it is walking according to Christ. The Holy Ghost maintains His own nature, and reveals, being given us as a seal. The new nature cannot reveal. It is dependent on Christ, is athirst for God, and to it the Spirit reveals the glory of the new world. Having this new life in Christ, the Holy Ghost comes and connects our desires with Christ.

In Rom. 8, suitably to the epistle, the Holy Ghost takes another character-He takes a place in the midst of evil, and helps us in the midst of infirmities. The grieving produced by the evil around us is by Him, connected with the love of God, and thus the Holy Ghost uses all to bring the soul of the saints into sympathy with God, according to the evil around. The Holy Ghost takes notice of all in creation, natural sympathies, &c., because the judgment of the Holy Ghost enters perfectly into all

that produces sorrow. He takes His place amongst the sorrows of man, and makes the hearts of the saints the place of expression, according to the will of God. The Holy Ghost, in a certain sense, just as the Son was looked on when in our tabernacle, as down here, has that particular character, and thus speaks what He hears. He reveals and gives us power to feed on what He reveals. The heart was won to the sustaining at once. There is more difficulty in guiding, as it becomes acting in responsibility, and this leads to anxiety—and except in the Christ of God, I see this anxiety. There is a guidance by knowledge, and also a guidance without knowledge.

In Christ we have everything exactly according to God. Christ, in a certain sense, had no character. He had never-failing obedience, because He was the thing to be testified about. A difference is in man's character, but not so in Christ: all was in Him that demonstrated God—tender when He should be tender, gracious when He should be gracious, faithful when He should be faithful. The apostles, who were only vessels, were not the thing itself, but only the witnesses of the thing, and had their own individual character. The Apostle Paul said, “I do not repent, though I did repent.” “My flesh had no rest,” &c. “In weakness and fear.” See the feelings of a man in its workings there-obliged to have the thorn in the flesh, an antagonistic power against the power in him, to keep him humble. God inspired him, and made Paul's own feelings to be guided by the divine life, and for our instruction in all this. I do not think the command, “Go not into Bithynia,” &c., the most blessed operation of the Spirit. This was like the government of “prohibition,” not in the intelligence of God met in communion, such as in Philippians, “Filled with the knowledge of his will with all wisdom,” &c. The divine will is as evident as possible to the spiritual mind. A vast quantity of the character of the Spirit is according to that in communion, the result of much prayer, though not necessarily resulting from prayer at the time.

Now I may be rightfully exercised about that in which five years since I was quite at rest. If we have lost ourselves, He may put it in our mind to go here or there, and it assumes a person walking with God. Assuredly we find, if we are walking humbly, God will guide us. “I will guide thee with mine eye.” If I exalt myself, God will deny me. If I have not the mind of God, and am asked, “Will you go to Hereford, or elsewhere?” if I have not the mind of God, I must pray, and this assumes I am not walking in the knowledge of God's mind. I believe Providence never guides us, it guides things. I may be going to preach in a place, and find the train gone. God has ordered things about, and I may be thankful for that; but it is not God guiding me, for I should really have gone.

Evidence of divine life and guidance of service are closely connected, but distinct. There may be a special guidance which may not be exactly taking Christ as a direct model, as when Paul was not suffered to go into Bithynia. The Holy Ghost acts for the church and in the church, and never severs from responsibility to the Head. We have seen the divine life flowing through all. Individual devotedness and brotherly love would be the same, if we were guided by the same Spirit of God, but life being an individual thing which continues in glory, as the white stone (no man knows the name, it might be insignificant to another, but it is a secret between the saint and Christ which none other knows), and He never gives up His title of knowing His sheep by name. There is a vast principle that is hung on it. The Holy Ghost is seen forming and caring for the church, ministering for the church and in it. “The same Lord” to make him a servant of Christ, and the effect of the working of the Holy Ghost. Most important it is to remember I am a servant of the Lord. The apostle states the servant to be free from all men, but his bondman.

Another point is if co-operation weakens individual responsibility, it will weaken the whole church. I get the whole body in the church. There is the eye, and ear, &c., each in its own place. Love unites in love and intelligence. The moment God puts Paul in subjection, then it was seen Paul was mighty, and the intelligence of the mind of God as to individual action. If that is not the case, there is no love in service. I see the Holy Ghost going before the church. Paul, in evangelizing, was the servant of Christ, and of nobody else. We are servants of the Lord, if walking in the same spirit; we have a common joy, and altogether free from all men as servants of Christ. Important to see individual responsibility-then I afterward see the body, which necessarily involves co-operation. See Paul acting with the most perfect independence, and in the same epistle he speaks of going up to Jerusalem for counsel of the apostles about his ministry. In another place we have co-operation in regard to individual service. The apostate mind may like to be a center; but a man conscious of weakness, depending on God, delights in co-operation and fellowship in service. Even an apostle found it sad to have no man like-minded.

I see a great politician, and he brings the most diverse means possible to promote the same end, to bear on his own point. Satan also combines the most gracious forms of human nature as well as firm independency, &c., all to bear against God, and promote the same apostasy. The Holy Ghost's power shown in the same thing. He obliterates the differences of character, and brings them to co-operate to one purpose. See a man of firm nature and a man of yielding nature: Christ has both righteousness and grace, and the measure of Christ in each is brought into subjection, keeping that which is merely individual in subjection. If there had been two Pauls, there never would have been Paul and his son Timothy in the faith. The individualization of service shows weakness.

The danger with us may be on the side of individual responsibility, or acting apart from those whose graces are necessary to the order of the church. In order to this, it is necessary that Christ should be the common object of all; and, after all, to so trust Christ, that He will care for us individually. A person like Paul I could see unconsciously had Timothy under his eye. Christ could direct all alike as one subjected to Paul, others perhaps alone. The Holy Ghost acts and works in subordination to Christ. One truth pushed alone will lead to absolute heresy. The Spirit divides to everyone several, as He will, acting in His divinity, yet always as taking the things of Christ-taking His place of glorifying Christ.

Chapter 73

On Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15

The notion of the application of the words in Hosea, “I have called my Son out of Egypt,” to Christ, is ridiculed by rationalists. Now, I affirm distinctly that it is according to the tenor of scripture testimony, and quite rightly applied. It is a great leading truth.

If you look at Isa. 49, you will see Messiah distinctly presented as taking the place of Israel. I think we have spoken, when on the pseudo-Isaiah of infidels, of the elect servant of Israel, Christ the elect Servant, and the remnant the elect servant of the last days. But this chapter 49 is more definite. Israel is first presented as Jehovah's witness in the earth, as the polished shaft in His quiver. “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Then I said,” exclaims Messiah, “I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught and in vain.” And so it was with Christ on earth. “But now, saith Jehovah, who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, and to be my salvation to the end of the earth.” That is, Israel is presented as the servant of the Lord; but when Christ comes, if it were so, His labor was in vain, and then Christ (though to restore the remnant in due time) is Himself God's Servant, and light goes forth to the Gentiles.

This is the passage Paul so strikingly quotes as justifying his turning from the Jews to the Gentiles, when the former rejected his message. Christ takes the place of Israel under the law, Israel after the flesh. This He does all through John, though in a higher way, as revealed Son of God. Hence, in chapter 15, He proclaims Himself as the true vine. Israel was the well-known vine, and, as remarked before, Messiah was to be the best branch, the topmost bough. But Israel is set aside. The true Vine, as the true Servant, is Christ. Israel was Jehovah's son, His first-born; but Christ was the Son, the true First-born of every creature. Hence, as rejected by Israel, He begins Israel's whole history afresh, and, as not deriving His position from the people, He is called out of Egypt to begin their history according to God. I am not saying whether scripture be wise or foolish; I believe it divinely wise; but this is not my question now. What I say is, it is the system of scripture to substitute Christ for Israel, the Second Adam for the first, and that what wholly failed as founded on the responsibility of man was taken up afresh in the perfect and unfailing Son of God. Indeed this is true, as we have seen, as to every principle of God's dealings with men, but I now speak only of Israel. And hence Matthew or the New Testament, citing the Old Testament scripture, uses it rightly according to the intended scope of scripture. People may quarrel with scripture, but they cannot say that Matthew quotes, “Out of Egypt have I called my Son,” in a way not according to the intention of scripture. It is the system and plan of scripture, of the Old Testament itself, thus to transfer passages from Israel, the provisional son, to Christ, the true Son.

Chapter 74

Thoughts on Isaiah 1-5

The great subject of the introduction to this prophecy is the way in which Jehovah presents Himself alter declaring their state of ruin. There is a day of Jehovah on all the earth, and if there were not a remnant, all the people would be as Sodom and like Gomorrah. The hand of Jehovah will be against all that the world exalts. Everything or one that is lifted up shall be brought low: Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day. (Chap. 2: 17.) God will purify the earthly people by His judgments. The rest will be the object of a terrible judgment. (Chap. 2:18-21.)

I desire to consider the character of the prophecy as given to the Jews. It takes in a circle much greater and concerns the nations as well as Israel.

There is an important principle to remark, namely, that every prophecy supposes ruin of the state of things in which the prophecy is presented. When all goes according to the mind of God, there is no need of warning. It is manifest here in a striking way. Prophecy reveals all the hopes that belong to the faithful when the dispensation breaks down. It announces the failures, and the judgments on what man essays to do because of the evil.

The mass of the Jews is not saved, but there is a remnant saved in the midst of them. The church is but a remnant. We begin as a remnant, and where the Jews end. This supposes that the state of the world is bad and that the world has not gone on well. God sends threatenings and warnings to the mass when all goes ill; and He makes promises to the faithful remnant to sustain and encourage it. When Israel failed, or the priesthood, in Eli, God raises up a prophet, Samuel. It was when all failed under the kings even of the house of David, that God raised up Isaiah. Ahaz had introduced idolatry into the house of God, and the testimony of Isaiah was sent to announce not a remnant only but the Messiah.

The state of what God established in presence of the glory of God shows that the people cannot stand before this glory. (Chap. 6: 5.)

God sends prophet after prophet, and chastisement after chastisement, during seven centuries, and He only struck fully when the Son was cast out of the vineyard and slain. Meanwhile the promise of the Messiah sustained the hope of the faithful. They felt the state of things whilst waiting for redemption. Anna spoke of the infant Jesus to all those that looked for redemption. The principle of such immense importance in prophecy is, that because of the unfaithfulness of the mass God rejects that which He has Himself established; and He announces that He is going to replace what is ruined by something which is infinitely better. God in His goodness gives the light beforehand to brighten up the hearts of the faithful. The goodness of God treats them as friends and fills them with confidence. If one recognizes the prophecy, one must recognize that God has judged and condemned that which exists. If God had not set aside man, there were no need of a new Adam. If the ark of the covenant had not been in the hands of the Philistines there would have been no need of Samuel the prophet, any more than of Isaiah if the house of David were not fallen. Wherefore prophecy is called a charge or “burden.”

It will facilitate the understanding of the book if one point out the divisions of the book.

Chapters 1 to 4 are the introduction, and blessing at the end. Chapter 1 speaks of the Jews, chapter 2 of the Gentiles.

Chapter 5 is a prophetic discourse which compares the state of the vineyard with that which God had done for Israel at the beginning; interrupted by

Chapter 6 which compares it with the glory of Christ. It is thus God judges His people. The prophet is installed in his work.

Chapters 7 to 9: 7 are a prophecy of Immanuel and of the remnant, of Immanuel's land and of the Assyrian when Immanuel is there.

Chapters 9: 8 to 12 are a prophecy about Israel.

Chapters 13 to 27 look at the nations and the circumstances of Israel in the last days (chap. 18.) among the nations.

Chapters 28 to 35 are details about Israel, each prophecy closing with a blessing.

Chapters 36 to 39 are a history of Hezekiah and the Assyrian as typical of the dead and risen Son of David, and the Assyrian of the last days, closing with a prediction of the Babylonish captivity.

Chapters 40 to 46 are the restoration of Israel, witness against the idolatry of the nations but idolatrous, and rejected because of rejecting the Messiah. Israel is found at last among the rebellious when Jesus shall come back, the remnant being kept on the earth for the glory of Jehovah.

Chapter 1.

We see the summary of the burden of the prophecy in verses 1-9.

There was much piety according to the world. They continued in a round of religious forms to render worship to God without perceiving the lack of life, faithfulness, and purity by which they were characterized. (Vers. 10-18.) Having a show of godliness they had denied its power. They made long prayers at the corners of the streets; but their conscience was not right with God. There was a moral blindness before the judicial blindness. As we learn from the next chapter, the land was full of silver and gold, with horses and chariots, full of outward blessings but also with idols. The multitude of sacrifices did not make their ways true in relation to God. Hence (vers. 14, 15) the very things God had instituted or enjoined became in their hands such as He hated, because the conscience in His people was not according to His mind.

The word therefore is (vers. 16, 17), “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well.” There is the weighty matter. Have a good conscience before God: if not, you become blind of yourselves before you are blinded of God. God distinguishes between actions. One cannot learn to do good before ceasing from evil. One cannot have the light in the conscience, without leaving first that which wounds the conscience.

Jehovah imputes not iniquity. (Ver. 18.) Moral government follows. (Vers. 19, 20.)

The saddest thing for the heart of God is, not that the world is wicked, but that the city which bears His name, on which His eyes rest continually, should be so evil. “How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: everyone loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither cloth the came of the widow come unto them.” (Vers. 21-23.) His judgment begins with His house. We see in Ezek. 9 that, when the remnant are marked, He causes all the city to be smitten, beginning at His sanctuary. He points out afterward the iniquities in detail. We have here a great present principle: if Christendom has deserved the judgment of God, His judgment begins with His house to purify it. In this sense we are with difficulty saved. It was over Jerusalem that Jesus wept.

“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: and I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.” (Vers. 24-26.) He will avenge Himself of His enemies who corrupted Zion; He will satisfy Himself in dealing with His adversaries. And when He shall have executed His judgment, He will restore Jerusalem as of old. But if judgment must fall on Israel, the consequence will be that out of Zion shall go forth the law. Jerusalem will be then more truly than ever the throne of Jehovah. “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall he together, and they that forsake Jehovah shall be consumed. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.” (Vers. 27 -31.)

Thus the first chapter of the prophecy applies to the state of the Jews, announcing the judgment, and gives the hope across the judgment that God will purge His people therein. This will be the means of gathering the nations.

Chapter 2.

In the last days the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. Some might think the law's going out of Zion might be by the gospel. But the gospel is not by the execution of judgment on the nations as here. God will deal with the nations by public judgment and righteousness on earth. (Vers. 1-4.) It is not the church, but the Lord who is spoken of; and this has evidently never yet been. They have dreamed these things for Christianity; but it is the judgment of God that is to bring all this about. (Compare Matt. 24:6, 7.)

The intelligent Spirit of prophecy always speaks as in verses 5, 6. “O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of Jehovah. Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.” The rejection of the people had not yet happened. Judgment begins at the house of God, but does not stop there. God will judge His people; and will He not judge the idolatrous world?

The nations boasted of their power and of their riches. They will be the first to be judged; but above all the so-called Christian countries, where profession is found highest, must be found at last the objects of the indignant wrath of God. When He exercises judgment on man's idols and pride, He resumes the course of His earthly government on the earth.

Chapter 3.

Divine judgment notices every detail of iniquity, oppression, and even vanity. All must be brought low.

Chapter 4.

God pushes the judgment and the ruin to the uttermost; but Christ the Branch of beauty and glory shall appear at that time for the remnant. All the wicked shall have been cut off. (Vers. 2-4.) The Branch of Jehovah shall be beauty and glory. The glory will be displayed over all the extent of the holy city. (Ver. 5.) Verse 6 describes an active protection on God's part. Those who remain after the purifying are saints, and the glory of God shall be manifested over the city that He has chosen to place His name there.

One can see in these four chapters the importance God attaches to the land. He takes cognizance of the iniquity of His earthly people, cleansing them by His judgment. He washes away the filth of the nations also.

This does not concern the church which will come again with Jesus in glory. Such is the position in which Christendom is found. Meanwhile, since the rejection of Jesus until He come again, God has visited the world by His Spirit to gather God's joint-heirs with Christ for heaven.

The nature of prophecy, which enters into the mind of God on the ruin and rejection of His people, is of all importance. It is what distinguishes the faithful who have the intelligence of Christ-faithful in the fallen state of things. Their conduct at the same time is directed and governed by the revelation they possess of another order of things to come.

Chapter 5.

There are two great principles presented in chapters 5 and 6: in the former the judgment God pronounces on the vineyard in reference to the fruits He must look for from it; in the latter the introduction of the glory of the Messiah, and what this glory demands from the people. Prophecy supposes a fallen condition, and would be superfluous if the state God established had no need of a special testimony. God bears witness against the state of things and gives promise in Jesus.

God considers whether the vineyard bears the fruit that a vineyard so cared for ought to bear. It is a general principle that applies to the Jews, to the church, and to each individual. If the church has received more than the Jews, God is entitled to expect that it produce more. When one takes the glory of Christ, one sees what ought to correspond to that glory. The two principles constantly turn up. God has formed the state of things, whether among the Jews or in the church, with reference to Christ.

Here is what God says of Israel: “Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered

out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come of Driers and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain upon it. For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and be looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." (Vers. 1-7.) The "well-beloved" is the Lord Jesus. God asks that people-even the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah-should judge between Him and His vineyard. He has done much for a nation that had a certain responsibility on the earth. He will accomplish all His counsels, but first of all He proves Israel to see if they will make good themselves the design of God.

But man always fails for what God expects from him, and He would have it seen what man is. God does all that man could ask, and this only manifests the ill will of man. Sacrifices, temple, service-God had arranged all. The people fail in all; and God destroys what He had Himself made. He breaks the fence. All that the father had the elder brother possessed. But God destroys what He had made, and He will accomplish all His counsels. (Lam. 2:1-9.) The Lord has cast off His altar, He has abhorred His sanctuary. His people having been unfaithful to His blessings, the means He had placed for the blessing of His people He has taken all away. When the people are far from God, they attach themselves to ordinances: it is the mark that all is going to ruin. From the moment that God is of little importance to the conscience ordinances become the objects of superstition and take the place of God. Here it is "the temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord!" When God is just about to destroy them, it is then men attach the more importance to them. God confided to man true privileges: but man fails: God takes all away, and the result is a judgment.

From verse 8 God enumerates the various sins which were in the midst of Israel. "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: that say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it! Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink; which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!" (Vers. 8-11, 18-23.)

The Israelites despise the warning of judgment; the wicked take advantage of the delay; just as the like was to happen in the last days of the Christian testimony. (2 Peter 3) But God does not hurry His counsel. He is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He knows well that He must judge at the end. Man attaches himself to his own wisdom, and as long as God does not chastise, man hardens his heart. God has done all for

His vineyard, but this producing nothing but wild grapes, He judges His vineyard on the earth.

The church is also on the earth ender responsibility here below. It has more light and more knowledge than Israel. This changes nothing as to the counsels of God, who commits His glory to the faithfulness of the church here below. If we do not represent aright this glory, judgment is impending on the church here below.

Instead of enfeebling the sense of our faults, the more that we feel the blessings, the dearer will be the glory of Christ to us; and the more also that we are alive to His glory, the more do we understand that the church here below must be judged as an economy here below. if anyone can say that the church has duly guarded the glory of Christ in the world, he must have lost the idea of what the glory of Christ demands, just as an unconverted person has no notion of what is due to the righteousness and holiness of God.

Chapter 75

Thoughts on Isaiah 6-7

Here it is a question of the glory of Christ, as we see by comparing John 12:40 with verse 10 of our chapter. The prophet sees here Christ as Jehovah of hosts who is manifested in the temple; the Spirit of God, putting together His glory and the state of His people, judges this state in reference to that glory. This is the Spirit of prophecy and of faith.

The unity and the condition of the church, do they answer to the heart of the Bridegroom Everything for us is to be in accordance with God. The state of His people, was it according to the glory of Christ which it is my privilege to share?

Woe is me for I am undone." He judges the state of the people, his own conscience being touched. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, &c. God establishes the prophet. The witness of prophecy consists in the setting forth of the holiness of God in the midst of His people. The live coal from off the altar had touched his lips, and his iniquity was taken away and sin purged.

There is a moment when the people of God become, as happened to the land of Pharaoh, the occasion of the outward manifestation of God's judgments: a serious and terrible thought, yet suitable. For where ought God to execute His righteous judgments if not where His light has been diffused and disobeyed? There must fall most stripes. (Luke 12) It is Christendom which is now charged with this responsibility. It is for these times the vine of the earth, the grapes of which shall be trodden in the winepress of His indignation. (Rev. 14) God will send them strong delusion. (2 Thess. 2:9-12.) It is just so here for the Jews of that day. "Make fat the heart of this people," not the Gentiles. (Ver. 10.) Christendom that received not the hive of the truth that they might be saved shall be judged in the same way. God will send them the working of delusion that they may believe the lie.

The judgment must go on to an entire desolation. (Vers. 11, 12.) There is a manifestation of glory, the prophetic testimony of purged lips, judgment on the people and land; but there is also the spirit of intercession, along with and by the Spirit of prophecy. Only we must remember that the Jews are to be restored on earth, the church will be glorified in heaven.

The Spirit of faith knows that it is impossible for God to abandon His people forever. He subjects them to judgment up to desolation; but says the prophet, "Lord, how long?" He knows that there is a term and that finally grace abounds for the people. There will be a tenth (ver. 13); then it is over again cropped down; but the holy seed, that is, the remnant, will be manifested. During winter the tree seems dead; but in spring when the grace of God renews its shining on the people, the tree recovers.

This prophecy was given in the year that Uzziah died, and iniquity began to draw near under Jotham. The spirit of faith is pre-occupied with the glory of God, does not hide sin, but counts on grace spite of sin. The principles which apply here are found again also for the church, though the details of application may not be the same. The church cannot say, Lord, how long? for the earth; but the responsibility of the vineyard, cultivated yet bearing bad fruit, abides. We may desire for

our souls intelligence in God's ways toward His people, and the application to ourselves and to the church of these great principles.

Nothing is more important for our souls than the church as an order of things here below for manifesting the glory of Christ during His absence. Our judgment on the state of the church should have as its rule the manifestation of Christ's glory as the Head in heaven. I cannot have a deep feeling of the benefits conferred by anyone without having the sense of the responsibility that results from the relationship. If we have unclean lips and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; we shall gain nothing by hiding from us the glory of Christ.

Chapter 7.

In general the prophets date their prophecies from the name of the kings during whose reign they prophesied. One always finds in their writings something which gave rise to their prophecy. Here it is the reign of Ahaz. The prophecy of Isaiah pertains to his last days.

Prophecy does not appear when the people walk according to God's mind. There might be a walk which appears good, but which goes little by little into evil. Before Israel made the fall of the golden calf, there was no need of a prophet, any more than during the leading of Joshua; for Israel enjoyed the goodness of God. When the state of the people is bad generally, God must encourage the remnant by prophecy, which is not only the revelation of things to come but also a testimony given. Prophecy is also a means of deliverance; it always condemns those in whose midst it takes place; it is the judgment of existing evil and the revelation of the method God is going to employ to deliver. Noah divinely warned condemned the world by building the ark; he prophesied the deluge for 120 years, because the wickedness of men was come to its height, and deliverance was in the ark. That judgment should be executed on the world, it was needful that it should be announced beforehand. Such is the principle. Prophecy is an appeal to repentance, for it is a manifestation which exists; it is not yet judgment, but still grace. There is always necessarily revelation for the faithful remnant from Him whose strength never fails. It is always Christ, in whom everything ends without exception: even all the course of this world concurs to the glory of Christ.

If we examine these two reigns, we see prosperity, and in part fidelity. It is said of Uzziah, “he did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah;” and the same of his son Jotham. God not having yet withdrawn His hand, there were blessings belonging to them; but look at what there was below. When the Spirit of God acts, He takes cognizance of evil and sees what sin is; He does not pass lightly over things and persons as the heart of man does, but wishes the good of the people and their conversion. Therefore does He take account of evil, and that before it is manifested; for He does not withdraw His hand till there is no remedy.

Such is the place prophecy holds in the ways of God, but at the same time it nourishes and strengthens faith by showing in the glory of the Messiah the remedy for all evil. All the moral power of prophecy is taken away if we do not consider the things to come without considering the action of God for the moment. Anna spoke of Christ to all those who, feeling the state of things, looked for redemption.

To understand prophecy one must understand what God says as He says it, just believing simply the things as they are said. It is because of not following this plain rule that people find so many difficulties.

There is one circumstance more, which shows God's attitude toward Ahaz and Hezekiah. Ahaz took away the altar which was before Jehovah and put in its place a pagan one. At that time the house of David being the last support, its fall dragged with it and displays the end of Israel; while Hezekiah who succeeded is like the resurrection for Israel, and displays the coming blessing for the remnant when Christ shall appear in His glory.

The Spirit of God thinks always of His people according to their privileges; when the heart is far from God, it judges otherwise than God does and according to its actual evil state. But God cannot do so. One must see the church as God formed it for Himself; and God cannot derogate from His holiness nor from the estimation He has made of it. Conscience cannot judge soundly if it judge according to its state and not its privileges; for it is according to our privileges that God always judges. When God judges, He compares the state of things present with what was when He set it up: and He sees only wounds and putrefying sores, and nothing whole. God judges and thinks according to our privileges; and we cannot judge soundly save when we judge as God judges, and this makes us humble.

“Make the heart of this people fat,” &c. (Isa. 6:10): when was this an accomplished fact? Seven hundred years later, after Christ and even the testimony of the Spirit had been rejected. Before the execution faith judges, and the judgment is in God's mind long before it happens. When the Christian is divinely warned by prophecy of the state of condemnation before the end, if he wait for it, all is lost. Prophecy supposes the knowledge of God, who was in relation with Israel till John the Baptist.

Let us now look back and compare all we have had with chapters vi., vii., and all the rest of the book. When Jehovah says (Isa. 1:24), “I will ease me of mine adversaries and avenge me of mine enemies,” He spoke of those in Israel. It is most terrible when the people of God take such a place as is not said of the poor sinner ignorant of God. There is a consuming fire for the adversaries. (Heb. 10:27.) God's people become of His judgments. There will be a remnant, but for the mass of the people judgment. Yet Zion shall be restored according to God's faithfulness. The separation of the remnant will take place at the end, judgment will fall on the people, not on the remnant. Those that return shall be redeemed by righteousness and Zion by judgment. It is a great mistake to think that chapter 2: 2-4 is yet accomplished. “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he shall judge, among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” There are two things: Jerusalem the center, and Jerusalem compared with what it was. Judgment must be executed; and Zion, delivered by this judgment, becomes the center of power, all nations flowing to it. In what follows one sees the moral judgment which was not executed till seven hundred years after it was pronounced. The day of Jehovah will be against all that is lifted up, for His Spirit judges all, and His hand will subject all to His power. It is only His people that are His enemy, none on earth like those who have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved, they will be faithful to Antichrist. There is nothing so opposed to God as what is near God, as we see in Judas. There

must be judgment on all that is proud and lofty. The haughty looks of man shall be humbled. If there is in our hearts a single object that we desire to exalt us, it will be judged and broken. That clay is against all the oaks of Bashan, &c.

Such is the sum given us in this book as to Jews and Gentiles, the first four chapters being introductory, with details in chapters 3, 4. Chapter 5 begins a pleading with God's people, chapter vi. interrupting the prophecy to give the prophet his mission, and chapters 7 to 9:7 the birth of Messiah in relation to Israel and the land, the Assyrian attacks, and the power of Messiah triumphant. Chapter 9: 8 resumes the chastisements on Israel with deliverance in the end, chapters 11, 12, for there is always deliverance after judgment.

From chapter 13 to 35 are the details of judgments on the nations, and of what will happen to Israel, that is, Judah and Ephraim, followed by the typical history of Hezekiah in chapters 36-39.

Chapter 40 begins with comfort for the people from Jehovah, with their chastening from His hand for their wickedness, first, in idolatry, next in rejecting the Messiah, and their glory and blessing when they repent and He is received. The thought of God does not stop till He has shown that grace over-abounds and till He sets His people in blessing. The way in which the Holy Spirit judges all is by referring all to His blessing if we have not full confidence in His goodness. One cannot have full confidence in His goodness without also having a full conviction of the sad state of God's people; if we avoid pronouncing this judgment on the actual state of things and on ourselves as sharing the same moral state, we cannot know all the goodness of God. Israel is taken as His witness against idolatry and also of the rejection of Messiah; so that the end is to identify the nations with Israel, and all that which is identified with evil shall suffer the effects of the evil. Two things shall happen together, terrible times and the return of Christ in power and glory.

We see in chapter 4: 3 that all the escaping of Jerusalem shall be written to life. There will be a manifestation of glory in this world, as in a little measure there was in the wilderness. “And Jehovah will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.” (Vers. 5, 6.) We have here the judgment of Israel and the glory manifested. The first four chapters give us the end of all as to Israel, but glory at last. Prophecy always supposes a state of displeasure on God's part, but blessing and glory after judgment. It was given to be believed and understood before accomplishment. If God charges anyone by a message, he must understand it before the judgment, else for him it is useless: to say the contrary is Satan's snare, for in understanding it only when accomplished, the moral effect is lost. To have God making known His mind in what does not touch ourselves directly, we have the great proof of His love and enjoy communion with Him, which always separates us more from a world about to be judged.

Jerusalem being the center of the things which must come to pass, one must be at the center to take in the circle. There was but one prophet sent to the heathen, Jonah to Nineveh. God ever sends warning before judgment, showing also the interest He takes in the creature.

Hear what the Spirit says in chapter 5. It is important to remark that it is always the Spirit of Christ. (1 Peter 1:10, 11.) We shall ever find allusion to Christ; and if we read without understanding that it

is Christ who speaks or is spoken of, they are lost for us.

In general prophecy applies as here to a people with whom God is in relation. God calling His people to consider their state, He would reveal His judgments to them, but begins by making them pay attention. “My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it,” &c. (Ver. 12.) It is the plaint of God in recalling to His people what He has done for them. This applies to our consciences. God has a right to look for fruit according to the pains He took, and if there were none, there must be necessarily judgment. God never stops at what is spoiled to repair the breaches; He looks at what He did at the beginning, and compares it with the actual state. Therefore does the Lord say to the angel of the church in Ephesus, “Thou hast left thy first love.” (Rev. 2:4.) What God demands of us is that we look at what He did at the beginning, and that we compare ourselves, not with the actual state that is spoiled, but with the fruits and testimonies given at the start; and if we do not bear these fruits, we are guilty, and here is the consequence. “Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.” The principle of verses 3, 4 applies also to the church.

The fact is that God's people are reduced to silence. Israel was placed under responsibility, as is the church; and, if enjoying all the privileges, they failed, all fails on man's part. God has chosen Israel for His glory on earth, and the church also for His glory in heaven; and we must not confound ourselves with Him. We have failed, but God will accomplish all in Christ. There is always man failing under responsibility and Christ who does not fail; and God executes by Him judgment on the creature, whether Israel or the church. Judgment will come before God accomplishes His purposes of glory.

“And now go to: I will tell you what I will do,” &c. (Vers. 5-7.) Judah was the plant of Jehovah's pleasure, but it brought forth wild grapes. God judges the vineyard, as also Christendom. We have enjoyed superior advantages, and, our Christian responsibility being greater, judgment will also be greater. God enters into details to show the righteousness of His judgments. It is not only covetousness ending in desolation, and corrupt luxury in death and hell, but excuses for iniquity growing up to contempt of divine judgment, as we see in the profane indifference of Christendom when men have God's warnings and think they will never be executed. “There shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?” (2 Peter 3:3, 4.) It answers to the insult of God in verses 18, 19. “Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: that say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it.”

Another character still is lack of discernment in good and evil. Satan brings about transgression and hardening of the conscience; his desire is always to darken the intelligence, as the desire of the Christian should be always more and more to judge according to God. It was the prayer of the apostle that the Colossians (chap. 1: 9) should be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. So Eph. 1:17. It is what distinguishes from those of whom it is here said, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Vers. 20, 21.)

“Because they have cast away the law of Jehovah of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel, therefore is the anger of Jehovah kindled against his people, and he hath stretched his hand against them and hath smitten them.” (Vers. 24, 25.) God does not strike all at once. He sends partial judgments, and since they do not awaken, worse judgments; but there is always before it forbearance and mercy on God's part. What God did at the beginning is the great principle that God recalls to His people. Therefore is He just in His judgments.

In chapter 6 is another principle. God speaks there, not of what He did at the beginning, but of glory. When I compare the state of the primitive church, I say, Where are we? I can also say, What glory! There is what God would give, and He shows the glory of God in His temple. Israel will be blessed by His manifestation and the enjoyment of this glory. But if the people is unclean, they must have only judgment and not glory. Read verses 1-4 for the manifestation of the glory of Christ Himself. They could not comprehend, because the heart of the people was grown fat, as we see in verses 9, 10. But where the glory was presented to Isaiah, he says, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.” (Ver. 5.) Such is the conviction of the prophet before God; he has the understanding of good and evil, instead of being overjoyed that he had seen Jehovah. This makes him say, Woe is me! The only thing that it becomes one to say is Woe is me! “Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” (Vers. 6, 7.) Because he is thus purged, the prophet is rendered capable of being a messenger and says to God, “Here am I; send me.” (Ver. 8.) “And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.” (Ver. 9.) From the moment it is a question of presenting the people, it is “Make the heart of this people fat,” &c. It is no longer a question of repentance. The time of judgment is come: repentance is for the remnant. This will be infallibly. Pharaoh was blinded that God might deliver His people; and for those who refuse to receive His testimony, God shall send them strong delusion. For He has been patient to the last degree, but they refuse instruction from Him. He deals with Christendom as with Israel.

God is long-suffering; for seven hundred years elapsed since the threat till its execution. When He sent the Heir, every means had been exhausted: I do not speak of efficacious grace. His people said, We shall have the world without God if we get rid of the Heir. If the Christian understands the mind of God, this separates his heart from the actual state of things, because he sees the course of this world which does not understand God. If the Spirit of God gives intelligence to the prophet and to us, one also understands that it is not forever. “Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and Jehovah have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a toil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.” (Vers. 11-13.) One must own that the judgment is just, but God is faithful. It is only for a time; though it will come, and though there be judgments, the church shall be in glory. So there will be a remnant of the Jews, but it will be anew consumed; they will come into the land, but the Gentiles will come also: as the oak and the teil-tree, which being cut down have still the trunk; “so the holy seed shall be their stock.” God guards His remnants.

When the prophet's mouth was purged, God tells him the judgment, when he turns to intercession. We ought to understand these principles and apply them, not to Israel only, but to the church and to each individual. The beginning of conversion goes well, but afterward —! One must judge oneself, or God judges us in His love, for He is always love. If God saves us perfectly in Christ, we are brought in to be the objects of His Father by government; and when a Christian walks for the glory of God, he is happy and can say, Send me; for God never fails for those who trust in Him.

Chapter 76

Thoughts on Isaiah 7-12

We find here not only the great principles of the government of God, but moreover the introduction of a personage (Immanuel, the Lord Jesus) on the scene of prophecy and the consequences of this introduction. God had raised up to Israel a stay in David. It was the last support of God's people on the earth. Before raising up the house of David, God had tried all means possible to maintain relations with His people. The priesthood had failed in Eli, the ark was taken, and God had pronounced Ichabod, The glory is departed. Samuel is brought in, and God abides by His channel in sovereign grace toward His people. Saul (“asked for") is unfaithful. Under priesthood, under royalty, under prophecy, in a word under all forms and all means that God had prepared, Israel always failed. Yet God raised up the house of David. Solomon fails. Though more faithful than others, his family also fails. God had promised to chastise it, but that He would never entirely withdraw His favor. Christ Himself has been the accomplishment of this promise as of all others. Man always fails to keep his relationship with God, but all is accomplished in Jesus. The family of David failed, and it is in Christ alone that the Jews find the blessing that is attached to it.

In the person of Ahaz the family of David abandons completely its fidelity. Ahaz associates himself with the king of Assyria, imitates the altar seen at Damascus, and places it in the very temple of God. When the family of David itself thus fails, and every hope is ruined, prophecy introduces the promise of Christ to be the support of the faithful. This sign was to be in the family of David itself. It is a fact of all importance. The Messiah, the Son of God, was to show Himself in Israel, and Israel to show itself unfaithful spite of the presence of Messiah. What is before us here is the house of David, not Israel alone. By iniquity the conscience is bad and faith is feeble. Ahaz does not ask for a sign. He makes a show of not wishing it by reason of piety.

Though the house of David failed, God does not at all fail; and He says to Isaiah, “Go forth now to meet Ahaz,” He intervenes at the moment the thing is necessary. Shear-jashub signifies the remnant will return. The people being unfaithful have no force against their enemies. But there, in the circumstances where all hope is taken away, God presents the promise that the remnant should be sustained by the testimony of God Himself. He comes in between the sorrowful circumstances and the faithful that his faith should not fail. At the extreme point of the misery God manifests Himself, and all is light. God would have it so; otherwise the heart rests on the flesh and forgets God. If the heart loved. God naturally, this would not be necessary; that is to say, it would not be necessary for every outward prop to fail His children, if their heart were only occupied with counting on Him; but the bent of the heart estranges from God. He had not yet delivered His people from the Assyrian; but where there is a lack of faith, the heart is fearful before the enemy, even before a powerless enemy. God shows comfort to His people. He has a perfect knowledge of all that is done and despises the strength of the enemy. He knows who Pekah and Rezin are, and that Damascus is head of Syria. When it is God who sends our enemies as a chastening against us, we have no strength against them. God knows all the difficulties. What is wanting is the faith which gives a perfect security against all the circumstances possible.

God points out the intentions of the two kings (vers. 4-6), intentions which perhaps Ahaz did not know. But God has, besides, His king at Jerusalem, and they will not succeed in setting up another. “Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within three-score and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.” (Vers. 7-9.) God knew all the details, as He gives Ahaz to see. Whatever Syria, Damascus, or Rezin might plan, it was not what God willed. On this all turns. What the Christian wants is consciousness of his relationship with God: then there is nothing to fear. It is not the strength of the enemy which the people have to dread, but their own iniquity which enfeebles them. The danger presented ends in nothing; but if we seek any support whatever in something of this world, God abandons us, leaving us to the consequences of our relation with the support we have chosen. Thus Pekah and Rezin had no strength against Judah, for God would not deliver Jerusalem to these confederate kings; but Ahaz fearful and unbelieving rests on Assyria, and it is from the Assyrian that Judah must be delivered. Meanwhile the true Deliverer, the real support, namely Immanuel, is revealed, when he failed who should have reigned according to God. Therein is a most important lesson.

God offers a sign to the feeble-hearted Ahaz and to the people seeking a prop apart from God. He would show to the worldling all that is possible for Him to show of grace and power; and He would make His children feel that their incredulity and unfaithfulness are without excuse. God bids the king ask a sign below or above (vers. 10, 11); but Ahaz (ver. 12) shrinks from being too near God and having a real proof that God was there, for fear of being obliged to follow Him, to abandon the outward supports of his infidelity, and to renounce everything but God. There is nothing that the outward people of God dread so much as nearness to God; though His nearness is a blessing without limit, the heart dreads it, because it will not quit what God condemns.

Nevertheless God will not abandon the house of David. He promises Immanuel. (Vers. 13-15.) The application of this promise concerns the house of David and the people of Israel, not here the salvation of the church. God gives the sign in spite of them. It is the birth of the Messiah. Ahaz did not wish God to be near him; but God would be with them, and Immanuel is the sign.

The two kings occasioned fear to Ahaz; but he on whom he sought to rest is sent as a chastening on him. (See 2 Kings 16) There is what one should fear-that God should take the rod. He will hiss for the enemy, for the fly far off in Egypt, for the bee in Assyria; He will shave as with a hired razor, “so as to sweep all clean. (Vers. 17-20.) God would be our strength: the heart of man never wishes it. The fear we have of evil befalling us makes us seek support in that which appears to us a way without danger; and these are the very things God employs to chastise us. The kings of Israel and of Syria came against Judah of their own will. God stops them. Ahaz and his people would lean on the king of Assyria; and God makes the Assyrian come against them in the end.

It is always what the will of man seeks that becomes the instrument of chastening. When the assaults against the people of God flow only from the will of man, there is nothing to fear. Beware of dreading the nearness of God: it is to be far from the source of all blessings.

Chapter 8.

Notwithstanding the grace of God abides toward His people. The scourge of God comes; but if He brings the Assyrian, He promises at the same time Immanuel. If Maher-shalal-hash-baz testifies to the Assyrian in making speed to the spoil and hastening the prey, God cannot abandon the house of David and Immanuel's land. (Vers-1-10.) The Assyrian shall go over and reach even to the neck; but no farther. God thereon vindicates against him the rights of Messiah, even as it is ever our resource that we are Christ's. This people had refused the softly flowing waters of Shiloah, they had despised the house of David, rejoicing in Rezin and Pekah, not in God's gentle way which keeps the heart ever dependent. If the flesh can have a support, it is in man, in what looks strong; it has no confidence if there be only God for the morrow. From the moment we would for tomorrow rest on a good thought of to-day, it is our own righteousness. God would have us be in appearance the most feeble, that He should be our only strength.

As they despised the waters of Shiloah, the Lord brings on them the waters of the river strong and many; He sends against them as their muter him on whom they leaned. Such is the end of man's wisdom. “Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us. For Jehovah spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.” (Vers. 9-12.) How busy is human prudence, and how vain! We are taught of God not to imitate this. The nations shall do all this, but their counsels come to naught, “for God is with us.” The one counsel for the faithful is Immanuel. “Neither fear ye their fear nor be afraid.” Their word shall not stand. The thought of the Assyrian is to do his own will, not that of God. All depends on this only word, Immanuel. What avails confederacy against Him? The Lord spoke in strength of hand. Therefore His word is, “Sanctify Jehovah of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And be shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.” (Vers. 13-15.) Give to God all the holy heed that is due to Him. Nothing then can shake us, because nothing can shake God. Yet is He in Jesus for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem—this because of their infidelity. They too did not like to have the Eternal near them. The introduction of the Messiah is in view of the power and the invasion of the Assyrian. (Compare Mic. 5) But the result for the mass of the people is that they reject Immanuel, and stumble on Him to their own utter ruin.

The remnant is separated, the testimony bound up and sealed. (Ver. 16.) The Eternal came Himself in the person of Jesus. He is the confidence, the sanctuary, of those that believe; He is a rock of offense to the unbelieving. Hence results a relation more intimate: “Seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon Jehovah, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from Jehovah of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.” (Vers. 17, 18.) The testimony is sealed there, while God turns away His face from the house of Jacob: nay more, “Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me.” They are for signs and for wonders in Israel.

The people have lost God who disowns them meanwhile, and, seeking light but finding none, they turn to familiar spirits and wizards. But the true heart, having Christ before it, cleaves to God and his word" To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Vers. 19, 20.) And then we pass from the anguish and darkness of despair for the Jew when he refused the Messiah to the last days when light begins to dawn once more. (Vers. 21, 22; chap. 9: 1, 2.)

Thus chapter 7 presents to us Immanuel heir of David's house and hope of the remnant which shall return (Shear-jashub); chapter 8, the land of Canaan in relation to Him. It is Immanuel's land. There the remnant separated; and the nations in misery and darkness, till the despised light re-appears in glory (chap. 9: 1-7), overleaping the mystery of Christ and the church of the heavenly places, after which the general history of Israel is resumed in continuation of the judgments of chapter v. Chapters 6-9:7 are a parenthesis to introduce Messiah.

We have seen in chapters 7, 8 Messiah born to reign. It is no longer only principles, or reasonings of God with His vineyard. There abides the absolute promise of God, though the son of the virgin, Immanuel, be rejected. Christ and His disciples, instead of being received, become a sign in Israel. Incredulity seeks a support, and this support becomes a difficulty and scourge, but there remains for faith the accomplishment of God's mind in Christ.

The waters of Shiloah being despised, the Assyrian comes into the country. The prophet with the two children is for a sign to the two houses of Israel. The Jews have in unbelief rejected Jesus, who is become a stumbling-stone to them, and their chastisement is in anguish and darkness. Two consequences result from this. The remnant could not enjoy the earthly promises made to the Messiah, but they have the testimony sealed up. Those who have rejected the testimony wander without light from God in the land which is trodden under the feet of the Gentiles. The Jews abide in bondage. Syria attacks Zebulun and Naphtali; it is the first invasion. Tiglath Pileser comes into Galilee; it is the second. But what follows is worse. Nevertheless the light shines in this land of the shadow of death; but all becomes graver still by the rejection of this light.

There is then a new element on which depends the lot of Israel. Christ has been there (Matt. 4:15), and He has been rejected. The election from among the Jews is based on this foundation. All the Jewish election is added to the church (Acts 2:47), in place of being saved for another end as in Mic. 5:3.

Christ having been manifested to but rejected by the nation, they are blinded. A judicial darkness is fallen on the Jews. His rejection by them opens the way for the election from among the Gentiles, whilst the elect from Israel are added to the church. Jehovah hides His face from the house of Jacob (chap. viii. 17); but the prophetic Spirit waits for Him to act in favor of Israel. The church anticipates the faith of Israel when the Messiah is rejected, believing in Him; and this even becomes the occasion of provoking Israel to jealousy.

If Israel had received Jesus, Israel would have been blessed; the wickedness of man would not have been proved, and Israel would not have lost their right to the promises. The wisdom of God places Israel under mercy like the Gentiles (Rom. 11), and opens thus the door to the Gentiles in accomplishing the promises. Jesus is minister of the truth of God for the Jews and of mercy for the Gentiles. (Rom. 15) We have pre-trusted in Christ (Eph. 1:12); that is, those of the Jews whose

hope was in Christ before the nation bows at the end when He is seen in glory. We have believed without seeing, in contrast with Thomas and Israel. Those who shall believe when they see Him are to be blessed, but are not to be in His glory. This changes nothing as to the promises on God's part. Israel had lost all right to the promises; but these abide, because God had sworn to Abraham, and He is faithful. He judges Israel, hides His face from Jacob; nevertheless He keeps all His promises, and Israel waits till judgment falls on faithless Christendom, as it fell on the Jews. God can resume His ways with His people, and Israel shall be blessed.

From the first to the second verse of chapter 9 the present economy is quite passed over, and we light on the accomplishment of the promises for Israel. It is a question of Israel and the world, not of the church. The prophetic Spirit waits for what God will do, and beholds across the ages the glory of Jehovah in the Messiah shedding His blessing on His people Israel. The first coming of Jesus has not accomplished verses 2-7. He has not delivered His people from the yoke of the Gentiles, the reign of the false king, or the efficacious lie of Satan. One often sees half a passage of the Old Testament cited in the New Testament, because the accomplishment of the other half is not arrived. Thus Christ is gone on high and has received gifts for men, but not yet‟ for the rebellious," that is, the Jews who will receive the rain of the latter season. All the present economy lies in the interval. It is no question at present either of Jews or Greeks, but of man, a new creation in Christ and called out of the world for heaven.

The Child was already born, the Son given; but Israel have not owned Him. When they are renewed, Christ will be owned, as born "unto us" and given "unto us." The church anticipates the people in all this; but for heaven.

There is here a principle of intelligence for prophecy to see how we can employ the passages put in the mouth of the Jews. In chapter 53:1-4 it is the Jews who esteemed Christ "smitten of God and afflicted." They said if He were the Son of God, let Him come down from the cross. Not so the believer, who enters into the enjoyment of the fruits of His suffering. "He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." It remains true that He died for the Jews as an elect nation, but also to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. These in the name of Jesus can say, that God caused the iniquities of us all to meet on Him. But Gentiles as such cannot say "we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" as grafted on the olive, they can now say what Israel will say by-and-by. The church can say more, for on our behalf Jesus sits on the throne not of David, but of His Father. We shall sit on Christ's throne, but not on the throne of David; to it we have no right whatever, not being of David's lineage. But we shall be seated on the more elevated throne of our Lord as the glorified Son of man. We are one with Christ the coming King and shall reign with Him, kings and priests to God, even His Father. In this sense it is not for us to say like Israel, "Unto us a child is, born," because we shall not be subjects of the kingdom but co-heirs with Christ the King, not the people reigned over but kings reigning with Him.

Christ has not yet the government here spoken of upon His shoulders, nor is there the increase of government and peace without end, nor is His name yet called Prince of Peace as here in the exercise of His functions. He is prince or originator of life whom God raised up from among the dead. He has not come yet to give peace in the earth, but a sword and division. He would have us fight, clothed with all spiritual armor. When Christ shall reign, He will be Prince of Peace as Son of

David, and peace shall be on the earth. Christ must have the pre-eminence in all things, and have every sort of glory, as Son of God, Son of man, Son of David, &c., all things put under Him, and not merely Israel or the Gentiles. We shall sit with Him on His throne, as now He sits on the Father's. Up to the present we are seated in heavenly places in Him, not with Him as yet, on high.

But He will also have the throne of David. God loves the people, and Jerusalem is the city of the great King: Jesus will have this glory, the church has it not. The Jews will enjoy it under His reign. It is an earthly state, and more limited. Jesus is also head of angels, and will have that glory too. He is personally the image of the invisible God, and Son of man, head over all things, as all the ends of the earth shall call Him blessed. (Psa. 72)

Jesus only took up the promises when risen, in a life to make all sure on the other side of the grave: a mere man could not do this. (2 Sam. 23:5; Isa. 55:3; Acts 13:34.) Jesus must introduce the blessing of God among creation. It is not here the Father and the Son, but Jehovah and the Son of David; and there is a counsel of peace between them both, to the end that creation should be blessed (Zech. 6:12, 13), Israel being restored to their own land.

We have been instruments of mischief to all creation, which now waits for the manifestation of the children of God for its, blessing and happiness too. We are gathered a kind of first-fruits of the new creation, while God hides His face from the house of Jacob. What gracious consideration in God towards us, for whom, having been in Adam the instruments of the ruin of creation, the creation waits, that we should be manifested with the Second man for the blessing! When Christ shall be Priest on His throne, the counsel of peace shall proceed for the blessing of the earth. As to us identified now with His humiliation, we shall be identified with His glory; alone, we shall see Him as He is in the intimacy of His love. The Jews will Lee Him as He shall be manifested in earthly glory.

In the expression of faith, as in the Psalms, mercy is always before righteousness, because Israel had failed completely in righteousness, and there must be recourse to mercy and grace.

We find in prophecy great principles of truth which can guide us, Christians, but also circumstances which do not concern us. Spiritual intelligence seizes the place of the church and the exaltation that God reserves for His Son Jesus, that all glory may center in Him. The Christian's heart is happy in seeing Jesus exalted everywhere and with all glory. The scriptures bear testimony to Him, and, in proportion as we apprehend better the glory of Jesus, the scriptures become more easy for us to understand.

Chapters 9: 8-12.

The Spirit of God has given in the preceding chapters the Messiah (hope of the remnant and deliverer from the Assyrian), whose presentation to the Jews changes all the conditions of the nation. He resumes now the prophetic history of the people of Israel. God has chastised His people, but this has not yet dealt with their pride: they confide yet in themselves. (Vers. 8-12.) The anger of Jehovah is not yet turned away, but His hand is stretched out still, for the people do not turn to Him that smites them, and has not discerned His hand. And till this is seen, there is resistance and a strengthening of self in one's own power.

There are three things in the chastenings of God's people: 1st, the instrument; 2nd, the enemy's malice; 3rd, the hidden intention of God. If one looks at the instrument, it is only to accuse, or to be

discontented. But even behind the malice of Satan there is the goodness of God. Sometimes the heart avows that the chastening is come in consequence of known evil, and then would just reform itself a little. But the hand of God abides stretched out still because there is no return to Him that smites, but the effort by a certain quantity of hypocrisy to appease God. The conscience has not been put in direct relation with God.

The consequence is (ver. 14) His cutting from Israel Lead and tail, branch and root, leaders and led. So God takes away even a Christian from this world as a chastisement. (1 Cor. 11)

When the people of God go wrong, there is always the spirit of false prophecy which would make them believe that all goes well. Men in authority love that they should not be discouraged: see the opposition to Jeremiah in Jerusalem. To this the false prophet lends help, to hinder the conscience from turning back to God, who would by chastening bring the conscience into direct, contact with Him. The spirit of falsehood would persuade that they are very happy. They that call them blessed are the misleaders. Those that are so called and believe them are swallowed up. (Ver. 15.)

When the people of God are in a good state, they have at heart the glory of God, without which they cannot be satisfied. It is not enough for them that there is no evil going on-this suffices man, but not the glory of God. There are still divisions and miseries because of their iniquities. (Vers. 18-20.) But the people is not yet turned to God, and His hand is stretched out still. (Ver. 21.) God does not crush His people even when He mites. He leaves some consolation. Nevertheless His people take up their pride again. (Chap. 10: 1-4.)

At last God calls the great instrument of His anger. (Chap. 10:5, &c.) The Assyrian is the rod of His wrath.

There are two phases in the history of the Jewish people. There is first the time when they are owned as the people of God, who chastens them by Egypt and Assyria, yet owns them. Later on He rejects them, and the people become Lo-ammi, Not-His-people. When Israel was carried away captive, it was Lo-ruhamah, but there was not yet an absolute cutting off as a people. When Nebuchadnezzar takes Jerusalem, the people became Lo-ammi. Israel is rejected. God no more owns His people. He watches over them still for final restoration to their land, but the times of the Gentiles begin.

Messiah has been presented to the Jews, but not to the ten tribes which had been carried away by the Assyrian. All the history whilst Israel is not owned belongs to the times of the Gentiles. Now in this part of Isaiah we leave aside the times of the Gentiles to follow Israel. God owns His people even in chastising them. The Assyrian is the instrument of the chastisement.

We see in Mic. 5:1-7 that, when the Assyrian shall come into the land, Christ the ruler in Israel will be found there, “the peace.” This is not yet arrived. He shall be the peace then when the Assyrian enters. There is a remarkable type of this final attack of the Assyrian in the history of Sennacherib against Hezekiah. Therefore it is that chapters 36-39 are given. The Holy Spirit takes the actual and real circumstances of the Jews to bind up with them the prophecy of the last days. When Sennacherib came, it was Hezekiah who was in Jerusalem. He is a type of the time when Christ is to be there.

God employs the pride and iniquity of the wicked for the chastisement of His people; and after wars He destroys the instrument. The Assyrian, God's rod to strike Israel, glorifies himself against God, who breaks the rod. So in the early part of this century Napoleon Bonaparte smote all the people of the Roman empire, but, being wrong, was after that smitten.

When the Assyrian shall have done his work, it is the ceasing of the indignation against Israel: an important point in Israel's history. The destruction of the Assyrian (not of Antichrist) is the end of Jehovah's anger. The Antichrist will have appeared and been judged before. The remnant shall return, the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God, who will search out and punish the glory of man's high looks on all sides, and shall make a consumption even determined in all the land. Christ will maintain Israel,

Chapter 11.

It is no question here either of Christ as head of the church or of the church's glory. He is presented as Messiah for the earth ruling, the judgment on the enemy being executed. He is not here called the Root of David, the source of blessing, but a Branch. In Rev. 5 He is the Root of David, in chapter 12. He is Offspring as well as Root. For the church He has a suited relation. He is not judging the earth yet. When He comes again, He will judge, and slay the wicked (Compare ver. 4 and 2 Thess. 2) Consequently Christ must be looked for to reign over the earth, ruling in righteousness and deciding with equity for the meek of the earth. Actually it is the haughty and unjust who possess the earth. Christ and His own have not yet His rights here below.

In verses 5-9 we see the fruit of the curse gone from the earth, which, by the presence of Christ and the Spirit poured from on high, shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. Christ is not here glorified above, nor is it the gospel here below.

Verse 10 is not at all realized yet. Christ is an object of reproach, not of glory. But “in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.” He will be the center and the Gentiles will seek Him then: now it is the hour when God the Father seeks true worshippers, a people from among the Gentiles for His name.

In that day not only will the curse of the earth be taken away, and the nations flock to Christ the exalted King; but “the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, froth Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” (Vers. 11, 12.) As He of old brought His people out of Egypt He will recover the remnant of them from the north and south, east and west. Ephraim and Judah will not only be re-united as a people, but in heart also (ver. 13), as they never have been.

From verse 14 we learn that the neighboring nations, which escape the last great Assyrian, or king of the north (Dan. 11:41), shall become objects of judgment to returned Israel, when they spoil their more distant enemies. The comparison of the two prophets shows exactness in detail, where unbelief sees only extinct races and thinks accomplishment impossible.

It is plain that verses 15, 16 can only apply to an earthly deliverance of Israel like that out of Egypt.

Chapter 12.

Here we have a song of praise and thanksgiving for their deliverance. “Thou shalt say,” &c. (ver. 1) means unequivocally Israel. God's anger has not only turned away and ceased, but He is their salvation. (Ver. 2.) For all Israel in that day shall be saved. Therefore with joy they draw water out of those exhaustless wells and say Hallelujah. (Vers. 3, 4.) But it is Jah Jehovah, not the Father as we know Him now through the Lord Jesus. The effect of their deliverance is that His glory as the Eternal is known in all the earth. (Ver. 5.) The Father is known in His family, not in all the earth as such, though by His children everywhere. But here it is the kingdom, and He is known as the Holy One of Israel in Zion. Jehovah reigns, and by Israel He makes Himself known in all the earth.

If one have well seized these two chapters, we cannot confound what is said of Israel and of the church. Christ as the Judge of all must have slain the wicked with the breath of His lips (see chap. 30: 33) in order that the blessing should come to pass. Otherwise we confound the kingdom of Christ's patience with the kingdom of righteous government. If one makes the church believe that this happy time is come, and that she is to make good all these things, it is to mislead the faithful and to encourage unbelievers. For natural pride is increased by these misapplications of what can only be realized by Christ's coming to reign. Our place meanwhile is to suffer with Christ.

Here we can remark the force of 2 Peter 1:20: no prophecy of scripture is of its own [particular] interpretation. It is not a question of Nineveh, &c., nor of any other thing in or by itself, but finally of the glory of Jesus, where all meets and all ends. It speaks of a vast and connected system of glory which must be taken as a whole, even as the Spirit wrote it.

Chapter 77

Thoughts on Isaiah 13-18

In the preceding chapters we have the relationship of God with His people closed by the manifestation of Christ in glory. Here begins a new prophecy, which presents to us the relationship of Israel with the nations. This series of the prophecy goes from chapter 13 to the end of chapter 17, terminating with songs of joy and deliverance, as in the first section.

Chapter 13

The first of these predictions begins with what is in contrast with Zion-begins with Babylon, and the answer to the messengers of the nations, which is in chapter 14, that Jehovah hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall betake themselves to it, when Babylon is destroyed.

Babylon is not only the capital of Nebuchadnezzar and of the habitable world. It is Babel, signifying confusion. It is there men are united to exalt themselves and make themselves a name and a reputation in the world. At the end all the world sets itself to get exaltation for which commerce furnishes the means; and everything there, men's bodies and souls, will be for sale, as we see in Rev. 18. The Spirit of God taking the city of the Chaldees as an occasion gives the mind of God on the city of idolatrous corruption and pride up to the end, and even brings in here future circumstances of which history presents no accomplishment, and whose order is the contrary of that which is already arrived. Thus the Assyrian, if we follow the history, was destroyed before the grandeur of Babylon; whilst the Spirit speaking of what will happen in the last days tells us that the Assyrian is to be destroyed after Babylon. In the time of the prophet Babylon had not yet any pretension to be the capital of an empire, but a provincial city or at most a secondary power, seeking independence of Assyria, and at times gaining it, till it at last became not only aggressive but supreme.

In verse 5 the fall of Babylon is announced as the day of Jehovah. That which will happen in that day is indicated in verses 6-12. There is all that the world has to look for.

One sees in the world either the arrogance of him who has the upper hand, or the envy of him who is below. God will cause to cease the pride of man in both ways; He will punish as here, not the dead only, but the living, the habitable earth, all that from which the world draws its glory. Its great chiefs, its victories, its wealth, ease, luxury, splendor, what is it but arrogance and self-exaltation? That day will be blessed for those who are poor in spirit, because they will enjoy peace; but the destruction will be so great that a man will be more prized than the gold of Ophir.

“Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove,” &c. (Vers. 13-22.) All this is “a promise” to the Christian. (See Heb. 12:25, 26.) If he is in his place, he is separate from all the interests of the world, he belongs to heaven, to Jesus, which cannot be shaken. The world passes away, and God will make it cease, and this will give rest. It is for us a “promise,” as we have seen. Jesus speaks to us from heaven and makes us this promise of shaking once more not the earth only, but also heaven; because all that which surrounds us is an obstacle which hinders us from enjoying what Jesus has promised us. Christians hasten this time by their faith. God would have

us wait for it because His patience is great, and the work of saving souls still goes on here below. (2 Peter 3) If the destruction of all the world-system is not a promise to us, it must be that we are attached to what is on the earth. There is a kingdom which cannot be moved and which will move all others: and it is for this that Christian simplicity waits. Can we truly desire as the accomplishment of a promise that God should shake the heavens and the earth? Are our hearts attached to not one thing which shall be the object of that destruction? May God make us see the end of it, that our hearts may be separated from all that is going to be destroyed!

Chapter 14.

When God acts in judgment, there is always care taken of His people. “For Jehovah will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of Jehovah for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were: and they shall rule over their oppressors.” (Vers. 1, 2.) When the devastation of the habitable world takes place, there will be the deliverance of the people of God, Israel, who will take possession of the earth.

From verse 3 to the 23rd there is a beautiful picture of the fall of Babylon's king in its last representative—the beast of the close. The prophet takes occasion from events at hand in that day; but no prophecy of scripture is made to be of its own interpretation, none has been fully or entirely accomplished. And the reason is that the Holy Spirit has always Jesus and His kingdom in view. God has always the Second man in His mind. Even the first prophecy, that the woman's Seed should crush the serpent's head, is not yet fulfilled. All that there is in God's word points onward to the glory of Christ.

There is a crowd of prophetic examples in the word of God, where but half is accomplished. Thus Psa. 8 is not yet accomplished in verses 6-9. We do not yet see all things put under His feet. (Heb. 2) Again Psa. 68 is not yet accomplished fully; hence the apostle omits “for the rebellious also” in Eph. 4, because it will apply to the Jews in the latter day. It would be to lose the purpose of God to believe the prophecies accomplished on this side of Christ's glory; for it would give to prophecy a particular interpretation.

In verses 12-15 we see that, as long as “the beast” is on the earth, he passes himself off for God. Nevertheless he is doomed to destruction. (Ver. 19.) God has but to give the signal, and he who broke kings like reeds is himself a broken reed.

To the Christian Christ is the true Morning Star; but “the beast” claims to be so. He attributes to himself all the glory of Christ. All these details here vaunted in verses 12-15 are true of the Lord Jesus; but the last holder of the power, given first to Babylon's head, would also ascend into heaven, and sit too on the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north, taking possession of Christ's kingdom in Zion. Compare for part of the language Psa. 48:2: there was the city of the great king. The beast would also possess himself of Christ's heavenly glory, and be like the Most High; but He who is Son of God and Son of man will overthrow the man of the earth, who shall cause no more fright after that. (Psa. 10:18)

The beast and the false prophet being destroyed, Christ is King in Zion. In due time comes the destruction of the Assyrian, as we see here in verses 2427. “Jehovah of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass: and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then snail his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For Jehovah of hosts hath purposed, and, who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” The Assyrian is no less senseless in rising up against Christ associated with Israel, the Prince of princes. The indignation is accomplished then, and Israel long chastised is owned of God. When Christ reigns in Zion, Israel is owned, but all the enemies are not yet destroyed. That which follows the destruction of Babylon and the beast is the destruction of the Assyrian, or king of the north. It is a mistake to confound the little horn of Dan. 7 with the little horn of Dan. 8, which last elevates himself not against the God of gods, but against the Lord of lords. For the indignation to cease completely the Assyrian must be destroyed. (Mic. 5) He will trample down the Assyrian in His land, because He owns Israel for His people. God will assert in the person of Christ all His rights over the earth.

In verses 28-32 is the judgment of the. Philistines, the remains of the Canaanites. Hezekiah labored for their submission. The Lord Jesus will finish it by a destruction more terrible when He stablishes His throne in Zion. When Babylon, the Assyrian, and the Philistines are put down finally, the poor and needy remnant shall lie down in safety, and Zion shall be their bulwark. (See Psa. 132) Never in God's word does that mountain mean anything but itself, being wholly inapplicable to the church.

Chapters 15, 16.

From chapter 13 we have begun to see Israel the center of all the providence of God in the world in contrast to all the other nations. Deut. 32 shows Israel as the center of God's ways in the world. In antiquity there is no profane history of any importance which is not in connection with the Jewish people. God has a people in the midst of whom He governs and manifests His ways and the consequences of His character. This is true of Israel and the church. All that happens to them is the manifestation of the principles of God's government. God abode visibly in Israel, His throne was there. He abides by the Spirit in the church. He acts always in government in the midst of His people; it is there He would manifest Himself and not abide only in heaven.

From the moment God is in Israel He identified Himself with His people. In consequence of this the nations are treated according as they treated Israel. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,” says the King. The moment they, touch Israel, they touch the apple of His eye. In all these chapters we see the relations of Israel with the nations, and the nations judged of God because they trod down His people, though He used them also to punish His people. But the world enters not into God's mind and assails His people, because they are not unfaithful to Him but hateful to them, as they would swallow up all they have. When His people are unfaithful, God sends a testimony to them, as Jeremiah, but they accuse him of conspiring against them, of weakening them, &c., because he tells them that in consequence of their departure from God He will give them over to the Chaldeans.

Here we have Moab wasted and cut off with bitter sorrow, the more humiliating after all their pride. And the very burden which proclaims Moab reduced hopelessly declares that David's throne shall be prepared in mercy with One sitting on it in truth, judging and seeking judgment and hasting righteousness.

Chapter 17.

Next comes the burden of Damascus and the degradation from a city to a ruinous heap. In verses 4-6 we see the judgment of Israel, but gleaning grapes are left there. God chastises His people till they cease to rest on their own strength, instead of relying on God alone. Yet when dwindled down to a remnant of two or three here and four or five there, they shall look to Himself, the only source of strength, the Holy One of Israel. For their idolatry they had been desolated. But in the hour of their desperate grief, when nations seem once more ready to engulf and overwhelm them, rebuke comes, and the rushing multitudes are as chaff before the wind. (Vers. 12-14.)

When God's people are faithless, they are able to act even after the prudence and wisdom of the natural man. When they do not rest on God, they are feebler than the world; and when they are given over to a chastening, they are immediately broken to pieces.

The prophet Habakkuk demands the judgment of God, because he is broken-hearted at seeing iniquity in the dwelling of righteousness. When God says He will punish and shows the prophet the desolation of His people, Holdest Thou Thy tongue, says the prophet, when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? Jehovah answers, The just shall live by his faith. Our relations with God, because He dwells in the midst of us, bring His judgment on men because of what they do to the people of God.

Chapter 18.

It is needful to remember the position of the land of Israel. The rivers of Cush are the Nile and the Euphrates, which represent the two nations on the frontiers of Israel that had oppressed them, Egypt and Babylon.

The country here summoned, “shadowing with wings” (ver. 1), is beyond those rivers. It was a country unknown at the time when the prophet lived, and was consequently in no connection as yet with Israel; but it will be so in the last days. To shadow with wings is an expression often employed in the word of the Lord for marking protection. It will be a powerful nation undertaking to protect Israel.

The great nations of those days occupy themselves with the Jews. (Ver. 2.) From the time the nations. begin to be the object of God's judgment, they will be crushed. (Zech. 12:1-3.)

“All ye inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the mountains” (ver. 3): God summons attention to that which He is going to do. “See ye when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.”

“For so Jehovah said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling-place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.” (Ver. 4.) We see what God will do when the nations, following their own policy, will have restored the Jews to their land. He lets them act, and keeps quiet, but He keeps His eye on His dwelling-place.

“For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches.” (Ver. 5.) It is not yet judgment, so all comes to nothing, whatever the promise, as in all human things when God is concerned. (Cf. Isa. 6:10.)

“They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.” (Ver. 6.) The people are brought back to their land to be given over as a prey to the nations, like wild beasts in winter or ravenous birds in summer. Such will be their fate when anew returned to Palestine, for God is not yet putting His hand to it. Jerusalem will again be the central object of political schemes for the world, though the world despises God's people, and never occupies itself with them but to exalt itself. The Jew will be oppressed by the Gentiles once more in their land; but deliverance is at hand.

“In that time shall the present be brought unto Jehovah of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of Jehovah of hosts, the mount Zion.” (Ver. 7.) A present is to be brought of Israel and from Israel to Jehovah. They will bring an offering and themselves be as it were an offering to Jehovah, who will manifest anew His abode in Zion (after all the long sorrows and desolations), but also His hand in judgment of the nations. After this will begin His relationship with Israel for everlasting blessing under Messiah and the new covenant. The mount of Zion is the place God has chosen, in contrast with Sinai, the mountain of the nation's-responsibility and ruin. (See Heb. 12) At Sinai God gave, not His promises, but His law, and Israel stood afar off and fell under its curse. Zion is quite another thing. Israel failed under Moses and Aaron, the Judges, Eli, Samuel and Saul, under priest, prophet, and king. But David is chosen in sovereignty and places the ark of God in Zion, which becomes the display of royal grace on earth, after man in every respect had failed in his relations with God.

The mountain of Zion is for the earth the same thing in principle (save royalty) as heaven is for God's relations with the church. The majesty of God no more requires righteousness in man. It establishes itself in grace on the earth when man broke down in everything. This will be true in all, though we shall not be there but above. Jehovah of hosts, that is, the God of government here below, will place Israel, not the church, in connection with the mount Zion. The Father will have us with the Son in His house on high as His children, instead of governing us as His subjects on the earth. It is always important to distinguish our part from that of the earthly people; if not, we necessarily lower our calling, our privileges, and our responsibility.

God puts Himself in relation with the world as King by means of His people Israel.

Chapter 78

Thoughts on Isaiah 19-25

Chapters 19, 20.

There is a change to be noticed, in that from this point the Spirit of God does not so much give us the deliverance of Israel as the desolation of the nations in question. Here in chapter 20 it is the burden of Egypt, its judgment and its blessing, when not Israel only but Assyria, their then conqueror, shall be blessed. If ruin befell that land meanwhile, if anarchy followed, if cruel lords after this oppressed, grace will succeed and bless in the end. But how complete the change when the land of Judah shall be a terror to Egypt, &c. (chap. 20: 17), a thing never yet fulfilled! On the contrary Egypt dominated the Jews under the Ptolemies, as of old under the Pharaohs. When Israel becomes at length the inheritance of Jehovah, both Egypt and Assyria shall oppress no more, but come into special relationship and blessing from God. Chapter 20 is but the sequel, marking by a sign in the prophet's person the vanity of hoping in Egypt or Ethiopia against Assyria.

Chapters 21, 22.

These two chapters introduce us to God's mind by showing the contrast between Babylon “the desert of the sea” and Jerusalem “the vision of peace.” The idea of the Holy Spirit speaking of Babylon is that it becomes a “wilderness,” the “sea” in prophetic language signifying the mass of peoples.

It is in Jerusalem that the Holy Spirit sees the glory and the peace of Christ, Salem as is well known meaning peace. The confusion is evident historically, if one essays to consider the prophecy as a whole already accomplished, however visibly Babylon's fall is given. It is plainly here a question of God's ways in times to come. All the events are brought together here without any reference to the chronological order of the past, but in the relation that they will have among each other to the last days. For Jerusalem falls after Babylon, the inverse of history. We find here instruction for ourselves now.

In chapter 21 we see God preparing a rod of vengeance for Babylon, as of chastening in the following chapter for Jerusalem, where the power of evil was displaying itself after another way.

How instructive for the soul which like a sentinel pays attention to that which God is going to do in His government of the earth Men are of no value and know nothing at all: all their wisdom and their prudence only contribute to bring about the result that God has prepared for the manifestation of His glory in the person of Jesus, in the midst of the Jewish people. Prophecy makes us understand that all is judged in the world, and that all the world's course is but “the desert of the sea.”

In Babylon had the Jews been captive; and there is found the pride and glory of the world. It has been thought that Babylon will be literally re-built by the unbelief, which will vaunt itself against God to show that what has been said of Babylon is not true. But if so, this will draw the final judgment on it.

Verses 11, 12. Dumah, or Edom, has a perpetual hatred against God's people. His people may be in an extremely poor state, and the world say with insolence against them, Where is your God? Here is the answer of the Spirit of God to this insolence. (Ver. 12.) “What of the night?” The Edomites spoke against Jerusalem, not because it was corrupt, but just because it was the city of the great King.

For us the night will soon be past, the morning will come. It is still the night as to the world. For the people of God the morning comes; it is their hope and their consolation. But for the world it is a question of the night. So long as Jesus was in the world He was the light of the world, but the night is there since Jesus is there no longer.

The insolence of enemies serves to exercise and strengthen faith; it recalls to the child of God what his privileges are and his position. If the people of God are unfaithful, God chastises them, and may call them Lo-ammi (not My people); but in presence of the world one remembers that they are notwithstanding the people of God. Jacob had often been unfaithful and chastised in every way; he says to Pharaoh, Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been; yet he blessed the king. Jacob as God's servant and chosen, though wretched and feeble, was in a position superior to that of the king of Egypt. The feeblest child of God is superior to the world in all its glory and strength. The church is unfaithful and has lost the manifestation of the favor of God. This should be subject of humiliation. But if the world is insolent, we can answer to it, “The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.”

These are the counsels of God, and the character of God who acts in His government according to the conduct of His people. He has manifested His character in showing an admirable patience till there was no remedy. As to this world where God manifests His ways, the church is responsible and treated according to its responsibility. As to heavenly glory the church cannot fail any more than the grace of God which calls to it.

The burden of Arabia follows in verses 13-17; all the glory of Kedar shall fail.

In chapter 22 comes the burden of the valley of vision. What is this that happened to Jerusalem? What is it that they expect? “What aileth thee now that thou art wholly gone up to the house tops?” (Ver. 1.) To-day also is the world on the house-tops, looking out; and the church so called no less than the world, for each feel, that all is crumbling.

Verse 4. The prophetic Spirit does not hide the evil, but in place of rejoicing over it like Edom, it is afflicted, and weeps bitterly, as Jesus wept over Jerusalem. This is ever the effect of intelligence in the ways of God. There is no need of prophecy but when things go to wreck. It awakens the affections of the heart. The spirit which is in us answers to the Spirit of prophecy, which is the expression of God's affection for His people. One loves with God; and there is always a great sweetness in this fellowship of thoughts with God, where the subject of them is painful.

Verse 5. God demolishes the wall, He rejects His house, His altar. It is the judgment of God which leaves Jerusalem a prey to the Gentiles. If there is evil, God cannot manifest His favor. He can restore His people, but He cannot glorify them in the world if they are unfaithful.

Verses 8-11. All that the wisdom of man can suggest to him is to fortify the wall God broke down. They take wise measures, they make a ditch for the water of the old pool.” It is very prudent to

hinder the water flowing outside the city to refresh their enemies. But with all this wisdom they forgot to look to the Maker and fashioner of it long ago. “And in that day did the Lord Jehovah of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by Jehovah of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord Jehovah of hosts.” (Vers. 12-14.) Such is the result. The prophetic Spirit seeing this cannot but weep for the ruin of the daughter of His people. It is a spirit of humiliation. The history of the same acts is presented to us in the Chronicles as a proof of blessing, and it was such on Hezekiah; but the worm was at the heart, and the people did not return to Him who struck them, but all went from bad to worse. In comparing this with the history, there is not a passage which bears more on the heart than the judgment God here pronounces on the efforts of man to reestablish what God would break down.

From verse 15 to the end I do not doubt that one should see in Shebna Antichrist set aside for the Messiah typified by Eliakim (that is, the God of resurrection). All the glory great or small attaches to Jesus on the throne of David; and all the power of Antichrist shall be cut off. Till Jehovah speaks, Antichrist looks strong and sure, and he counts on the future; but from the moment God speaks, he falls. (Ver. 25.)

We have also the judgment of the city. But we see the fall of Babylon necessary in order that Jerusalem should appear on the scene, though its state be one of perplexity and distress, desiring and undertaking to restore things, but God blowing on all. And all falls with Antichrist; when God sets up the throne in Jesus and gives His blessing to all the earth.

We see in these chapters how God destroys the insolence of man and judges the unfaithfulness of His people. The world's insolence as to God's children ought not to shake their confidence, but on the contrary to strengthen it. For God takes knowledge of everything; and their cause is that of God, who will be glorified in them to the end.

Chapter 23.

In chapter 23, we see the burden of Tire. The immediate aim was the capture of this great seat of ancient commerce by Nebuchadnezzar; but the Spirit of prophecy does not stop with Jehovah's purpose then against its merchant princes) when the honorable of the earth were brought into contempt and the pride of all glory stained, and the ships of Tarshish smitten in their strength. Whatever the re-appearance of Tire after the overthrow of the Chaldean, the prophecy looks onward to a brighter day when her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to Jehovah.

Chapter 24.

Since chapter 13 we have in general judgments on the nations, and have seen the Jews given up for the Gentiles, the beasts of the earth, to winter upon them. Here we see judgment on Israel: from verse 13 it extends to all the earth and the isles of the sea. At that time the resurrection will be, and after the judgment blessing. How many Christians walk as if the coming of the Lord was a fable, without a thought that the present age is an evil one! It is sad that through lack of spirituality so it should be with saints. If their affections were only set on heavenly things, things here below would no longer act on them.

The counsels of God are manifested in the ways of God. One may begin to retire from the world by the precepts of the gospel; but prophecy confirms these precepts by the light it casts on the world: then these precepts separate us, showing their practical value.

It is a question at first of the men of Judea. But all nations of the earth will be occupied with Jerusalem and gathered there where the judgment of God is to fall. From the land the transition is to the prophetic earth, and then to all the world. (Vers. 3, 4, &c.)

It is a frightful character in the joy of the world that it cannot subsist before God. His presence puts an end to all that the world loves and desires. How terrible the thought if realized by faith! Bring in the manifestation of God, and the world's joy, gaiety, pleasure is all destroyed. (Vers. 7-12.) The Christian ought to abide in complete separation from all that. It is important that the testimony borne against, not the world only, but worldly Christians, should be distinct and positive. With a worldly person, not bearing Christ's name, one thinks at least of speaking to him of grace. But to a Christian who, knowing his privileges, walks with the world, it is hard to speak of grace, because he abuses it. Love does not consist in walking with such, but in warning them. That which gives intelligence is the unction from the Holy One. It is not possible to walk in the light and in worldliness. One must show oneself more decided with the Christian who is worldly than with the worldly man: “If any man that is called a brother be.... with such an one, no not to eat.” (1 Cor. 5) There is love. If we believe that God is going to judge Sodom, how could we be at ease in Sodom with Lot? This is of all importance to-day.

The latter portion shows the consequence of the vintage for a little remnant. If one passes across the world, one sees how God is forgotten. Before executing judgment God separates from the perverse generation which is about to be judged those who are going to be saved.

If a Christian passes through the world, there is nothing to find there which speaks of Christ; and he is called to confess Christ where no one thinks of Him. Do you believe that, when the judgment shall have fallen, what will remain will be only as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done? The Holy Spirit reveals to us beforehand what the reality will manifest, the glory of Christ, the ruin of the world, the blessing of the remnant. It is evident that the judgment of God will effect a total separation between the righteous and the wicked. If the Holy Spirit acts with power, that is realized beforehand in us. The effect of judgment is to give a glory and a joy without mixture.

From the moment that judgment is executed, God appears as the Jehovah-God of Israel. (Ver. 15.) Verses 16-18 show the state of the Jewish people. Man may vaunt himself long against God, but he will not escape judgment when the Eternal is manifested. “The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.” (Vers. 19, 20.) Such is the end of all that surrounds us.

But there is more: “And it shall come to pass in that day that Jehovah shall punish the hosts of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.” The high ones are spiritual wickedness on high, or in the heavenlies, the source of the evil; the kings of the earth are the chief instruments here below. “And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in

Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." (Vers. 22, 23.) The glory of Jehovah replaces all the false glitter of the world.

Chapter 25.

This is the song of Israel which corresponds with the subject. We have need of long patience. The counsels were of old; they are faithfulness and truth; they are not yet accomplished, but they will be manifested in all their precision and solidity according to God. 2 Peter 3 shows us the world clinging to visible things: the sun rose to-day, as it did yesterday and will to-morrow, and with more prosperity still in hope. Let us eat and drink, say they; the things that are have ever been, and nothing is so permanent: the earth, the world goes on forever. So men speak and act. The child of God, on the contrary, rests on the firmness of God's word. By His word the world was made; by His word it has been judged and will be destroyed. If we judge by the events before us, as incredulity does, we shall attach ourselves till the last moment to the things about to pass away. If I conclude from experience, I try to make the best of things around me, instead of adhering to the word of God. It is a principle of all-importance. Faith separates from evil, because it is evil; but it is quite a different thing to separate from a thing because God is going to judge it. One sees Christians who do not recognize evil until they are injured by it. But one ought to recognize evil beforehand by the word of God, in order not to be in the midst of evil when it shall be judged. It is not the man entangled by evil who can put his brethren on their guard.

In verses 2-8 we have the things that God does in that day. Not only will He put down wickedness and pride, but He will make unto all people a feast of fat things, that is, a full blessing; and He will destroy in the mountain of Israel the covering that covers over all people-an expression very applicable to the day when a chastening God will send men strong delusion that they should believe a lie. Moreover He will swallow up death in victory, wiping away every tear and taking away the rebuke of His people from off all the earth. This is applied in 1 Cor. 15:54 to the first resurrection of which the apostle treats throughout. All is presented together in a general way. We may so, for the Eternal has spoken, and it is our blessedness to believe God when there is only the word of God for our faith. The world will think only of what it likes; man believes Satan and despises God, who demands faith, in His word; and we believe God in the midst of all the illusions, and the wiles of the devil by which we are surrounded in this world. We must believe God though encompassed with the effects of sin. Adam believed Satan though encompassed with the effects of the goodness of God. Faith gains the victory over the world, and acts in face of that which is not, as if it already existed.

Comparing verse 8 of our chapter with 1 Cor. 15:54 we see something different in tone from the resurrection of the wicked, who are to be by rising again plunged in the lake of fire, the second death. We clearly see here Israel restored at the time of the first resurrection. All the brightness of the sun will be as nothing in comparison with the glory of Jehovah, when the covering of darkness shall be removed from the nations. For God will have delivered the Gentiles to blindness. (Rom. 1; 2 Thess. 2)

In the two chapters that follow are given the blessing of Judah, and the destruction of Satan, or leviathan.

Chapter 79

Thoughts on Isaiah 26-30

“In that day” (ver. 1) is an expression of frequent recurrence which marks the time of accomplishment. “In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah.” Israel becomes again the center of God's government for the earth. (Deut. 32: 8.) At present the nations have the upper hand: these are the “times of the Gentiles;” but at length Judah re-appears on the scene as the object of God's counsels.

Though Israel has been for a time delivered to the nations as to fierce beasts of prey, nevertheless the nations are not the direct object of the government of God, whilst providence directs everything. From Psa. 67 and many other scriptures we learn that the face of God must shine on Israel in order that His way may be-known in the earth. When God strikes the nations, they are set aside, and He resumes the course of His government toward Israel. God overthrows the power of the Gentiles, and as to Israel shows Himself to be Jehovah, the Eternal.

“The way of the just is uprightness” (ver. 7)-of him who walks faithfully.

The immediate government of God takes place only in the midst of His people. Them God judges; and when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world. Every act in the life of the Christian has its consequence. God judges immediately, and the unfaithful Christian has not a path of uprightness. This is what Israel has already proved, as it will prove more. God smooths the way of him who is faithful.

The remnant of the Jewish people will have waited for Jehovah, spite of Antichrist and all the difficulties. Psa. 44 shows the anguish of the remnant at this time. God has to chasten them; nevertheless they are watched tenderly by God. Jesus perfectly realized this waiting of the faithful which counts on God, what ever the anguish to which obedience might bring Him Never did He turn aside from the path of obedience although it led Him on to drink “the cup.”

“The inhabitants of the world” will only learn righteousness (ver. 9) by the divine judgment which strikes the earth. The Christian ought to take his part in suffering; if he walks with the world, he does not understand the interests of Christ and is weakened, he has not the desire for the glory of Christ and does not suffer for Christ. “The inhabitants of the world” are not of God; their portion is on the earth, they enjoy this world. We (Christians) are the dwellers in the heavens, or at least belong to heaven (1 Cor. 15:48; Phil. 3:20), though too often Christians learn the ways of the dwellers on earth. God waits till iniquity reaches its height before striking; meanwhile the wicked will deal unjustly still.

“The land of uprightness” (ver. 10) is what is promised to Israel, Canaan under the Messiah.

The wicked fail to see the uplifted hand of Jehovah (ver. 11) until it falls upon them, when they shall see. As to the result here below, grace does not accomplish the conversion of the world. Every hope of the world's conversion by the gospel is without ground in the word of God; and it is even worse with Christendom, hardened as it is against the truth, than with pagans. Christendom

as it refuses the love of the truth will receive a spirit of error.

The Jewish remnant (vers. 12, 18) have nothing but the name of Jehovah to boast. There are moments in life for the saint where nothing but that remains for the soul.

The nations which ill-treated Israel shall not live longer; their day is over. Not chosen of God for this world, they have failed in their responsibility; their day of visitation comes, and all their memory is made to perish.

Verses 15-19. Israel ends by renouncing all hope in itself; whilst now-a-days we see the Jews in their unbelief full of hope in their re-establishment. Yet they shall live. (Compare Ezek. 37) They shall rise as a nation.

The remnant (vers. 20, 21) are called to hide themselves during the time of indignation or the day of vengeance. It is the time when the lawlessness of Antichrist will draw down the consuming wrath of God. The sole testimony will then be His judgment.

Chapter 27.

We have here another fact of all importance. The power of Satan in the world is destroyed, a power which governs and deceives the nations. Israel becomes the vineyard of red wine that Jehovah keeps, waters, and guards: whoever would harm it, must face His judgment; but He offers peace with Him, and His strength to make it good. Israel became the center of earthly blessing. To this the church has not been destined; and the moment it is her pretension, it is nothing but pride. In fact the church has failed in the mission she received of announcing the gospel and of being the witness of Christ's heavenly glory; and if she would after that pretend to it and count on it as a right, is this any more than pride? Even things which at one time are of faith are in other circumstances only pride. For instance Isaiah tells the king in chapter 38 to count on the deliverance of Judah from the Assyrian; whereas Jeremiah tells the king at a later day to save himself by submission to the Chaldean. In Isa. 51 God tells His people to look to Abraham, and as He called their father when he was alone and blessed and increased him; whereas when the Jew boasted of Abraham in pride, God confounded them, as in Ezek. 33:24; Matt. 3:9; John 8:39.

In verses 7, 8 we see Israel chastened, not destroyed. It is a purificatory dealing. “By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin” (ver. 9) in the very day when judgment takes its course on the wicked who have no understanding. (Vers. 10, 11.)

From verses 12, 13 we see that there will be among the nations a remnant of Israel to be recalled one by one. (Matt. 24:31.) Such is the unraveling of the history of this poor world. All should bid us now stand entirely aloof from its course. The pride of Israel transfers itself to Christendom which arrogates to itself what God never gave it. Worldly-mindedness and the hope of gaining over the world always go together now. When the church thinks of converting the world (instead of gathering out of it to Christ in heaven), it allies itself to the powers of the world. They begin, it is true, by sincerely desiring the conversion of souls; then to arrive at this they join the world and fall into spiritual feebleness. When we rest on the world, we own and affirm its power. Rightly viewed, the conversion of three thousand in one day in Jerusalem was the precursor, not even of the conversion of that city, but of the judgment which was about to fall on it.

God abides sovereign, and the Christian admires His sovereignty, and rejoices in it.

Thus from chapter 13 to chapter 27 we have seen judgments falling on the Gentiles, the Jews being found there. From chapter 28 to chapter 35 we shall see the details of what is to happen to the Jews, &c., in the last days of this age. Each revelation closes with a testimony borne to God's glory in Israel.

Chapter 28.

In this division chapters 28, 29 show the judgments on Ephraim and Jerusalem (Ariel, that is, lion of God). We see there what God thinks of that which inspires most confidence in man, His judgment condemning it all, and the deliverance of the meek, the remnant of His people.

The first thing judged is the crown of pride, the carelessness of luxury, which leaves man intoxicated and blind. God raises up the Assyrian, a mighty and strong one, against those who had abandoned themselves to pride and excess. “Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet: and the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which, when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.” After this judgment there is a change, and Jehovah becomes a crown of glory, and a spirit of strength for the remnant. (Vers. 5, 6.) Pride, ease, luxury, and the world's vain glory hinder the word from striking the conscience; but for the poor, despised, afflicted remnant, God is their resource and strength, and becomes a crown of glory. It is very possible that the people of God should be despised till then.

As to the church there is this difference that from the beginning it is a remnant. “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” The ways of God were not such in the Jewish economy. The nation was the people of God, and the remnant remained hidden. Elijah believed himself alone, the remnant was not manifested, though God knew seven thousand. When the church began, the Lord added together such as should be saved, the remnant from among the Jews. The actual principle for the present time is the gathering together in one of the scattered children of God. Among the Jews God did not thus gather His children: they were the elect people that He owned.

It is a mistake that some Christians make of the church an invisible thing. Such was the case with God's children in Judaism, but it is not the principle in Christianity. For the Jews there was only individual faithfulness, besides their common national privileges. But to-day, that is, since Pentecost, the presence of the Holy Spirit is a power that gathers the children of God and produces a corporate testimony in the world. It is a city that cannot be hid. When Israel departs from God, God sends as to children, precept upon precept, line upon line. “But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean. Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little,

and there a little: for with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, like upon line: here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." (Vers. 7-13.) God cannot cease to bear testimony till He has exhausted all the means to bring back to Himself.

The result of resistance is to bring upon those that resist a blindness so much the greater as it is proportionate to the light refused. If the first testimony is received, more is always added, for it is given to him that hath, and he shall have more abundance. Those who bowed to the witness of John the Baptist received also Jesus; those who rejected it rejected also the Messiah, and the testimony of John was withdrawn, and the people blinded. Jesus bears a greater testimony, the remnant attach to Him. The Holy Spirit, bears afterward testimony and gathers the church; but the Jews rejected Him, and were rejected. These testimonies bring on their judgment. The more God manifests Himself, the more does the heart's natural opposition show itself. Those who receive the first grace receive the rest, until glory, and go from strength to strength. God does not let judgment fall on Jerusalem till Jerusalem rejected the Holy Spirit. When grace is exhausted God sends judgment. The flesh seeks ever to keep the enjoyment of its lusts, and would harden the conscience against the testimony that God sends.

The Jews would not have their kingdom and their holy place destroyed, but their unbelief led to a complete blinding, and Satan pushed them on to destruction, going so far as to make them say of Jesus, that He cast out demons by Beelzebub. There is no blindness like that which results from resisting the light and in presence of the light not renouncing one's own will.

When Jerusalem sees the judgment on Ephraim, to escape it they unite more firmly with the power of evil. "Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves." In the close it will be Antichrist in alliance with Satan and his instruments. But God gives the remnant a sure foundation-stone in Zion. "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." (Vers. 16-18.)

In the judgments of God, the question one sees debated is between the rights of Satan because of sin, and those of God. It is necessary that the people of God should be judged on the one hand, and on the other, that in the midst of the judgment salvation should be found, as Noah in the ark was carried over the waters of the deluge. It is in the cross of Christ that faith sees the judgment of God against our sins, and for ourselves; we are thus saved righteously. So here also judgment will Jehovah lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, when He lays in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone. The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, the waters overflow the hiding-place; but the stone abides sure and steadfast. The very same

thing-God's judgment-which destroys the wicked guarantees the believer against all evil, for he is made God's righteousness in Christ.

The foundation-stone has long been laid at Jerusalem. The blood of the new covenant with His people it carried within the holiest of all. The church is already laid on this stone; meanwhile, because it has owned the stone, which later on is to become the confidence of the Jewish remnant. The church profits by it beforehand, as Israel will doubtless at a later day. The passages where it is a question of this Stone are cited in the New Testament, in the past generally applicable. One often sees passages thus half cited, because as a whole they do not apply to the present. Judgment is not yet laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet. To-day is the time of grace, and not that of judgment.

But judgment will surely come for the earth. “From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. For Jehovah shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord Jehovah of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.” What is Jehovah's “strange work” and “act"? It is the judgment of His people towards whom His goodness has no bounds. This “act” strange to the heart of God, which made the Lord Jesus weep, is the execution of judgment on His people, then apostate. It is a thing God does only when He is forced to it by their extreme iniquity. The Jews have rejected the Christ, and they will have the Antichrist. The consumption, even determined upon the whole earth, will be much more terrible on them. It is the same principle, but even worse for Christendom which had the light but rejected it. The more truly one is in the light, the more is one necessarily allied to Satan if one rejects the light. Nothing more terrible than a conscience hardened by a perverse will, which commences by the most ordinary lusts. Judas is not the only man fond of money.

The end of the chapter (vers. 23-29) shows the wisdom of God in the smallest things. He gives to man wisdom in cultivating the earth, in sowing, reaping, and dealing with the crops. And will He not know what to do best for His people?

Chapter 29.

As Chapter 28 gave us Ephraim and Jerusalem taken spite of its evil alliance, chapter 29 shows that a second attack against Jerusalem, brought to the utmost distress, will fail through divine power which will destroy its adversaries. (Vers. 1-8.)

If Jerusalem is a lion of God, when God speaks of the judgments He says, “I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee.” (Ver. 3.) The Assyrians were but instruments in His hand. He would Himself strike, but not exterminate His guilty people. He does not destroy, but chastens them. This humbles but it comforts; for love is there. See the case of Job: there are the instruments of judgment, and Satan behind them, but God above who directs all for the good of Job, who at the end is more blessed of Jehovah than at the beginning, bright as it was. Psa. 118 shows us these three things clearly. (See Vers. 10,13, 18.) The nations surround in enmity, Satan seeks to destroy, but above them all

Jehovah chastises and sorely, but does not deliver to death.

All the nations of the earth shall be round Jerusalem and opposed to her, but they shall pass as a dream before Jehovah. (See also Zech. 12:2-4; 14:2, 3; Psa. 108; Mic. 4:11, 12.)

But we see here that the most ancient relations with God serve no good purpose when man lays his trust in them. When he is far from God, he attaches himself to the old things that God instituted to reject what God may be actually giving. But one cannot deceive God as to right and wrong. “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year: let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel.” (Vers. 1, 2.) He says elsewhere He would destroy His house, His altar; as He did to Shiloh, so to the temple, whatever the presumption of His people, because He will have righteousness and holiness, not the things He established. God had established the altar, temple, sacrifices, feasts, and priests; but when iniquity is there, judgment must begin with His house, and its judgment is only the more terrible if the effects of the Holy Spirit are not there: the sole consequence of being near to God outwardly is the more unsparing judgment. Again, the more Christendom departs from truth and righteousness, the more it rests on institutions as being of God. It is not those who are occupied with the Lord of the temple that say, “The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah is these.” The more evil the conscience is, the more it attaches itself to forms.

No doubt sovereign mercy and faithfulness will work in a remnant, and God will deliver for His own name at the end. But we see in verses 9-14, at the side of these forms, that God despises the incapacity of His people judicially blinded of God: learned or ignorant alike reject the word of God. To the one the book is as sealed, and the other pleads that be is not learned: the revelation of God by prophecy they cannot seize. Yet He reveals all for the blessing of His people, not that aught should be covered. He has not given the Bible that it should not be understood. If Christians say that they cannot take it in, they say just what the Jews do here, the proof of their state of ruin. They thus evade the testimony which would save them from the consequences of the judgment. But in vain. “Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from Jehovah, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us and who knoweth us? Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding? Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?” (Vers. 15-17.)

But babes receive God's testimony. “And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in Jehovah, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.” (Vers. 18, 19.)

The Lord does not present us here with the detailed history of His people in the last days. He takes cognizance of all that will happen to them; He has measured the force of the enemy; He has not only foreseen all, but makes us see the light behind all these means.

The state of the people in the time that precedes destruction is a voluntary ignorance, after which God closes intelligence and sheds profound slumber. This will happen to Christendom also. There will be” strong delusion” because they wished not the truth. It is the same here as in verses 8-11.

This iniquity will be like the bowing of a wall about to fall. They wish to hear no more visions threatening them with the terrible things that are to happen. It had been similar with the heathen who had not the knowledge of God, and were given over to a state of blindness. (Rom. 1:22-24.) God had already said of Israel, “Make the heart of this people fat,” a word applied for the last time in. Acts 28 It is the case then for the heathen the Jews, and Christendom, and it will be yet again, true for the Jews. They have said to the seers, See not. (Chap. 30: 10.) It is frightful to know the people at such a pitch that they can no more be extricated. This obstinacy assumes an appearance of reason, because it is a strong delusion.

Verses 13, 14. This is not an avowed infidelity which brings on the judgment. The people draw near to God with a show of piety: they have a fear taught by the precept of men. It will be the same with Christendom: there will be a form of godliness, yes, and men will be lovers of themselves rather than of God. Such is what characterizes the perilous times the show of piety, but no conscience before God. (Ver. 15.) Then God turns all upside down. Lebanon is turned into Carmel. The fruitful field is esteemed a forest, and the forest a fruitful field. This is always what characterizes such a state; but when God turns all upside down, verses 18-24 will be seen accomplished. All that is yet to come.

Chapter 30.

Woe is pronounced on the rebellions children who act according to their prudence, but not counseled of Jehovah. (Vers. 1-7.) This is found too often even with the Christian. It is folly, even with the best intentions, to take counsel of oneself. It characterizes the evil in the last times. For the Christian it is not to take counsel of God, if one form plans and then pray for a blessing. Often it is necessary for us to run back the road so as to return to the place which we had quitted. All that is time lost.

Israel sought an ally in Egypt strong as the Assyrian. (Ver. 2.) It is to seek strength in the flesh. God would make this prudence vain; He would have His people confide in Himself. So Abram went down into Egypt without consulting God (Gen. 12), and found himself the worse for it. What things have we, dear friends, done to-day without consulting God? It has been all lost time thus to act without God. Man would always act; though on many occasions God would have one keep quietly waiting. (1 Sam. 15) Whatever be the appearances of reason and prudence, it is always folly for man to wish to go before God's time. God does not slumber, He tries our hearts and intervenes at last in a suitable time.

Nothing is more despicable than the people of God in alliance with the world. They can but add their misery to that of the world, and the world profits them in nothing. (Chap. 31: 33.) Ruin will come on all that the deceivers do. (Vers. 8-14.) There is no people as God's, when He abandons them: the evil reaches them, the good escapes them; there is neither force nor intelligence. (Vers. 15-17.)

Nevertheless Jehovah waits that He may be gracious unto them. (Ver. 18.) The Pharisees, who would have made a snare of the adulteress, disappear; whilst Jesus stays to show grace, of which they felt no need.

“For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.” (Ver. 19.) This is given

also in Joel 2:12-14. From the moment the remnant take the place where God put them, He listens to their cry. Faith takes the place of the sinner and humbles itself, and then God answers. If the church is in a sad state, faith has the consciousness of the state the church is found in; owns it, humbles itself, and God can answer. It is what Christ has done for us; He has owned fully before God the state of sin in which He put Himself for us, and He has wrought redemption. The remnant will feel the ruin of Jerusalem, and will cry according to the misery and the ruin of Jerusalem. Faith gives the consciousness of the state of ruin in which sin has placed us. “And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers he removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” (Vers. 20, 21.) This is consoling. The remnant will be in the utmost distress, but they shall see their teachers, and hear the word of guidance. Misery may be deep, but God will show the way. Once they are brought down to the point where God sees things, He has always a way for His people, and as they depart from all iniquity, so He will bless with every blessing on the earth. (Vers. 22-26.) The nations are to assemble in the power of their will, but God will sift and scatter them in devouring judgment (vers. 27-30), while the remnant rejoice in their place.

The Assyrian is always presented here as the one with whose destruction ends” the indignation.” (See chap. 10: 24; 14; Dan. 8) When the Assyrian is destroyed the indignation will be closed. (Compare Mic. 5:5, 6.) Jesus “shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land.” “For through the voice of Jehovah shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which Jehovah shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.” (Vers. 31-33.) The staff of Jehovah shall fall on the Assyrian. One sees the aim of this judgment of God. He is full of patience and long-suffering. His people meanwhile are in alarm at the power of the enemy. When God strikes the enemies, it is always the deliverance of His people. Tophet, the place of the Assyrian's judgment is already prepared, not for him only, but also for “the king,” the Antichrist who shall do according to his will. (See Dan. 11:36-45.) Antichrist will be cast with the Assyrian into Tophet. “The breath of Jehovah like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it.” (Compare 2 Thess. 2:8.) He will destroy the wicked with the breath of His mouth.

It is of great moment in these prophecies to distinguish “the king of the north” from “the king” in the land. They are not the same, but enemies and fight. They are both wicked, and each successively dealt with by the same terrible judgment at the Lord's hand.

If we listen to our own will, it would put us in movement according to the strength of man against the evil which surrounds us. But we have nothing else to do but wait on God, abiding faithful to Him who will not let us fall into ruin through the adversary. May God give us grace to receive His word that this rebellious people would not receive. For God waits to be gracious to those that receive His word. “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell on the earth.” (Rev. 3:10.)

Chapter 80

Thoughts on Isaiah 31-35

Jehovah warns His people against the tendency to seek aid in Egypt. It is not any longer only taking counsel without God, but leaning on the flesh. It is the tendency of us all not to have recourse to God unless forced to it. The prodigal son ate the husks of swine before he thought of his father's house. To lean on God one must be in the truth, having the consciousness of what we are; one cannot bring lies before God. What often hinders conversion, or at least retards it, is that one misunderstands what he is by nature, that is, without strength and ungodly. It is the same in all our ways, seeking to lean on any rather than on God. Israel had been taken out of Egypt and carried to Babylon. Called out of the world, one falls into corruption. Egypt typifies the natural strength of the world; Babylon, the world's corruption. Israel seeks support in the natural strength of man. That does not irritate pride nor unveil what we are. One cannot lean on God without the beating down of flesh's pride and the learning that we are nothing. The tendency of sin is to veil sin from our eyes. Far from God we cannot know what is the power of God, though we might have known it at other times. Far from God we forget what He is. It is not a question only for us of God in heaven, but of His manifestation in the midst of His people, mixing Himself with all their affairs, and accompanying them in all their journeyings. (Ex. 29:44, 45.)

What is true for the joy of God's people is also true for their strength; it comes from the presence of God. It is also the case with the church which is God's habitation through the Spirit. It is true of each Christian individually. God does not manifest His power in the activity of the flesh. If one acts in the flesh, one loses the consciousness of what God can do. When we see that God acts, one does not even think of seeking the resources of the flesh. In the activity of the flesh, one feels that one has no right to count on God.

The flesh seeks to hide the thing from itself, or take its side of going with the world, or to find somewhere a resource to hinder chastening. The consequence of this is that one does not at all perceive when good comes. (Jer. 17) Israel set themselves outside the way, and when the Lord acts, they do not at all see it; they will then be overthrown with those from whom they sought succor.

Often the Lord makes one wait long, as if He did not trouble Himself with the lot of His people. But when they are in the greatest distress, God acts. The extremity of man is the opportunity of God, the moment favorable and suited for Him to manifest Himself. It is difficult to convince man of this-that God loves him enough to think of him and deliver him. Faith has only God, and God alone is the resource of the people in the resurrection.

We have already seen that the Assyrian is the last enemy of the people. (Vers. 8, 9.)

Chapter 32.

The moment that God acts, Christ appears. This chapter is the one God used to open my understanding to the coming of Christ. We see, 1st, Christ coming to reign in righteousness on the earth; 2nd, an entire change in the economy, a new Pentecost for the Jews and also for the

Gentiles. An outpouring of the Holy Spirit cannot be repeated in the present economy. There are but two outpourings of the Spirit, the rain of the former season and that of the latter. The Jews must necessarily have returned to their own land in order to receive the rain of the latter season which has been promised them. Thus there must be the presence of Christ on earth, and a second effusion of the Holy Spirit. But this will be a testimony rendered to the glory of Christ, and no longer a manifestation of grace. We see in Zech. 2:8 that it is “after the glory” the Jews become a blessing to the nations. The testimony to the glory of Christ thus manifested is not in this economy.

We see here then the return of Christ (ver. 1), and the Spirit poured out from on high on the Jews (ver. 15), entirely new events. All that has taken place before in Christendom will be counted only as a forest and not a fruitful field, or a Carmel; the hail shall fall on the forest (of the Gentiles), and “the city” Babylon shall be utterly abased.

Verses 1, 2. The first thing is a king who is to reign on earth in righteousness. The church on the contrary ought during the actual economy to follow Jesus, righteous indeed but suffering, put to death by a judge who owned His innocence. The righteous man suffers, and injustice the most flagrant is committed against such. Such is the position of the Christian and the church. It is not yet a king reigning in righteousness. In the age to come righteousness shall reign. Even then it will not be the eternal state where righteousness dwells in the new earth. During the millennium there will be the need of a reign to repress evil. The principle of the present economy is the suffering of the saints though walking righteously: in the future age “judgment will return to righteousness,” whilst at the present time it is opposed to righteousness.

Verses 9-14. Judgment must go on, Zion even be a wilderness, until (ver. 15) the Spirit be poured upon us (the Jews) from on high: then all should be changed for good, the wilderness be a Carmel, and what was a Carmel be counted for a forest.

God, having put man near Himself above by resurrection and ascension, pours out from on high the Holy Spirit upon those who believe as a Spirit of power, which it is needful to distinguish from His work in conversion or the new birth. At the time of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came down on the converted only. We see that not only does the Holy Spirit act on us to make us believe, but moreover when we believe He is therein given to us as a Spirit of power. All this got blotted out little by little in its effects by the unfaithfulness of the church, which grieved the Holy Spirit who dwells there. When the church is caught up to meet the Lord, the Holy Spirit goes along with it; but after the Lord returns in power and glory, the Spirit is poured out afresh as the rain of the latter season, and the world recommences as a thing quite new. “Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceful habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places,” &c. (Vers. 16-18.) But it is the moment of the world's judgment (ver. 19), followed by the blessedness of peace on earth. (Ver. 20.)

The chapter thus presents us with the complete change of the economy. It is not here a question of the church. The relationships and the state of the faithful will be then quite opposite in character. Today it is a question of conformity to the grace of Jesus in suffering, then to His glory and power on earth. The earth cursed because of sinful man will be blessed; self and unrighteousness will be uprooted. The vile person will no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. Peace

and righteousness shall flourish; and the Holy Spirit will no more have to resist the power or wiles of Satan, who will then be consigned to the abyss. We see the later history of the Jewish remnant in Psa. 42-49, especially in the three earliest of these psalms. Then Psa. 45 introduces the Messiah, and joy comes. We have here this instruction to sustain us on the Lord when He does not manifest Himself. Those who have believed without seeing are to be especially blessed, This is the church's portion; and it applies also to all the circumstances of details. Moreover the presence of the Holy, Spirit is all our strength. It is when put to the proof that we are tempted to lean on the flesh, and then faith manifests itself in leaning only on God. But we must be in the truth before Him, and it will be manifest that the remnant seek not help in Egypt.

Chapter 33.

We have seen from chapter 28 the special circumstances of the Jews in the last days, terminating as always in the introduction of the Messiah. Here in chapter 33 we see judgment fall on the last enemy of Israel (it would seem the Gog of Ezekiel); then in chapter 34 on. All nations of which Edom is the scene, followed by the unparalleled sketch of the earth's blessing, and joy, and prosperity under Messiah's reign in Zion, when “the last end of the indignation” is closed. Therefore in the midst of the prophecy is found introduced the history of Hezekiah menaced by the Assyrian and his deadly sickness turned, as a type of Messiah and the power of resurrection, and the destruction of the last mighty foe of Israel in the last days, but not without the captivity of Judah and its royal line to Babylon meanwhile.

Edom is another bitter enemy that ever put stumbling blocks in the way of Israel, and yet to be judged in a particular way, when his destruction will be so complete as to leave no remnant. See Obadiah.

We have then in this chapter the judgment of the last great enemy of Israel, typified by the Assyrian; then of Edom and the nations gathered there, to introduce the blessing of Israel and the earth, the land especially when every curse shall be removed.

The invasion of the Assyrian into Judea was groundless; be dealt treacherously (ver. 1), deceived Hezekiah and, after receiving his treasure, broke the covenant and besieged Jerusalem; but the effect of the distress of Israel at the coming of the Assyrian was that Jehovah rose, was exalted, and lifted Himself up. (Vers. 2-10.) One may remark the spirit of intercession in Christ for His people, and how He identifies Himself with them: “Be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.” We see it also very often in the Psalm when He speaks of “mine iniquities” in speaking of those of His people.

Verse 5. “Jehovah is exalted,” &c. The circumstances indicated in verses 7-9 show the power of the enemy unlimited. It is thus faith regards all the power of the world. From the moment it sees neither fear of God in the world nor deliverance for itself, it gives itself up to wait on God. Faith judges justly of all. Unbelief judges the circumstances correctly, and the consequences of things visible; it forgets but one thing, God, who comes in and upsets all these combinations, be they ever so wise. Faith pierces even to God across all circumstances and all difficulties. It does not stay to consider, it does not reason on the possibility of things because it only stops at God, and when man despairs, faith is perfectly calm and happy. Faith has no need either of human reasoning or of human prudence. Hezekiah puts before Jehovah the letter of Sennacherib. The

wisdom of faith is looking to God, doing His will, and troubling about nothing. When Christ comes, one then sees that the fear of God is wisdom and treasure. (Ver. 6.)

The circumstances which are too strong for us ought to have no other effect upon us than to make us realize the presence of God. We see in Psa. 18 how God answers to the distress of His people. He rises, and all crumbles in His presence: the full accomplishment of this psalm will manifest it.

Verse 14. It is a terrible thing to be found without faith between the power of the enemies of God and the manifestation of the power of God when He descends with devouring fire. The hypocrite cannot dwell there between the two, nor is any one so wretched as a merely professing Christian or a sinful Jew in those times. It is the position of the foolish virgins; the Bridegroom comes, and they have no oil. It is the position in which all Christendom will then be found, all that which has but the form of godliness; and therefore daring the judgments in the last days they will be as men giving up the ghost through fear, and saying to the mountains, Cover us. Conscience foresees those everlasting burnings, and that the judgment of God will rise against every power of Satan.

Verses 15, 16. The remnant will be kept; the devouring fire does not touch them. But further (ver. 17) their eye shall see the King in His beauty. The thunderbolt that falls on the wicked passes them harmlessly, for Messiah is there. Peace is established, and men look round freely even to the most distant quarters of the land, and reflect on the terror which no longer fills them: so overwhelming the danger so sudden and complete the deliverance! (Vers. 18, 19.) All that was dreaded is vanished away.

From verse 20 we see what Zion will be for the faithful people. It is a peace God has made and given forever, not an atom to be disturbed any more. Even in the last revolt when Satan masters the distant nations at the end of the thousand years' reign, the enemies may compass the beloved city and the camp of the saints, but they touch nothing. It is a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down. “Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.” (Ver. 20.)

Vers. 21, 22. The confidence of Israel is in Jehovah, the source of all blessing, and withal their unfailing security. “For Jehovah our Judge, Jehovah our Lawgiver, Jehovah our King, He will save us.”

The strongest of their enemies was foiled and prostrate, and a prey to the feeblest in Israel (Ver. 23), who will thus be enabled to enjoy the blessing, the curse being gone, all their iniquities forgiven, and all their diseases healed. (Ver. 24.)

Chapter 34.

All the earth is called to hear (ver. 1); it is very far now from being willing to answer such an appeal.

The nations, will be assembled in Idumea, and there will be judged. (Obad. 13-15; Psa. 137:7; Isa. 63:1-4.) The sword of Jehovah shall come down on Idumea, and on the people of His curse to judgment. (Ver. 5.) Edom is marked out as a center of judgment for the quick. He has chastened His people to sanctify them; but He will judge the nations. His indignation against idolatrous and apostate Jerusalem closes with the judgment of the Assyrian, and the destruction of the nations in

the land of Edom. In chapter 63 we see what will happen to them at this time; Jesus will judge and trample them down in His fury: a scene which has no reference to the cross, where Jesus was Himself trampled down.

“The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Jehovah hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.” This terrible judgment of the living is lost for Christendom. The Jews had, no adequate idea of a judgment of the dead; they were familiar with judgments on the living by the direct government of God which exercised visible judgment on the living, as we see in Korah, Achan, &c. All has been changed in relationship with God for the church by the resurrection; and Christians have in great measure lost sight of the judgment of the living, because they are used only to expect judgment after death. But there will be a judgment of the living as well as a judgment of the dead. They like to forget it because the judgment of the dead, being more distant, does not touch so directly the course in which one walks on the earth. It will fall on the neighborhood of Jerusalem as well as on Bozrah.

The rest of the chapter is the detail of the judgment in Edom.

Chapter 35.

We see the full blessing of the land, of which Zion will be the center. All will be blessed. God does not despise this earth, nor any creature, though the curse is fallen on all because of Adam's sin.

The miracles of Jesus working every sort of cure were a sample of what His redemption will do for all creation, and hence called powers of the world to come. (Rom. 8:19-22; Heb. 6) There will be deliverance when He appears; the evil will be taken away. Hence also, when the disciples rejoiced over the demons cast out in His name, He predicts the fall of Satan from heaven. His death breaks Satan's power for the believer's conscience: but though thus emancipated, we groan and suffer in the body still. But the Son of man's victory goes much farther than to cast Satan from the Conscience. By His word He takes away every evil, all suffering, for faith. But here it is no question of conscience; it is a marvelous manifestation of God's intervention into all the miseries of man.

Jesus will exercise this power fully when He returns, but on quite a different plan from that which He exercised in Judea during His ministry. It will be no more by the Holy Spirit awakening souls for spiritual joys, but delivering creation from the slavery of corruption, the liberty of glory and not merely of grace.

“Say to them that are of a faithful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you.” (Ver. 4.) The faithful remnant is restored by this announcement. Is it also for us the greatest source of joy or would His coming be a sort of tearing us away from the earth, instead of lifting us up to set us where our treasure is? The Spirit and the bride say, Come: do we?

Chapter 81

Thoughts on Isaiah 36-39

Chapters 36-39.

These chapters are the history of the Assyrian invading and overthrown, of the sickness of Hezekiah and of the embassy from Babylon with the captivity foreshewn. There is the outward deliverance (chaps. 36, 37.), and the inward (chap. 38.), resurrection power being applied to the sickness of the Son of David, type of a greater who actually died and rose to bring in the sure mercies of David.

Verse 16 above all explains why God wished Hezekiah to pass through this trial. It was needful that flesh should be judged as naught, and that the power which opposes the people of God should be destroyed solely by God's power. So will it yet be made good spiritually in the Jew, the principle of death for the destruction of the flesh, that the nation, deprived of all confidence in self, may be delivered by the power and grace of God. Yet was it but a type now: Hezekiah was a saint, but not the Messiah; nor had he learned the lesson of death and resurrection adequately; but lifted up with pride after his recovery and the destruction of the Assyrian, he displayed the rich stores of his house and dominion to the ambassadors of Merodach-baladan, and hears from the prophet the solemn word of Jehovah that all should be swept away to Babylon, not only all that had been laid up for generations by the royal house, but of his issue to be eunuchs in the palace of the conqueror. (Chap. 39.) The historical portion is of the utmost weight for the elucidation of this prophecy, which it divides into two very distinct sections, both of which it illustrates, the earlier being external, as the latter is more internal and consequently viewing Israel not merely as a people among hostile nations, but as witnesses to Jehovah the one true God and awaiting the Messiah, the elect Servant, which they should have been but failing in both respects. Finally, when bowing to the Messiah in detestation of their idolatry, they become and are owned as His servants when His glory appears, and all ends in the blessing of the faithful and the judgment of the rebellious. Christ will defend Israel by His power when the Assyrian shall come into their land: “This man shall be the peace.” (Mic. 5) “And they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.” Till then it is vain to expect it.

Chapter 40.

After this historical parenthesis we have henceforth in our prophecy a more intimate and detailed revelation of the relationships of God as to His people and of His ways toward them.

It is a question of the counsels of God as to Israel in grace, but in this point of view Israel is a witness of God, the only true God, and His servant, Christ, comes, but Israel will not acknowledge Him. For this reason the remnant alone is recognized and the people condemned by the judgment which is coming, and the remnant glorified with Christ.

He speaks of comfort, notwithstanding the many iniquities of which Israel has been guilty, and He manifests His positive will to be glorified by His people upon the earth. The church glorifies God before principalities and powers in heavenly places. (Eph. 3) The church is the means of making

known the wisdom of God in heaven; Israel is the means of making it known in this world to powers upon the earth. Until the church the ways of God had always been in connection with the earth; God's king had been seen on the earth; His wisdom on the earth, with regard to His earthly people. But in looking at the church, the principalities and powers see a wisdom which is entirely new, the glory of Christ in a people whom God strengthens by His Spirit, to whom everything is promised for heaven at least, and who do not consider their own life, in order to be manifested in the glory of Christ. This is why we see in Ephesians that the wisdom of God is different in every way. When this purpose of God is accomplished in the church, He takes up again His ways with the Jews, and He says as a summary of all that is to follow, “Comfort ye my people.”

In the preceding chapters He reasons with His people, in order to prove to them their sin. Here it is the proclamation of a new way, and of His positive will to comfort His people. But in order to do this, He must enter with more detail into the miseries of His people. He makes an appeal to their conscience, then an explanation of the thought of His heart. He enters into these special purposes with His people and shows that He has not always been able to do so. He desires that the conscience of the people should acknowledge the justice of His ways, and enters into the delicacy of their new relations with God. God makes manifest His way of dealing, and all the manner of His people's acting, in order that everything may be acknowledged, and that the people may understand that in God all is love. It is continually a question in this latter part of the book of Isaiah, not only of the ways of God with His people in regard to the nations, but chiefly of the coming and the rejection of Jesus-a sin which was the crowning point of all the sins of Israel.

God had an object, whether it was in calling Israel or in calling the church. If God wished to glorify Israel on the earth, He presents His people according to the intention of God regarding them. He might have said, This is my will, and have left to man the task of doing it: that is, law. He could produce and accomplish in man what He desired, and show the resources there are in God for doing it: that is, grace.

God did this with Israel. Israel was a people in relation with the eternal God, in order that the eternal and only true God might be manifested to the world in all His ways. This will happen also at the close.

There are two things true with regard to the power of Satan. He got possession of the earth as being the theater of the government of God, and he got possession of man and his affections. Therefore does the Holy Spirit say, that the friendship of the world is enmity against God. He therefore who would be a friend of the world is an enemy of God; as also the mind of the flesh is enmity against God.

The church has been formed and maintained here below to manifest to the world the victory of the Lord Jesus over Satan and His glory as the Second man seated on the throne of God the Father, infinitely greater than that of the first man Adam in Eden. Israel and the church should have been witnesses of God, one for the earth, the other for heaven, and this in putting aside the power of Satan.

Before the flood there was no government; since then a new principle of evil manifested itself, man entering into direct relation with Satan by idolatry. Man does not confine himself only to being wicked and rebellious against God; he replaces God by Satan. “The things which the Gentiles

sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons." Then it is that God calls Abram in order that His name should be known on the earth, and His called one be witness to His glory. It is grace that acted; for Abram had been an idolater, like others. He is chosen, called, and made heir of the promises: grace acted thus. Later on the Israelites, Abram's posterity, were placed as God's witnesses in Canaan under the law-law which could not annul the promise. God manifests in Israel the principle of His government. Israel having not only failed but apostatized, God had to chase them thence. How could He tolerate a people which compromised His glory, having ceased to be a witness against idolatry, Satan's direct power in the world? The greatest part of the world is still under this direct power of Satan besides his influence on the heart, for the moral influence of Satan is quite another thing. In idolatry the demon is adored to have his protection or escape his malice; they attribute to him all that God does. Israel, having become idolatrous, totally failed in his responsibility; the ten tribes first, afterward Judah who has been yet worse. Then God carries them successively away from the land. With Nebuchadnezzar begin the times of the Gentiles. (Dan. 2:31-34, 37-43.)

There is a particular circumstance to remark. We see in Isa. 41-48 Cyrus, conqueror of Babylon, marked out as about to close the captivity by executing judgment on idolatry. The temple is rebuilt, and Israel enters on a new trial. For Jehovah comes Himself in the person of Jesus to present Himself to His people as king; and thus there is a new responsibility for Israel, or at least the Jew. Cyrus was but a type of a greater; and the return from Babylon only a partial deliverance. Much more was coming. Hence with chapter 49 God enters into a now controversy with His people, on the ground, not of idolatry, but of the rejected Messiah. It is not only that Israel announces to the nations that God had called the seed of Abraham to be His servant, witnesses of Jehovah against idols, and that then they utterly failed and came under judgment, but that after this they were actually to refuse their own Messiah, the divine King, the Lord Jesus Christ, who takes the place of His people Israel, and Himself becomes "Servant" of God, a title which serves to open the latter half of the prophecy. In chapter 42 at the beginning He is just characterized in humiliation till the end come; but the people are immediately turned to in their failure, though with wonderful expression of sovereign goodness to Israel spite of all. So it is in the second controversy, from: chapter 49 to chapter 62, where as before God's love to Israel is fully set out before the proof of their sin and ruin. Then when Messiah's humiliation and atoning death but exaltation have been fully set out in chapter 53., the result is added for Jerusalem at the close in chapter 54, and suited exhortations follow in the three chapters which conclude the section: free grace even to the nations (chap. 55.); the indispensable character formed and requisite even for Israel (chap. 56.); and, whether Israel or not, no peace to the wicked. (Chap. 57.)

Then, in view of divine intervention and glory with its consequences morally and in every other way, which forms the closing part (chaps. 58-66.), the Holy Spirit opens with the most extreme denunciation of form and hypocrisy in Israel, obedience being due to Jehovah. Only He could meet all, and will by coming as Redeemer to Zion (chap. 59.); for whatever the glory in judgment which will invest Jerusalem (chap. 60.), He must first suit Himself to their need in grace (chap. 61.) in order to secure peace and blessing (chap. 62.), though none the less in unsparing judgment. (Chap. 63.) Lastly the Spirit in the prophet speaking for the remnant reasons on this, chapter 63: 7 to the end of chapter 64, and Jehovah answers in chapters 65, 66, which concludes the book.

In this chapter Jehovah intervenes and announces that He is come to comfort His people. Verse 2 is the expression of His heart which will have it that Jerusalem has received double for all her sins

at His hand. Verse 3 opens the preparatory warning, but it is of Jehovah's manifestation. “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.” (Vers. 4, 5.) The Eternal presents Himself to His people and the remnant is manifested by this means. “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of Jehovah bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever.” (Vera, 6, 8.) The answer is a sentence on all Israel. The passage is cited by the apostle of the circumcision to prove that all is rejected save the remnant. It is also a sentence pronounced on all that which is “flesh.” For all flesh is grass. The power of the Spirit discovers to our souls that in the flesh no good dwells: it will not submit to God's law, nor does it love Jesus, nor is it led by the Holy Spirit. And man who is not of Christ is “flesh.”

There must be submission to the righteousness of God in order to walk in the Spirit. Otherwise it is just the flesh and worth nothing, whatever the appearance. But at that time Israel according to the flesh was but vanity. Also, because they were flesh, the resurrection was needed to secure the mercies of David, even to Israel here below namely, the godly remnant who will own the risen Christ. Man torments himself vainly by seeking in himself wisdom, strength, righteousness. All is vanity and vexation of spirit. God's word alone abides. The consequence is that the promises to Israel stand forever-that He will comfort His people even according to His earthly promises.

The rest of the chapter points out God's glory in creation for His people, the sole and true God in contrast with an idol. If on the one side all flesh is withered, on the other after the ages of sorrow Israel must know that God is always the same and wearies not. The state of the people have in no way been unknown to Him during this long interval. Those who wait on Jehovah renew their strength: He faints not, but He gives power to the faint. This is a hard lesson to learn; but it is necessary to believe that the flesh is nothing-its wisdom, good plans, &c., nothing but vanity. What God does and says abides; man perishes. How important to let God act, knowing that we are nothing!

Thus the people of God are to be comforted. “Prepare ye the way of Jehovah... all flesh is as grass, but the word of God endureth forever.” He takes the, people of God for a witness against idols, the people which He made for His glory. He takes Cyrus as a type of the deliverance of the people captive in Babylon, also being a witness to the Gentiles, and Jehovah, who is to be glorified in Israel. What has just been said is from chapters 40-48.

[Chapter 41. is full of the righteous man from the earth, not merely as the destined conqueror, but as the avenger to call on Jehovah's name and execute judgment on idolatry. But a greater than Cyrus is beheld at the beginning of chapter 42, who, meek and lowly, shall not fail nor be discouraged till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles of the Gentiles shall wait for His law. At the end of the chapter Israel are the deaf and blind, perfect in privilege as Jehovah's earthly people, but alas! blind self-will and disobedience had darkened their eyes. But grace will intervene and save them from the ends of the earth (chap. 43.) though they be the blind people that have eyes and the deaf that have ears. The dealings with Babylon, which pre-figure the judgments at the end of the age, show that Israel are His witnesses, and that He, notwithstanding

their iniquities, will blot out all for His own sake. In chapter 44 He promises the full positive blessings of grace, while exposing the folly of idols and pointing out the coming conqueror by name; and this is followed up in chapter 45 with plain predictions of Babylon's fall, and Israel's salvation. Chapter 46 declares how the idols of Babylon must come to nothing through the “ravenous bird from the east,” the man to execute Jehovah's counsel from a far country; as we see from chapter 47 that the virgin daughter of Babylon must sit in the dust. Then chapter 48 closes the section by an appeal to Israel, though to those sprung of Judah, because these would alone represent the people in those days. We know from the Lord's word in Matt. 12 that the unclean spirit will return with worse than itself for the closing scenes of “this wicked generation."]

Chapter 49 begins the second charge, the rejection of Christ, not idolatry, and it goes on to the end of chapter 57. (Compare the end of chap. 48.) Israel having rejected the Messiah, it is said that it is to be of little value. He is put as a light to the Gentiles, and Zion is to be re-established.

Chapter 50. Manifestation to all flesh: indication of the rejection of Jerusalem (the Jews) because they have despised the Lord in His humiliation. The remnant hearken-to the voice of the servant and will be in darkness.

Chapter 51. to the end of verse 12 of chapter 52; three addresses on God's part to the people; verse 4, His people; verse 7, in whom is the law; verse 9, the people being awakened; verse 17, Jehovah.

Chapter 52: 13 begins with the revelation of this Servant.

Chapter 43. The Jews (the remnant) who recognize the rejection of Christ, and God who bears witness to Him.

Chapter 54. Jerusalem, barren, is acknowledged, and Jehovah becomes her husband.

Chapter 55. It is not only Jerusalem, but such as are athirst, grace being the great principle.

Chapter 56. continues the same part; the end is in chapter 57.

In chapter 58. he begins, as the third part unto the end, to reason concerning righteousness, Israel, &c. Redemption comes in at the end of chapter 59., and the promise that the Spirit shall remain with Israel.

Chapter 60. The terrestrial glory of Jerusalem; the same thing is said of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Chapter 61. Christ comes in blessing, and is rejected. Chapter 62. But the blessing of the earth is sure for His people.

Chapter 63 is the day of vengeance.

Chapters 63 to 64. All this excites in the prophet the spirit of intercession.

Chapter 65 is the reply to the intercession of the prophet. God distinguishes between the nation and the remnant; He condemns the nation and saves the remnant, who own Christ the Servant, and become Jehovah's servants thenceforward.

Chapter 66. He condemns the outward form of religion, and comes to deliver the remnant and to bless Jerusalem.

In Isaiah the Holy Spirit does not speak of Antichrist, but of the judgments of Christ against the Assyrian, &c. The Assyrian will come rather pushed forward by Gog; but he comes the first-Gog will come after (with the power of the Assyrian, it is true). Antichrist, in his character of beast, head of the Roman empire, will make war with the nations.

Daniel 9:24-26

My Dear Brother,

I beg to submit to your consideration, and that of the readers of the “Bible Treasury,” the following reflections on the subject of Daniel's seventy weeks, or rather of the sixty-nine weeks. If the Lord enables me to contribute any true thoughts on this subject, I shall be very thankful. Concerning Himself, as it so directly and immediately does, it cannot but be of the greatest interest to the Christian. We all agree that the seventy weeks date their commencement from the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, according to Neh. 2; but I have never seen a satisfactory elucidation of this period with respect to dates. This has caused me no little consideration, and with the result which I here lay, not dogmatically, but tentatively, before you. To me the matter has been rendered more difficult by the fact that the birth of our Savior was really three years before the nominal epoch; for it is evident that historical reckoning is affected by this circumstance. I also assume that the date of the accession of Artaxerxes (Longimanus) was 464 B.C. (common reckoning).

Before entering upon the computation, there are two or three introductory remarks I wish to make. In the first place, it does not appear that the birth or life of our Lord is referred to in Daniel, but only the crucial fact, or period, of His death. (Chap. 9: 24-26.) The prophet refers elsewhere to what would follow in due season, as also to political events preceding His being “cut off,” but he nowhere refers explicitly to the birth or life of our Lord. In the next place he refers to Him as “Messiah, the Prince” (chap. 9: 25), that is, as the royal Son of David. Moreover, the wicked king, or direct opposer of Christ as king, is spoken of in chapter 11: 39. It is as the Prince, as the rightful King, that Christ is spoken of, not as Prophet, or as Priest. Hence the Antichrist, but as the wicked king, is also brought upon the scene, and all is connected with Jerusalem, whether locally, or as to dates.

At His birth Jesus was announced as the Christ, and as the Son of God. Also at His baptism He was acknowledged as Son of man and Son of God. Thus there could be no mistake as to His personal glory. But I believe the terminus ad gum (as to the sixty-nine weeks) was not at His birth, or at His baptism, but at the formal presentation of Christ to Jerusalem as the King, the Son of David, as recorded in Matt. 21, John 12, and which was followed by His cleansing the temple. But the city of the great king as formally refused Him. This is the event we are, it appears to me, to reckon to, and His death, following almost immediately, leaves no great gap which the word “after” otherwise implies in, “after the three-score and ten weeks shall Messiah be cut off.” His presentation to Jerusalem as King, and as Son of David, and rejection, followed immediately by His death, is the grand point in the prophecy or revelation made to the prophet. The Messiah is at once brought into view, not as Prophet, but as King, and that in connection with Jerusalem, and He is rejected and “cut off.” No sojourn of His in the world (so precious to us) is alluded to.

Now as to the reckoning. Assuming that Artaxerxes came to the throne in B.C. 464, and allowing that the birth of Christ was three years before the nominal epoch, we find that the twentieth year of

Artaxerxes would be 441 years before the actual birth of Christ. To this we should have to add 33, or rather 35, years (as it is usual in scripture to include parts of the first and last years as entire years), so that we get in all 476 years, and reducing these to prophetical years of 360 days to the year, the 476 become 483 years, that is, taking the complete number. But multiplying 69 by 7 is equal to 483. Hence the period seems thus made out, on the assumption of the correctness of dates now probably pretty well authenticated.

Yours affectionately, J. B. P.

Chapter 83

Notes on John 17:1-5

Next follows a chapter which one may perhaps characterize truly as unequaled for depth and scope in all the scriptures. Holiness, devotedness, love, reign throughout. Who can wonder, seeing that it is unique in this respect as it is the Son opening His heart to the Father when just about to die and leave His own for heaven? Yet profoundly interesting and momentous as the case was, it is the Son addressing Him thus which is so wondrous a privilege for us to hear. But all this may well fill our hearts with the sense of utter insufficiency to speak of such communications suitably. Nevertheless as the Savior uttered all within the hearing of the disciples, so the Holy Spirit has been pleased to reproduce His words with divine precision. They are therefore for us now, as then for His favored followers. Encouraged by this grace we would count on the Lord's real and living interest in us and on His faithfulness who still abides with us to glorify Him by taking of His things and showing them to us.

“These things spake Jesus, and lifting up his eyes unto heaven said, Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy [or, the] Son may glorify thee, according as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that, everything which thou hast given him, he should give them eternal life. And this is the eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send forth, Jesus Christ. I glorified thee on the earth, having finished the work which thou hast given me to do; and now do thou, Father, glorify me along with thyself with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was.” (Vers. 1-5.)

The Lord had closed His parting instructions to the disciples who had now to testify of and for him, and so much the more because He was just about to leave them, His own personal testimony being already complete. To them not only had He spoken with fullness, but promised the Holy Spirit from heaven on His departure, that there might be power as well as truth. Unto heaven therefore did the Savior lift up His eyes in addressing His Father. He who even as Son of man is in heaven as a divine person was going there in bodily presence, when the work of redemption was effected. In virtue of this work accomplished in death, proved in resurrection, He would take His seat there, the witness of its infinite acceptance. His proper ministry on earth, not merely to men but to the disciples, had been fully rendered. To the Father He turns as ever, but now in the hearing of His own, as indeed He would open His heart, if unto Himself and His work, about them yet more, always the Sent One and Servant in divine love, though Lord of all. He looked to heaven when He blessed and brake the five loaves to feed the five thousand. He looked there and groaned as He made the deaf stammerer to hear and speak. Upward He lifted His eyes when at the grave of Lazarus He said, Father, I thank thee that Thou hast heard Me. To heaven He raising them once more said, “Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee.” He is ever a divine person, the Son, but a man; not here as in the other Gospels the rejected and agonized sufferer, but the perfect executor of God's purposes, heavenly and everlasting.

Hence, whatever the necessary and all-important intervention of His death, without which all else had been in vain for God's glory in presence of sin and ruin, He nowhere speaks of it here, nor

does He ask for resurrection but glorification. “Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son;” but, even so, it is “that thy Son may glorify thee.” He is man, and asks the Father to glorify Him; He is Son, and when there, if glorified, it is still to glorify the Father. “According as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that, everything which thou hast given him, he should give them eternal life.” Though God, He exerts no power in His own right; He is true to the place into which He was pleased to come, and as man receives authority from the Father, but authority inconceivable, either in its universality of sphere or in its specialty of object, were He not God. For the authority given is over “all flesh,” and the special aim now, as to whatsoever the Father had given Him, is to give them eternal life. Thus the right of our Lord extends without limit, the Gentile being no more outside His title than the Jew; whilst eternal life is the portion of none beyond what is given of the Father to the Son, as elsewhere it is said to belong to the believer only.

This leads to the explanation of “the eternal life” in question. Life for evermore, life to eternity, is the blessing commanded by Jehovah on the mountains of Zion; and of the many Jews that sleep in the dust of the earth, some shall awake to everlasting life, as surely as some to shame and everlasting contempt; but both these scriptures contemplate that great turning-point for the earth, the kingdom when it comes in manifest power and glory. The Lord speaks of life as given in Himself to faith now. “And this is the eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ.” If it be distinguished from that which is to be enjoyed in the displayed kingdom by-and-by, it stands as to its character in the knowledge not of the Most High Possessor of heaven and earth, but of the Father and of His sent One, the only true God now plainly revealed in the Son, and the true Melchisedec, a Priest on His throne, the one Mediator between God and man. If distinguished from the past, it is no longer the Creator-God giving promises to the fathers protected and lodging as under the shadow of the Almighty, nor the sons of Israel in relationship with the name of Jehovah the moral governor of that chosen nation. It is the children of God in possession of the revelation of the Father and of Jesus Christ whom He had sent; and this knowledge identified, not with promises nor government, but with “eternal life,” as a present thing in

Christ, the portion of every believer. A deeper blessing it is impossible for God to bestow or for man to receive; for it is exactly what characterized the Lord Himself who is that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. Only Christ was that life; we as believers are not, but have it in Him; and as by faith alone it is received, so in faith it is exercised, sustained, and strengthened.

It may be noticed further that, as eternal life is bound up with the knowledge of the Father, the only true God, in contrast with the gods many and false of the Gentiles, so it cannot be where Christ is not known whom the Father sent, in contrast with His rejection by the Jews to their own deeper guilt and ruin. Neither the Son nor the Holy Ghost is excluded from the deity, which is elsewhere predicated or assumed of both equally with the Father. Here the object is to assert it of the Father and to state the place taken hereto below by Him who did not regard it as a prize [act or object of plunder] to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondman. He was here to obey, to do the will of the Father that sent Him. But that He took such a place in lowly love is the strongest if indirect proof of His proper and eternal Godhead; for even the archangel is a servant and can never rise out of the position or relation of a servant, whereas the Son was pleased to take it in order to the full blessing of redemption unto the glory of God the Father. So life

was in Him, and He was eternal life from everlasting; but here He is viewed as coming down to impart it in a scene departed from God, and to a creature, which otherwise must know death in its most terrible shape in judgment as now in guilt.

Next, the Lord presents His work: we have seen His person as the Son pleaded. But now He urges what He had done hereto below. “I glorified thee on the earth, having finished the work which thou hast given me to do. And now, Father, glorify thou me along with thyself with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was.” The language here is more general than in chapter 13:31, 32, where it is a question of glorifying God, before whom sin comes into unsparing judgment. Here it is glorifying His Father, and so there is no special contemplation of that final dealing where all that God is and feels came out against, evil imputatively laid on the head of the Son of man. Here the entire path of Christ on earth in giving Himself up to obey and please His Father is summed up. Therefore it was the more needful to specify its completion, “having finished the work which thou hast given me to do.” He speaks not more as the faithful servant than as the conscious Son of God who sees all completed to the Father's glory, Who had given Him the work that He should do it who alone could. And thereon does He ask the Father to glorify Him, not because of His personal glory and relationship only, but in virtue of the work completed to His glory here below, that He might thus lay a valid and sure title for us to join Him in the same heavenly blessedness. It is not that He ever did or could cease to be God, any more than after becoming incarnate He will ever cease to be man; but, having, in divine love come down to be a servant and a man to glorify God the Father and make a righteous channel for all the purposes of divine grace, He asks to be glorified by the Father along with Himself with the glory which He had along with Him before the world was. There He had been from everlasting as the Son; there He asks to be as the Son but now also a man, the Word made flesh but risen, to everlasting. It was His perfection as man to ask for this glorification. Not even as risen does He glorify Himself. He had emptied and humbled Himself for the Father's glory; He asks the Father to glorify Him, though He states His eternal and divine competency by asking to be glorified with the glory He had with the Father before the world was. Never so weighty a plea, never so solid a ground of righteousness, never such exquisite and infinite grace.

Notes on John 17:6-13

The Lord then explains how souls were brought into such nearness of relationship to Him before the Father.

“I manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and to me thou gavest them, and they have kept thy word. Now have they known that all things as many as thou hast given me are of thee; because the words which thou gavest me I have given to them, and they received [them], and knew truly that I came out from thee, and believed that thou didst send me.” (Vers. 6-8)

Thus the manifestation of the Father's name is first laid down. It was a characteristic and most influential truth, the Son being the only one competent, though none of course could enter in even so but by the Spirit, as we know and as is taught elsewhere. But as the Son could manifest His Father's name, so this He did in unjealous love, that the disciples, the men whom the Father gave Him out of the world, might know what He is as the Son knew Him; not, it need hardly be said, infinitely as was proper to the Only-begotten, but after that manner, as children of God, to whom the Son would impart that which was wholly outside and above man, and intrinsically of God for the family of God. For though the Lord had come to the Jews as their promised Messiah on earth, Him they would not have but had rejected, as they were just about to do even to the death of the cross. Hence, whatever may be the divine retribution another day when God makes inquisition for blood, and above all for His blood which they had blindly imprecated on themselves and their children, it became wholly a question of sovereign and heavenly grace, which, coming in the person of the Son, manifested His Father's name as no saint had ever enjoyed, no prophet so much as predicted, save perhaps in such a sort as to fall in with and confirm this most precious privilege when communicated. But even Hos. 1:10 is comparatively vague. Here all is as full as it is precise. It was the positive side of what the Lord undertook with His own here below, and its highest character: not the meeting sin and misery in grace, not even the display of excellency as the righteous One, the Servant, the Man and as such Son of God, but the manifestation of what His Father was and is as He knew Him, and as they were learning who were given to the Son by the Father out of the world. For the world is now defined and judged as alien and opposed to the Father. How blessed for the disciples to hear themselves thus singled out and designated as His!

Nor is this all. “Thine they were, and to me thou gavest them, and they have kept thy word.” It appears to me that they err who refer the Lord's description to His followers as formerly of Israel merely, and as walking in all the commandments and ordinances of Jehovah blameless. They were His elect. The Father had a purpose about them, and thus they belonged to Him, who gave them to the Son, the object of His love and effectuator of His counsels, as He is also the accomplisher of redemption, to His own glory. And as the men given out of the world are thus viewed on a divine ground outside Jewish ties, so that which formed their souls and their ways was quite distinct; they had kept, says the Son, His Father's word, made known by Himself when with them on earth hitherto. This we have, speaking generally, in the Gospels, with not a little they

could not then gear in the Epistles. Everything refers to the Father: the Son, a man on earth, is always exalting Him, and in view of his own departure would endear them to Him and give them the assurance of it.

This is developed yet more in what follows. “Now have they known that all things as many as thou hast given me are of thee.” (Ver. 7.) They had entered into the secret of which the world knew nothing: the Father was the source of all that was given to the Son. Some wondered at His works and His words; others in their enmity blasphemously attributed what was beyond man to Satan. The disciples had learned that they were all of the Father, as the Son desired that they should. It was not only that He came out from the Father, nor that He had finished the work the Father had given Him to do, as their title to blessing with the Son before Him; but the means for bringing them into the blessing were also of the Father; “because the words which thou gavest me I have given to them, and they received [them], and knew truly that I came out from thee and believed that thou didst send me.” (Ver. 8.) Thus the Lord handed over to His disciples those intimate communications of grace which the Father gave to Himself. It was no longer a question of the ten words given by Moses, the measure of man's responsibility to prove his sin and ruin which he neither owned nor felt. The words which the Father gave the Son were the expression of divine grace and love according to that blessed relationship in which the Son stood, though man; and the disciples, once mere men, but now born of God, have eternal life in Him and are given these words by the Son that they might know and enjoy the new relationship which grace had conferred on them. Nor was it in vain, however slow of heart they might be in believing all. For if He had given to them the words the Father gave to Him, the disciples received the truth really, though no doubt imperfectly; and the result was that they knew truly that Christ the Son came out from the Father, and believed that the Father sent Him. This is all the reckoning of grace here, not measuring degrees, but making much of reality, as He can well do whose love gives, deepens, and secures from first to last. Even for them to know assuredly that the Son came out from the Father does not suffice His heart, for this would not necessarily prove more than His own love in so coming; but the disciples believed the further truth that the Father sent Him, the proof of His own love to them. How rich, how needful, is every word of His grace!

“I ask for them: not for the world do I ask, but for those whom thou host given me, for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine (and all my things are thine, and all thy things mine), and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee.” (Vers. 9-11)

It is concerning the disciples He makes request, not for Israel nor the nations, not for the land nor the earth at large, but concerning those whom the Father had given Him. It is no question of taking up the world for government or blessing now: He is occupied with the joint-heirs, not with the inheritance as yet. By-and-by, as Psa. 2 lets us know, Jehovah will say, Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. But then the Son will be upon His holy hill of Zion, instead of being rejected on earth and received up on high. Then, instead of sustaining the suffering family of God who bear His reproach here below and wait for heavenly glory with Him, He will break the nations with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. It is not the interval of the gospel as now, but the day of the kingdom in power and glory. Here the Lord is praying for His own as the precious gift of the Father to Himself, while cut off and having nothing that was promised Him here below; and He asks the

more, because they were the Father's. But this gives occasion for a parenthetic statement which lets out much of the light of His personal glory: And all My things are Thine, and all Thy things Mine. As the Son of David, the Messiah, could this reciprocity have been so expressed? Is it not evidently and only in virtue of His being the Eternal Son, one with the Father, that they have rights and interests no less boundless than common? After this however He returns to the saints as those in whom He was glorified as a fact, not past but abiding, urging their care on the Father, both because He sees Himself no longer with them in the world and themselves so much the more exposed in it, as He was going back to the Father. Hence arises afresh appeal.

“Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one even as [also] we. When I was with them, I was keeping them in the name which thou hast given me, and I guarded [them], and not one of them perished but the son of perdition that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now unto thee I come, and these things I speak in the world that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” (Vers. 11-13)

The Lord asks His Father, as a holy Father, to keep the disciples in His name that they might be one, even as also the Father and the Son. And this was accomplished by the power of the Holy Ghost in those very men who then stood around Him. Never before or since was such unity produced in human beings on earth. Yet the Gospels are the plainest proof that they were far from it whilst our Lord was here below with them. It was to be the fruit of His grace through redemption after He went on high and sent down the Holy Ghost to effect it. And it was essential as a practical basis for Christianity. For doctrine is not enough without reality in life, and this most of all in those who were raised up of God to lay down the foundation. Granted that they were men of like passions with ourselves or any; granted that they displayed varied and not slight infirmities even under their Master's eyes and ministry on earth; granted that they then from first to last betrayed petty prejudices and narrow hearts and no small jealousy of each other, even in presence of the deepest love and lowliness, and words and ways which made their contrasted jars (and the selfishness which gave rise to all) most humbling and painful: all this, and more, only add to the blessedness of what God wrought in these very men by His Spirit in answer to the Lord's demand. The power of the Father's name, which the Lord here below knew so well, was manifest in them, and the twelve were one, even as the Father and the Son. None would have ventured so to describe but Christ; but if He did, He is the truth; and in fact with whom or what else could their unity as witnessed in the Acts and Epistles of the apostles be compared? Never elsewhere was seen such rising above egotism in the aims, measures, objects, the life and service of men on earth; never such common devotedness to, and absorption in, the will of God for the magnifying of the risen Jesus.

The Lord then, in committing His own to the Father whom in that name He was keeping whilst here, speaks of having kept them safe, save that one who was doomed to destruction. Awful lesson! that even the constant presence of Jesus fails to win where the Spirit brings not the truth home to the conscience. Does this enfeeble scripture? On the contrary, the scripture was thereby fulfilled. Chapter xiii. referred to Jades that none should be stumbled by such an end of his ministry. Here it is rather that none should therefore doubt the Lord's care or the scripture. He was not one of those given to Christ by the Father, though called to be an apostle: of those so given He had lost none. Judas was an apparent, not a real, exception, as he was not a child of God but the son of perdition. To see the awful end of so heartless a course would only give more force to His

works of grace who, if He left the world for the Father, was bringing them into His own associations before the Father. Judas may never have meant the worst, as Satan did who entered him; but he did mean at all cost to gratify his love of money, trusting that He who had heretofore baffled His enemies would be able to extricate Himself. But he trusted his own thoughts to the death of His Master, and to his own eternal ruin; as Jesus carrying out His love in obedience to His Father would bring His own by His death to glory on high and His own place there: and expressed it here that even now they might have His joy fulfilled in themselves. And now that the Lord was going to the Father He speaks these things in the world that the disciples might have His joy fulfilled in themselves. The Father would surely prove the value of His name when the Son was not here in person to watch over them; and the very ruin of Judas rightly read should make the scripture still more solemn and sure to their souls.

Chapter 85

Notes on John 17:14-19

From verse 14 the Lord pleads for another object on behalf of the disciples. He had entreated for them to be set in His love in presence of the Father; He now asks that they may have His place in presence of the world. As He had sought their association with Himself in the one case, so in the other He would have no less an association. There it was for His joy to be fulfilled in them; here it is for the Father's testimony in and by them; His place on earth, as in heaven.

“I have given them thy word; and the world hated them because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world. I do not ask that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them out of the evil. Of the world they are not, as I am not of the world.” (Vers. 14-16.)

It is not here as in verse 8 “the words” (■■ματα) given of the Father to the Son which the Son had given to the disciples, the communications of love, whence they knew truly that He came from the Father, and believed to their joy that the Father sent Him. It is here the Father's “word” (λ■γος), the expression of His mind. This, it was said already, they had kept. But the Lord resumes the notice of it in connection with testimony in the world which for Him was closed. In the world they were to be witnesses of Him, and the Father's word He has given them, and the world hated them, not for that word only, offensive as it is to the world, but because they, the disciples who had it, were not of the world even as their Master is not. This is the true measure of unworldliness, and it is intolerable in the world's eyes, and nowhere so much as in the religious world. For men on earth to know themselves possessors of eternal life sounds presumptuous to such as know not Christ and His work. But to add that they are not of the world the world will have to be intolerance. The truth is that nothing is so lowly as faith, and faith works by love, the very reverse of despising others or trusting in themselves that they are righteous. Christ is all to the believer, as He is to the Father; and as He is not of the world, so they are not. That they are not of the world depends on the former truth, that they are the Father's and given to the son, who manifested the Father's name to them and kept them in that name; as He besought that the Father would keep them still during His absence from the world. Christ in John is from the outset unknown to the world and rejected: they know not the Father and the Son. So it is with the children of God. “Therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not.” The breach is complete. “The world hated them,” as it hated both the Father and the Son.

Never had there been such a breach before. It was not so during God's dealings with Israel of old; nor yet in their ruin during the ensuing times of the Gentiles. Man was still under trial; and even while the Lord was here below, the character of His ministry was God in Him reconciling the world to Himself. But the world would none of Him, and is judged in its prince. And as man is now in the light of the cross pronounced lost, so is the saint crucified to the world and the world to him. They are not of the world, as Christ is not of the world. It is a fact, and not merely an obligation, though the firmest ground of obligation. They are not of the world, not merely they ought not to be; whilst if they are not, it is grievous inconsistency even to seem to be of the world. It is to be false to our

relationship, for we are the Father's and given to the rejected Son who has done with the world; and if it be said that this is to bring in everlasting and heavenly relationships now, be it so: this is exactly what Christianity means in principle and practice. It is faith possessing Christ, who gives the believer His own place of relationship and acceptance on high as well as of testimony apart from and rejected by the world below; which he has to make good in words and ways, in spirit and conversation, whilst waiting for the Lord. Hence if going back to law or flesh, as in Galatia, was to fall from grace, no less thorough is the departure of the Christian when he seeks the world of which he is not. That the world improves for Christ or His own is as false as that the flesh can ameliorate. It is the light become darkness, and how great is that darkness! There may not be the reflex of the latter part of Rom. 1, but it answers to the beginning of 2 Tim. 3. It is the natural man knowing enough to forego what is shameless, and invested with a religious veil; it is the world essentially, occupying itself with the things of God in profession but in reality of the world, where common sense suffices for its service and its worship, and the mind of Christ would be altogether inapplicable. What a triumph to the enemy! It is just what we see in Christendom; and nothing irritates so much as the refusal so to walk, worship or serve. It does not matter how loudly you denounce or protest: if you join the world, they will not mind your words, and you are faithless to Christ. Nor does it matter how much grace and patience you show; if you keep apart as not of the world, you incur enmity and hatred, and contempt. A disciple is not above his Master; but everyone that is perfected shall be as his Master. To act as not of the world is felt to be its strongest condemnation; and no meekness or love can make it palatable. Nor does God intend that it should, for He means it as part of the testimony to His Son. And as the world neither receives nor understands the Father's word, so it hates those who have and act on that word.

Doubtless there is a moment when the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we the living who remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, when He shall Himself with a shout, with archangel's voice, and with trump of God, descend from heaven; and thus we shall ever be with Him. But the Lord did not ask yet that the Father should thus take His own out of the world, but that He should keep them out of the evil. This He does by His grace through His word, as we shall see presently. Only the Lord, before He explains how the Father keeps the saints, reiterates in a new form so as to give greater emphasis, Of the world they are not, as I am not of the world. Nor is anything more speedily forgotten, unless the eye be fixed on Christ above, with continual vigilance as to our motives ways and ends, as well as unsparing self-judgment. It was of all moment to have it firm and clear that the world and the Christian have no common ground, and that Christ Himself, according to whose grace and for whose glory in communion with the Father we are here, is the pattern of our unworldliness. What separateness so absolute? or dependent on relationship to the Father so near, save only His, who is in the highest way its pattern? For the world in the sense here conveyed is that vast system which man has built up away from God in independence and self-reliance, and to the exclusion, not of His nominal honor, but of any real submission to His righteousness, His will, or His glory, which fully came out in the rejection and cross of His Son, who thereon reveals as wholly distinct in source, nature, character, and aim, those that the Father owns as His in the world, whose fellowship is indeed with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Of the world they are not, as He is not. They are Christ's.

Now comes the formative power, as wholly new as above man, and not of God merely but of the Father. “Sanctify them by [or, in] the truth: thy word is truth. As thou didst send me forth into the

world, I also sent them forth into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify thyself that they also may be sanctified in truth." (Vers. 17-19.)

It is impossible to overrate the importance of the Savior's words for His disciples; it is easy for men to misapprehend them, as those do who lower and narrow the word to separation for ministerial service. But He had at heart a more personal and intimate want, that the disciples should themselves be imbued with, formed and fashioned by, the truth. The law now sufficed not; not even in the most comprehensive sense, as embracing the prophets and the Psalms. For Christ was come, the Only-begotten who declared God otherwise unseen of any one. He revealed the Father, who would make a fresh and full yet permanent revelation, as we have it not only in Him but in the scriptures as a whole. The sanctification or setting apart was therefore as new as complete. It was to the Father that the Son spread His request for men who were none of them heathen but of the holy seed. Yet for such does He say, "Sanctify them by the truth." The truth was revealed as it never was before. "Thy word," the Father's word, "is truth." Truths had been made known, never the truth till Jesus who is it. For He first, He only as an objective display, showed out every one, God, man, Satan even, and everything, heaven, earth, hell, and all things in them, as they really are, for His person (the Word made flesh) alone was competent to do it. His advent and redemption gave the suited occasion and needed object for the full revelation, as being Son of man and withal true God and eternal life. By the truth then, the Father's word, were the disciples to be sanctified. The Father revealed, not only in the Son personally but in His word detailedly, changed all for the soul. None but the Son, and the Son a man on earth, glorifying the Father perfectly in His life, glorifying God as such in His death, could furnish the adequate motive for the Father's love, object for His ways, center of His counsels or manifestation of His glory. Hence all is out and in perfection: testimony higher, deeper, fuller is looked for in vain, as those know who acknowledging the Son have the Father also and are not of the world.

Then comes their mission, which is drawn from the same unworldly source and is characterized by it. "As thou didst send me forth into the world, I also sent them forth into the world." Moses disappears even as a pattern; so do the prophets. Even John the Baptist (and among those born of women was no prophet greater) was but man in mission from God; but he that is least in the kingdom is greater than he. He that cometh from above-from heaven-is above all. Such was Jesus; and as the Father sent forth Him, so He too sent those who then surrounded Him, their mission as new as the word which formed and furnished their souls. It flowed from One apart from the world and above it, who had been sent into it on an errand of infinite love to the Father's glory and was in spirit no more here but in heaven, whither He was actually going soon. It was thus the Son sent the disciples associated with Himself in heaven and charged with the Father's testimony to the world. Not of the world as He was not, they could be and were sent into it. Had they been of the world, they could not he sent into it; but, as taken out of it by grace in Christ, they were not of it.

This is fitly followed by another and crowning means of sanctification of which the Lord speaks. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified in truth." It is not the Father's word now as given to them here and revealing Him in every detail as the disciples needed, though inseparable from Christ's person as come into the world, where they too were sent. This was essential both for themselves and their work. But grace does more; and the Lord goes on to show how He is setting Himself apart on high, the Son as ever but model Man before the Father in heaven, so as to complete their sanctification in seeing Him thus in glory. Thus it is not only the

truth brought out here in all its application, but the truth also in the glorified Christ as the suited object to animate and strengthen as well as transform, while we behold Him with unveiled face: God revealed in man, the Son of man; the Son of man now glorified by God in Himself, and this straightway, that the disciples might be sanctified “in truth,” both bearing on their nature and walk. For, without such an object above, the fullest demonstration of God's righteousness and power were lacking, and so too, one might add, of the Father's love and glory, as well as what was due to His own person foot only as divine but as man, and man glorified according to the counsels of God. And the disciples also needed His blessed person thus before them at God's right hand in order to fix and fill their affections, beside the word which perfectly reveals all the mind of God in grace. Thus it is not simply as incarnate that the Lord sanctifies Himself on their behalf,-nor yet as dying sacrificially, according to Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria, with a crowd of followers since their day, but as glorified, consequent on death and resurrection, that He becomes the pattern of His own. Beholding Him they are transformed into His image from glory to glory even as by the Lord the Spirit; and, when He shall be manifested, they are to be like Him, seeing Him as He is, and conformed to the image of the Son in resurrection glory. God Himself could give no other portion so blessed, when Christ shall be the firstborn among many brethren.

Chapter 86

Notes on John 17:20-21

The Lord now proceeds to plead for those to be brought into faith in Him by apostolic testimony that they too might form a unity according to God and bear witness before the world to His mission of the Son. Verse 11 had contemplated only those disciples who were then surrounding Him in view of special grace and the consequent responsibility which attached to them.

“And not for these only do I ask, but also for those that believe on me through their word, that they may be all one, even as thou, Father, in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou didst send me.” (Vers. 20, 21.)

There was to be, as we have seen, an astonishing exhibition of unity in the apostles. But there is another and larger unity here. Those believing on Him through their word are now presented to the. Father, “that they may be all one.” Room is thus left for multitudes of believers, for confessors of His name, Jew or Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free; for those that had hitherto clung tenaciously to legal forms, the substance of which they refused through their unbelief of Him; for those that had been well-nigh as obstinate in cleaving to the dreams of heathenism and its debasing immorality, in utter ignorance of the only true God only known through Him whom He sent. The gospel was about to go forth to every land and in every tongue, as the Holy Ghost bore witness on the day of Pentecost; and the more strikingly on that day, because they as yet were Jews only from Gentile countries as well as Palestine, and the miracle was not the obvious and comparatively easy one of enabling all, home or foreign sons of Israel, to understand the wonderful works of God in the Hebrew tongue, but conversely that they, every man in his own dialect in which they had been born, should hear the disciples speak. God has of old smitten men's pride and divided them into ever so many differing tongues. Grace now rose above judgment, not reducing them all to one lip and the same words, but meeting each where thus scattered. Nor was this all; but the power of the Spirit baptized all the believers into one body, the church. The unity here however, though produced of course by the same Spirit in those who compose that body, is not that which fell to the apostle Paul to set out. Of a spiritual nature it nevertheless displays itself in that which the world can see and appreciate in measure. It is not precisely “one as we,” that is, as the Father and the Sons which verse 11 had predicated of the disciples. As the Father and the Son had but one mind and affection, purpose and way, so was this oneness desired for the apostles in their work and life; and wondrously was it realized in them as we have already noticed. Here the saints at large, those who believe through their word, are in view; and the thing sought is that they should be “all one,” “even as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” —not “as we” but “in us,” in the Father and the Son. It is communion in virtue of the Father made known in the Son, and of the Son the object of the Father's love and delight, into which we are brought by the Holy Ghost. With the Father we share the Son; with the Son we share the Father. Into this blessedness the saints were now for the first time to be introduced, and in such sort that they should be all one, even as the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Father, so they also one in the Father and the Son.

This was to be a testimony to the world, not preaching only, but this oneness so singular, so unprecedented among men, oneness in the joy of divine grace which drew together souls so diverse and by the power of divine objects, motives and affections, those who had been once utterly indifferent or bitterly opposed, hating and hated. What a call for the world to believe that the Father sent the Son! For this and this only, but this adequately, accounted for it, when the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven gave the truth energy in hearts purified by faith. For as flesh tends to scatter by the assertion of its own will, so the Spirit operates to unite in the Father and the Son; and when the world sees the fruits of such gracious and holy power in the oneness of men otherwise alienated, and by nothing so keenly and permanently as their varying religions, what a demonstration that the Father sent the Son! For here at least was no power of the sword, here no pandering to lust, here no inducement of wealth or worldly honor, here no allowance any more of sin than of human righteousness, no pride of philosophy any more than religious show or ritualism. None can deny that as built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets there was constant and unresisting exposure to the world's scorn and violence. Self-sacrificing love reigned, grace we may say through righteousness in devotedness to the name of Jesus; and a heavenly separateness to Him for whom they avowedly waited from heaven. What then accounted for so astonishing a change from all that had previously characterized mankind, not merely among the Gentiles but in Israel even in its most flourishing estate? What did it attest but that the Father sent the Son? What of grace and truth, of perfect and eternal redemption, of near and heavenly relationship, does not this involve?

For if the Father sent the Son, it could not but be for ends impossible otherwise and worthy of the true God revealing Himself in sovereign grace, yea in intimate love, as well as in the light which makes everything manifest. Nor was the Son only to make the truth known and to impart the divine nature, the eternal life, capable of receiving and enjoying it and walking in it by the Spirit of God. There was an incomparably solemn yet blessed work to be wrought to God's glory as well as for man's deep need and everlasting salvation: sin had to be borne in judgment, a propitiation made for our sins so complete that God should be righteous in justifying the believer, and that believers should become God's righteousness in Christ. Thus washed, sanctified, justified, children of God consciously, the Holy Ghost given, they find others in the communion of the same blessing; they are all one, as the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father, and brought out as they are of the strongest prejudices into a mutuality of enjoyed blessedness, into oneness in the Father and the Son, what could more powerfully bear witness to the world that the Father sent the Son?

Notes on John 17:22-23

There is yet another unity of the deepest interest which our Lord next spreads before the Father: not discipular or apostolic, which was so marvelously sustained, nor of testimony in the grace that would embrace all Christians, which after a bright display at first has long painfully broken down, but unity in glory where all is stable and according to God.

“And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one as we [are] one, I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that thou didst send me and lovedst them as thou lovedst me.” (Vers. 22, 23.)

This is wholly distinct from what we have seen, though all be to the praise of Christ. It is an exclusively future unity, though the glory be given to our faith now, and grace would have us apprehend it and feel and walk accordingly. For all is revealed to act now on our souls. But this unity will be in glory when we shall be one as the Father and the Son are. Hence failure here is impossible. The weakness of man, the power of Satan, can damage no more.

The manner of this unity is to be noted also. It is not the mutuality which we had described in verse 21, that we should be one in the Father and the Son, as the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father. Such is the admirable way in which the Savior set out what we are called to now by the Spirit, that the world may believe the Father sent the Son. But by-and-by, when the glory is revealed, there will be this new character, that, while the saints are to be one even as the Father and the Son are one, it will be Christ the Son in them and the Father in Him. And this as exactly agrees with Rev. 21 as the former answers to 1 John 1:3.

For as the holy city, new Jerusalem, is the bride the Lamb's wife, the symbol of the glorified saints in that day, so we are shown that the city had the glory of God, and the Lamb its lamp, while the nations walk in its light. (Vers. 11, 23, 24.) Thus are the blessed on earth to enjoy the heavenly glory, not directly like the glorified on high who have the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb as their temple and need none other; whereas those on earth have it but mediately. Yet how constant and impressive the proof before them that the Father sent the Son! For how else could there have grown up such a holy temple in the Lord? And what adequately could account for men thus called out of the earth and glorified on high? Sovereign grace had given them that heavenly portion as the fruit of His mission who at all cost to Himself had glorified God on the earth. And now they share His glory above, and are so displayed before the wondering world. The salvation-bearing grace which had appeared to all and had done its suited and appointed work in redeeming and purifying these to God as a people of possession will then have given place to the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, but this through the church reigning over the earth, at any rate as the ordinary or normal method of its manifestation during the kingdom. As we by faith saw the Father in the on to eternal life, they in that day will behold and learn them in the church, the glorious vessel of the light of Christ in whom God's glory shines. For then the false glory of man is forever judged, never more to mislead the heart, and Satan will never regain his bad eminence in the heavenlies whereby he found means most effectively to misrepresent God,

oppose Christ, accuse the saints, and deceive the world. It is thenceforward the glory of God that is established before all eyes, so that men “know” it in and by the glorified saints, instead of being objects of testimony that they might “believe.” For the earth shall be full of the glory of Jehovah (Num. 14:21) and of the knowledge of Jehovah (Isa. 11) and of the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea, when Christ shall have come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believed, in that day.

Therefore do we hear for the first time of being “perfected into one.” The apostolic unity first spoken of, unity in counsel and action, as the Father and the Son gave pattern was as blessed as it was all-important for the place they had to fill and the work to be done in the testimony of Christ. Still it was comparatively partial, and necessarily on a small scale. Far wider was the second unity of fellowship in the Father and the Son exhibited in the Pentecostal assembly at large, when thousands of souls walked together superior to selfish influence and great grace was upon them all, and of the rest durst no man join himself to them, but the people magnified them, and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. But this was only transient. The third will be perfect in glory, and so permanent as well as complete.

And the effect will be immense and immediate, as indeed one could not conceive it otherwise. The world will contemplate with amazement the church in the glory and the glory of God in the church, or (as the Lord says) the Father in Him, and He in them glorified. It is unity perfect both in connection with its source and in manifestation of the divine glory. And what a demonstration that the Father sent the Son and loved the saints as He loved Him! For how should the Son be there as the glorified Man unless previously sent here in love? and how should we be manifested together with Him in glory, unless loved with the same love? It is no question of “believing” this being undeniable fact. The world will “know” it. We may know now what is only revealed in the word to our faith; but this will be a display of divine glory.

Chapter 88

Notes on John 17:24-26

The closing section of our Lord's words is quite distinct in its character, and yet more intimate, as is marked by His use of θ■λω “I will” (or “desire") for the first and only time throughout His prayer.

“Father, those (or, that) which thou hast given me, I will that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold thy glory which thou hast given me, because thou lovedst me before the world's foundation. Righteous Father, both the world knew thee not, and I knew thee, and these knew that thou didst send me; and I made thy name known to them and will make [it] known, that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them and I in them.” (Vers. 24-26.)

First, the Lord desires of the Father that those whom He had given Him should be with Him where He is. He is in spirit on high before the Father, and would have His own with Himself there, It is no question of display in glory before the world, even though in the closest association with Him; it is to be with Himself where no stranger can (I do not say merely, intermeddle with the joy, but) look on Him or them, in the hidden scene which divine love forms for its deepest satisfaction. There the Father has the Son after glorifying Himself perfectly in the face of all possible difficulty, and the suffering entailed not by creature opposition and malice, but by divine judgment of God on that evil, the consequences of which must be borne unsparingly by Him, who would vindicate God on the one hand, and on the other deliver to the uttermost the guilty, so far as suited the gracious purpose of God. And this Jesus did in absolute obedience, as became Himself a man in grace beyond measure and at all cost; this He did in infinite suffering to His Father's praise, who acquired fresh and everlasting glory and could thenceforward act as freely as righteously according to His nature and His love.

And now, as we have seen at the beginning of the chapter, going to heaven on the ground not of His personal title only but of His work, He expresses His desire that His own also, the disciples whom the Father had given Him, should be with Him above, “that they may behold my glory.” It is not on the one hand that which is personal from everlasting to everlasting, beyond creature ken, that in the Son which I presume none really knows nor can, save the Father who is not said to reveal Him. Neither is it on the other hand the glory given to the blessed Lord which is to be manifested even to the world in that day, in which glory we are to be manifested along with Him. Here it is proper to Himself on high, yet given Him by the Father, as we are in His perfect favor to behold it: a far higher thing than any glory shared along with us, and which the Lord, reckoning on unselfish affections divinely formed in us, looks for our valuing accordingly, as more blessed in beholding Him thus than in aught conferred on ourselves. It is a joy for us alone, wholly outside and above the world, and given because the Father loved Him before its foundation. None but the Eternal could be thus glorified, but it is the secret glory which none but His own are permitted to contemplate, “blest answer to reproach and shame,” not the public glory in which every eye shall see Him. Nothing less than that meets His desire for us. How truly even now our hearts can say that He is worthy!

Next, the Lord draws the line definitively between the world and His own, and makes it turn not on rejecting Himself but on ignoring His Father. Here therefore it is a question of judgment in result, however grace may tarry and entreat; and therefore He says, “Righteous Father,” not “Holy Father,” as in verse 11 where He asks Him to keep them in His name, as He Himself had done whilst with them. Now He sets forth not the lawlessness of the world, not its murderous hatred of Himself or of His disciples, nor yet of the grace and truth revealed in the gospel, nor of the, corruptions of Christianity and the church which we are sure lay naked and opened before His all-seeing eyes, but that on the one side the world knew not the Father, and on the other that the Son did, as the disciples that the Father sent the Son: words simple and briefly said, but how solemn in character and issues!

Never was so competent a witness of anyone or anything, as Christ of the Father. Yet the world knew Him not, nor received His testimony for a moment, but rose up more and more against it till all closed in the cross. Thenceforward He is hid in heaven, and those who believe in Him are heavenly. False pretension to it is salt that has lost its savor. And all those who are true are the first to own that all turns for them on the Son's knowledge of the Father, as they themselves knew the Father sent Him. It is no question of themselves at all, but of the Father; and He is only known in the Son, whom He sent; and this is eternal life, whether now had in Christ or enjoyed without alloy when we behold His glory on high; as ignorance of the Father implies the guilty rejection of the Son, to the everlasting loss, and not merely passing judgment, of the world.

But, lastly, where Christ is known as the Father's sent One, the deepest blessing and the highest privileges are even now given, and not merely what awaits the saints at Christ's coming. “And I made known to them thy name, and will make known, that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them.” If ever there was one capable of estimating another, it was the Son in respect of the Father; and His name, the expression of what He was, with equal competency He made known to us. He had done it on earth to the disciples; He would do so from heaven whither He was going; and this that He might give them, and give us, the consciousness of the same love of the Father which rested ever on Himself here below. As if to cut off the not unnatural hesitation of the disciples, He adds the blessed guarantee in His own being in them, their life. For they could understand that, if they lived of His life, and could be somehow as He before the Father, the Father might love them as Him. This is just what He does give and secure by identification with them, or rather as He puts it, “and I in them.” Christ is all and in all.

Chapter 89

Notes on John 18:1-11

The Lord had concluded His words to the disciples and to His Father. His work on earth now about to close had been before Him, as well as His departure on high, and contingent on both the approaching mission of the Holy Spirit to abide with His own apart from the world. That rejection of the Savior which has been in view throughout our Gospel was now to reach its extreme in the cross; but its dark shadow, far from obscuring, only serves to bring out the True Light more distinctly. He is man, but a divine person, the Son throughout wherever He moves.

“Having said these things Jesus went out with His disciples beyond the torrent-bed of Kedron, where was a garden, into which he entered himself and his disciples. And Judas also that was betraying him knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. Judas then, having received the guard and officers from the high priests and from [the] Pharisees, cometh there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus then, knowing all things that were coming on him, went out and saith to them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus the Nazarean. He saith to them, I am [he]. And Judas that was betraying him was standing with them. When then he said to them, I am [he], they went backward and fell to the ground. Again then he asked them, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus the Nazarean. Jesus answered, I told you that I am [he]: if then ye seek me, leave these to go away; that the word might be fulfilled which he said, Of those whom thou hast given me, I have lost not one of them. Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it, and smote the bondman of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. Now the bondsman's name was Malchus. Jesus said then to Peter, Put the sword into the scabbard: the cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Vers. 1-11.)

It was the same orchard or garden which in the other Gospels is called Gethsemane (a word formed from the Hebrew words meaning a winepress and oil), but giving no real ground to say, as some after the patristic and medieval style, that here emphatically were fulfilled those dark words, “I have trodden the winepress alone,” as Isaiah has foretold, and as the name imports. For the treading of the winefat is when the Lord comes to judge, not to suffer, as the connected text, Rev. 14:20, ought to have been plain. Indeed no reader save one perverted by theological tradition could mistake the earlier prophet any more than the latest. For what is described in these prophecies is not agony but vengeance, not His bloody sweat with strong crying and tears, but His treading the peoples in His anger and their blood sprinkled on His garments.

But an intelligent and thoughtful reader would remark the striking absence of that wondrous scene where even those who loved the Lord, yea Peter, James, and John, could not watch with Him one hour. For His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and though He asked them to tarry and watch, whilst He went a little farther to pray, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and this repeatedly. I am aware that some left out of their copies of Luke the verses which record the angel which appeared from heaven strengthening Him, and the conflict such that His sweat became as great drops of blood falling down on the earth; as if the Lord were lowered by such an expression of real humanity and unspeakable grief, instead of seeing how characteristic the facts are of that

Evangelist and adoring Himself who could so love and suffer as there portrayed. Yet John, who alone of all four writers of the Gospels was near the Lord, nearer than Matthew-John is the only one who does not describe that conflict at all: and this, not because it was not infinitely precious to his spirit, nor because the others had given it to us, but because what he gave, as they also, was by inspiration and in no way a question of human judgment or feeling. John records, no less than Matthew and Mark and Luke, the miracle of the five barley loaves; and this because it was as essential to the work given him to do as for the others in theirs. For the same reason he, led by the Holy Spirit, does not give the agony in the garden, as not falling within his assigned province. He knew it of course, and must have often dwelt on it in his spirit deeply meditative beyond all the others, yet is silent.

Can anything more attest the overruling wisdom and power of the inspiring Spirit? Yes, in every part and every detail, one almost as much as another, were we not so dull of hearing; not only in what is omitted, but in what is inserted by infinite grace. Witness what our evangelist tells us next. He brings before us, no doubt, the appalling spectacle of Judas availing himself of his intimate knowledge of the Savior's habit and haunt to guide those who wished to take and slay Him. With the guard and officers from His enemies, Judas guides them to the spot of nightly prayer, with lanterns and torches and weapons to make sure of their prey, though full moon shone and He had never struck a blow in self-defense. But Judas really knew not Him any more than his companions did. How terrible the sight of a soul blinded to the deadly malice at work, no less than to the Savior's glory and His love! How surely Satan had entered, when we look at him as he stood with them and betrayed Him!

Jesus, knowing all that was coming on Him, goes out to them saying, Whom seek ye? and at His confession of Himself in reply to their answer of Jesus the Nazarean, they went backward and fell to the ground. How manifest the proof of His intrinsic divine glory! A Man sent and come in love, yet the true God, and this the constant and special testimony of John, the true key to what he does not say, no less than to what he does say. Yet is there no effort, but the most charming simplicity along with this deep and divine under-current. Not all the treachery of Judas, not all the hatred and enmity of the Jews, not all the power of Rome could have seized the Lord, had not the time arrived to give Himself up. His hour was now come. He could have destroyed the company which sought to apprehend Him as easily as He caused them to fall prostrate before His name; as by-and-by in virtue of His name every knee shall bow, of beings in heaven and beings on earth and beings under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

But when He asked them again, Whom seek ye? and they said, Jesus the Nazarean, grace shone out, not power: the former now, as the latter before, expressing the true God who was now manifesting Himself on earth in His own person. “If then ye seek me, leave these to go away; that the word might be fulfilled which he said, Of those whom thou hast given me, I have lost not one of them.” (Vers. 8, 9.) Like the ark in Jordan He would go alone into the waters of death, and His own pass over dry-shod. He gives Himself up freely for them. The great salvation which is infallible includes every lesser one which suits and serves the glory of God meanwhile. And blessed it is to trace to the same spring of gracious power in Christ all the passing mercies we experience, where His hand shields us from the enemy's malice. He puts Himself forward to endure all. His people go free; His word is fulfilled in every way. Where the Father gives, the Son loses none. What comfort and assurance before a hostile world!

But even His most honored servants fail, and are apt to fail most where they push forward in natural zeal and their own wisdom, too self-confident to watch His ways and heed His word and thus learn of Him. So Simon Peter then displays his haste in total discord with the grace of Christ; for having a sword he drew it and struck Malchus the servitor of the high priest, maiming him of his right ear. Had Peter watched and prayed instead of sleeping, it might have been otherwise; when we fail to pray, we enter into temptation.

Luke alone, true to his testimony to God's grace, tolls us of the Lord's answer, “Suffer ye thus far,” and of His touching the ear to heal the wounded man. Matthew alone, in harmony with the rejected Messiah but true King of Israel, gives the reproof which warned His servant of what it is for saints to resist carnally. Mark mentions the fact, but no more. John, agreeably to the purpose of God in his work, presents the Lord in unfaltering obedience to His Father, as before in divine power and grace. Nothing more calm than His correction of Peter's energy; nothing more distinct than His submission to the Father's will, whatever it cost. “The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” It is the same Jesus as in Luke and the other Gospels, yet what a difference! Everywhere worthy, never a word or way beneath the Holy One of God, but here above all the Son with perfect dignity and withal perfect subjection of heart in suffering as in work. It was His drink now in doing His will, as before His meat in doing it. As the living Father sent Him and He lived on account of the Father, so He lays down His life that He may take it again; but if He says, I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again, He adds, This commandment I received of my Father. Never was such deep and holy conflict as the second Man knew in the garden; but none of this appears in John: it is all the power and grace and calm of the Son with no motive but the Father's will. Never was there an approach to such glorifying of God the Father.

Chapter 90

Notes on John 18:12-27

The believer will note the bearing of our Lord throughout these closing scenes, His lowliness and dignity, His infinite superiority to all who surrounded Him, friends or foes, His entire submission and withal His power intact. He is a man, the Sent One, but Son of God throughout. It is He who shelters and secures the disciples; it is He who offers Himself freely. The traitor and the hand, the torches and the weapons, had all failed, if He had not been pleased in letting His own go to give Himself up. For this indeed had He entered this world, and His hour was now come. But it was His own doing and according to the will of His Father, whatever man's wickedness and Satan's malicious wiles. Not more surely was it the power of His name which overwhelmed the armed crowd of His would-be captors than that His grace alone accounts for His subsequent subjection to their will.

“The band therefore and the commander [chiliarch], and the officers of the Jews, took Jesus and bound him and led [him away] unto Annas first; for be was father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest of that year. But it was Caiaphas that counseled the Jews that one man should die for the people. Now Simon Peter was following Jesus, and the other disciple. And that disciple was known to the high priest and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest, but Peter was standing at the door outside. The other disciple therefore, that was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the porteress and brought in Peter. The maid therefore, the porteress, saith to Peter, Art thou also of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. But the bondmen and the officers were standing, having made a coal fire, for it was cold, and were warming themselves; and there was with them Peter standing and warming himself. The high priest then asked Jesus about his disciples and about his doctrine. Jesus answered, I have openly spoken in the world, I always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews assemble, and in secret I spoke nothing: why asked thou me? Ask those that have heard, what I spoke to them: behold, these know what I said. But as he said these things, one of the officers as he stood by, gave Jesus a blow, saying, Thus answerest thou the high priest? Jesus answered him, If I spoke ill, testify of the ill; but if well, why smitest thou me? Annas [therefore] sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore to him, Art thou also of his disciples? He denied and said, I am not. One of the bondmen of the high priest, being kinsmen of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did I not see thee in the garden with him? Peter therefore denied again, and immediately a cock crew.” (Vers. 12-27.)

Our evangelist notices the fact that the band carried our Lord, not only to Caiaphas the high priest, but before that to Annas his father-in-law, who had preceded him in that office, but was succeeded by Caiaphas before his death. All things were out of course, and in nothing was this more evident than in the closing scenes of the Savior. And therefore does the Gospel recall what was already recorded in chapter 11, where the highest religions office blended with the lowest expediency, and the prophetic Spirit wrought in the wicked high priest, as of old in the unprincipled prophet of Midian. As the rule the Holy Spirit actuated holy men for God's will and glory; but exceptionally He could and did use for that glory those whom Satan was employing to thwart it as much as possible.

Nothing can be more striking in Caiaphas' case than the way in which his heartless sentiment is turned by grace into the expression of a great truth wholly outside his ken. (Vers. 12, 13.)

Again we see, Simon Peter following the Lord, but not in the Spirit, nor was the other disciple there to his own honor, still less to the Lord's. For he finds access to the high priest's palace, as known to that functionary, and in no way as a follower of Jesus. And how he must have soon grieved over the kindly influence he exerted to get Peter let in, who had been obliged to stay without! Little did he think that his word to the porteress would give occasion to the terrible and repeated fall of his beloved fellow-servant! But every word of the Lord must be fulfilled. It would seem that the maid who kept the door was not ignorant of John's discipleship, for she says to Peter," Art thou also of this man's disciples?" But the trying question was put not to John, but to Peter; and Peter, in the garden so bold, now utterly quails before this woman. Such is man, though a saint: what is he to be accounted of? Nor is fleshly energy better really in Christ's eyes than fleshly weakness, which not only lied but denied his Master in denying his relationship to Him as a disciple. And this was warm-hearted, fervent, courageous Peter!

Yes, but it was Peter tried under the shadow of the coming cross. Death is an overwhelming trial to the disciple till he knows what it is to have died with Christ to sin and law, crucified to the world which crucified Him, and able therefore to glory in the cross. It was not so yet with Peter, and he fell; nor can we say more of John and the rest than that they were not so tried. That they would have stood the test better is more than any can accept who believe what God says. (Vers. 14-17.)

The high priest pursues his investigation; Peter renews his sin. And no wonder. For he had slept when he ought to have watched and prayed, and he had ventured into the scene of temptation instead of heeding the warning of the Lord. "But the bondmen and the officers were standing, having made a coal-fire, for it was cold, and were warming themselves; and there was with them Peter, standing and warming himself." (Ver. 18.) Evil communications corrupt good manners; and the confession of Jesus before friends is very different from confession before bloodthirsty enemies; and Peter must learn by painful experience what he was too unspiritual to realize from the words of Christ. It is blessed to learn our nothingness and worse in His presence who keeps from falling; but every saint, and specially every servant, must learn himself, if not there, in the bitter humiliation of what we are when we forget Him. May we abide in Him, and have His words abiding in us, and so ask what we will and have it done unto us! Peter had not thus failed before men if he had not failed before with his Master. Doubtless it is by the power of God we are kept, but it is through faith.

"The high, priest then asked Jesus about his disciples and about his doctrine." He desired grounds against the Lord. Was this the procedure of-I will not ask the grace which should characterize a priest, but-ordinary painstaking righteousness? It was not to screen Himself that the Lord points to His open and constant testimony. Others unlike Him might cultivate private coteries and secret instructions, not to speak of darker counsels inciting to deeds that shunned all light of day. "Jesus answered, I have openly spoken in the world, I always taught in synagogue, and in the temple, where all the Jews assemble; and in secret I spoke nothing: why askest thou me? Ask those that have heard what I spoke to them: behold, these know what I said." It was unanswerably true and right. The only reply was a brutal insult from a Jewish underling who would thus, as he could not otherwise, sustain the high priest. But the Lord answered the low as the high with a righteous

dignity immeasurably above them all: “If I spoke ill, testify of the ill; but if well, why smitest thou me?”

So fared the Lord with the high priest: how painful the contrast of the disciple warming himself with the slaves? More than one assailed him with the crucial question, “Art thou also of his disciples?” Again the fear of man prevailed; and he who truly believed in Him did not confess but denied and said, I am not. But this was not all. For “one of the bondmen of the high priest, being kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did I not see thee in the garden with him? Peter therefore denied again, and immediately a cock crew.” (Vers. 26, 27.) Oh what fear of man bringing a snare! What blinding power of the enemy thus to involve a saint in direct and daring falsehood, and this to shame Him who was his life and salvation! But of what is not the heart capable when the Lord is not before it, but fear or lust or aught else by which Satan beguiles? God however took care that the dread of man to His dishonor should cover the guilty disciple with self-reproach and contempt and utter humiliation when an eye-witness could brand him before all with his reiterated lying in denial of his Master.

It will be noticed that we have in this Gospel neither the Lord's antecedent praying for Peter and assurance of restoration, nor His turning and looking on Peter after his last denial, when he, remembering the word of the Lord, went out and wept bitterly. These are given explicitly in the only Gospel whose character they suit and sustain. (See Luke 22:31, 32, and 60, 61.) Here all turns, not on the discovery of what man's heart is, and the grace of the Lord's, but on the person of Christ as the one central object, not so much the Second man despised by man, and the energy of His love acting on a disciple spite of utter failure in himself, but the Son of God glorifying the Father in the midst of complete and universal ruin.

Notes on John 18:28-40

This Lord has been before the religious authority; He is now to appear before the civil power. It was a mockery everywhere; and so it must be shown out against His person who will one day cut off him that privily slanders his neighbor and will not suffer the man that has a high look and a proud heart, any more than the liar and deceiver, early destroying all the wicked of the land, and especially from the city of Jehovah. But His glary they wist not, nor consequently His grace; yet they should not have been blind to His holy and righteous ways; but man religious or profane was filling up the cup of his iniquity, and the more so because of God's long-suffering.

“They lead then Jesus from Caiaphas to the pretorium; and it was early; and they entered not into the pretorium that they might not be defiled but eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them and said, What accusation do ye bring against this man? They answered and said to him, If this [man] were not an evil-doer, we should not have delivered him up to thee. Pilate therefore said to them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews said to him, It is not allowed to us to put any one to death; that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled which he said signifying by what death he should die. Pilate then again entered into the pretorium, and called Jesus and said to him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, Of thyself sayest thou this, or did others say [it] to thee about me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thy nation and the chief priests delivered thee up to me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would be fighting that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from hence. Pilate then said to him, Art thou then a king? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith to him, What is truth? And having said he again went out unto the Jews, and saith to them, I find no fault in him; but ye have a custom that I release one to you at the passover: will ye then that I release to you the King of the Jews? They cried then again, all saying, Not this [man] but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.” (Vers. 28-40.)

The activity of hostile will marked the Jews, whose zeal was as great as their punctiliousness and their lack of conscience. Late and early were they at work, from one high priest to another, pushing on to the Roman governor. Bent on the blood of the Messiah they scrupled to enter the pretorium; they must not be defiled, as they would eat the passover and had not yet done so. (Ver. 28.) Little thought they that they were but bringing about the death of the true paschal Lamb, and so in guilty unbelief fulfilling the voice of the law to their own destruction, whatever God's purpose in His death. The hard-hearted pagan seems at first fair and just compared with the chosen nation: we shall see how at last Satan found the way to excite his unrighteousness and fix him, as them, in hopeless evil through rejecting Christ. Pilate felt that there was no proper case for him, and asks a tangible accusation. (Ver. 29.) The want of this they evade by an affected or real affront at his question, as if they could not be unjust. (Ver. 30.) The governor would gladly have thrown the responsibility on the Jews, who betray their own foregone conclusion: Jesus must die; and as death could not be lawfully at their hands, it must be by the hand of lawless men. He must die the

death of the cross. Thus was the word of Jesus to be fulfilled, signifying what death He should die. (Ver. 32.) John 3:15; 8:28; 12:32, 33: compare Matt. 16:21; 17:12, 22, 23; 20:18, 19. Stephen might be stoned by the Jews in an outburst of religious fury, James be slain with the sword by Herod; but the Son of man must be condemned by the Jewish chief priests and scribes, and be crucified by the Gentiles. “For in truth against thy holy servant Jesus whom thou anointedst, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the nations and people of Israel were gathered together to do whatever thy hand and thy counsel pre-determined should come to pass.” (Acts 4:27, 28.) Man universally must prove his guilt to the last degree and the divine word be fulfilled to the letter, God Himself (we may say in the person of His Son) being cast out in shame from His own earth, for all this and more was involved in this deliberate and fatal act. Yet was it the deepest moral glory. Now was the Son of man glorified, and God was glorified in Him. Obedience unto death, absolute devotedness, suffering beyond measure both for righteousness and for sin, met there on the one hand; and on the other the truth, the justice, the grace and the majesty of God, were not vindicated only but glorified, while Satan's power and claims were forever annulled, and a perfect everlasting basis to God's glory laid for the blessing of man and creation in general: such were the fruits of Christ's death on the cross. How dense the blindness of its instruments how dim the intelligence even of its favored objects! How blessed the Father and the Son in love and holiness, spite of all accomplishing all!

Again the Roman (whose characteristic common sense saw through the envy and malice of the Jews, and repudiated all anxiety as to the honor or security of Caesar) entered into the pretorium, called the Lord, and said, Art thou the King of the Jews! He who was silent before the high priest till adjured by the living God answered Pilate by the question, Of thyself sayest thou this; or did others say it to thee about Mb (Vers. 33, 34.) This was the turning-point. If the governor were uneasy as to the rights and interests of Caesar, the Lord could have pointed to His uniform life, as in John 6:15, and to His invariable teaching, as in Luke 20:25, as a perfect disproof and re-assurance. But if the question originated, as it really did, with the Jews (Luke 23:2), the Lord had nothing to say but the truth in the face of Israel's unbelief and gainsaying, nothing to do but witness the “good confession” before Pontius Pilate; and this He does.

The governor's answer made plain what was already sure, that the true Son of David was rejected by the Jew undefinitively false to the one divine hope of the nation. “Am I a Jew?” said he; “thy nation and the chief priests delivered thee up to me what hast thou done?” (Ver. 35.) Not one thing against which is any law: every word, every way, testified of God. He spoke, He was the truth, which not only detected man but presented the Father, and both were intolerable. They would have none of Him; not because He did not give every possible proof of His Messiahship, but because He put them in presence of God and of their sins, from which testimony there was no escape but the rejection of Himself. Hence the all-importance of what was in question. People and priests alike refused their own Messiah; and He bowed to it. Deeper things were meanwhile in accomplishment; and the infinite glory of His person, already confessed by the disciples, as well as His work of eternal redemption, were about to be proclaimed in the gospel and to supersede Jewish hopes, and the gathering together in one of the scattered children of God should replace the disowned nation, till at the end of the age they shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah, when the long-rejected Jesus shall once more and forever recall them as His own, and bless them unchangingly, and make them a blessing to all the families of the earth.

Hence Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would be fighting that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from hence.” (Ver. 36.) When the Jews repent and the Lord returns in power and glory, not only will He be revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance, but Jerusalem be made a burdensome stone for all people, bending Judah for Him and filling the bow with Ephraim. But here we have Christianity which has come in before that day with His kingdom not of this world, nor from hence but from above, where all savors of the rejected but glorified Christ, and according to the revealed knowledge of the Father, the Jews being as such outside and manifest enemies.

The governor, while satisfied that there was nothing to fear politically, could not but perceive a claim incomprehensible to his mind. “Art thou then a king?” This the Lord could not deny. It was the truth, and He confessed it, whatever it might cost. But having done so, He set forth that which applies now. “Thou sayest I am a king. I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the troth.” The law was given by Moses, and Jesus was the born King of the Jews. But He was conscious of another and higher glory bound up with His person as Son of God: grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” How solemn and unwavering the testimony! The Jews were zealous for the law, not because it was of God, but because it was theirs; the Romans sought this world and its power. They were both blind to the eternal and unseen. Jesus was the truth, as well as the Faithful and True Witness to it. But He adds more, strange to the ears of man, and not least to Roman cars; “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” If a man did not hear Him, he was not of the truth. How could it be otherwise if He was the Only-begotten Son, a man on earth? What could such an One come for but for this, if He came in grace, not in judgment? And Pilate, with a “What is truth?” returns to the Jews. He did not seriously seek an answer: an awakened conscience alone does; and grace, as it produces the desire in the sinner, gives the answer of good from God. Not so Pilate, who having said this went out again to the Jews, saying, “I find no fault in him;” and suggesting as a solution of the difficulty the customary release of a prisoner at the feast, he offers to let go their King. But this only draws out the depth of their hatred, and they all cry out.... “Not this man but Barabbas.” Now Barabbas, as the evangelist adds, was a robber. So the Jews chose Satan's son of the father; for so the word means. How evident that man rejecting Jesus is Satan's slave!

Notes on John 19:1-15

Hard-heartedness and insult took their course, for His hour was come. Pilate took and scourged Jesus the. Lord of glory; the soldiers treated their meek prisoner with the unfeeling scorn, natural in such towards One who resisted not; yet we must look to the Jews for extreme and unrelenting hatred.

“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged [him]. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put [it] on his head, and clothed him with a purple garment, and were coming to him and saying, Hail, King of the Jews! and gave him slaps on the face. And Pilate went out again and saith to them, See! I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find no fault [in him]. Jesus therefore came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment, and he saith to them, Behold the man!” (Vers. 1-8.)

The Roman saw through the baseness of the people, through the craft and deadly malice of the religions chiefs; and he seems to have resorted to the unjust policy of scourging the Lord, followed up by the allowed, if not prescribed, derision of the soldiers, as a means of satisfying the Jews and letting Jesus go. Contrary to truth and righteousness he would humor their feelings against Jesus, but he would save an innocent man if possible without loss to himself. Such is man in authority here below-at least where Christ is concerned, or even those that are Christ's. It was the place of judgment, but wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, but iniquity was there. There was not one spark of conscience in the judge, any more than in the accusers, or the crowd now quite carried away. There was man deceived by Satan; and God was in none of their thoughts. Pilate probably hoped that the uncomplaining endurance of such cruel mockery and scourging in their sight might perchance move the multitude and its leaders to compassion, whilst the exposed futility of the royal claims of Jesus would naturally awaken their contempt, and so in both ways further his own desire to dismiss the captive in whom he avowedly saw no guilt whatever. But, no! all must come out in their true colors, priests and people, learned and unlearned, civilians and soldiers, judge and prisoner. It was their hour and the power of darkness. But if man and Satan were there, so was God, morally judging them all by the One they misjudged.

Still in that blind and hardened throng the Roman, unjust as he was, shines in comparison with the Jews of all ranks; and as the difficulty grew of delivering the Guiltless from their will set on destruction, we see a man in spite of himself growingly impressed with the unaccountable dignity of Him who appeared to be at his mercy. Elsewhere indeed we read of his wife's dream sent to warn him on the judgment-seat; but here it is His person, His silence and His words alike, which increased the desire to extricate Him, from unscrupulous and murderous adversaries, always despised in Pilate's eyes, never so despicable as now.

Pilate's effort however was vain. “Behold the man!” had for its effect neither the pity nor the contempt intended to divert the crowd from their fell purpose, but rather to whet their rage afresh in clamoring for the Lord's death. In the ways of God He will not allow iniquity to prosper, least of all where Christ is in question. The unjust judge might abuse and insult the Lord, hoping to gratify the

Jews thus far and turn them from an aim from which even his stern and callous mind revolted as useless crime; but God, who abhorred the horrible iniquity of them all, lets Satan ensnare them all in the consequences of their utter unbelief, and their habitually evil state-deaf to every warning and blind to the fullest testimony of moral goodness and divine glory, and perfect grace in the holy Sufferer before them. As the judge acknowledged His innocence, yet would risk nothing on His behalf, so all commit and condemn themselves to their own ruin, stumbling over that precious Cornerstone and sure foundation as a stone disallowed by the builders.

“When then the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried, Crucify, crucify. Pilate saith to them, Take ye him, and crucify; for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered, We have a law, and according to the law he ought to die, because he made himself Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard this word, he was the more afraid, and entered into the pretorium again, and saith to Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate saith to him, Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have authority to release thee, and I have authority to crucify thee? Jesus answered, Thou hadst no authority at all against me except it were given thee from above: on this account he that delivered me up to thee hath greater sin.” (Vers. 6-12.)

The charge failing against the Lord as hostile to the powers of the world, His accusers now betake them selves to the still more solemn cry, He ought to die because He made Himself Son of God. And Pilate was the more afraid, but not more ready to fall in with their design, though he were a heathen and they the blasphemers of the Hope of Israel, the Holy One of God! Yes, He is going to die, but not for the lies some swore falsely against Him, but for the truth of God, the capital troth for man, the object of faith and one source of eternal life. He emptied Himself, and humbled Himself; but Son of God He was and is from all eternity to all eternity. Not more sure is it that matt is a sinner dead to God, than that Jesus is His Son, and eternal life is in Him only, but for every soul that believes in Him. He that believeth hath everlasting life; nor is there salvation in any other, nor is there another name under heaven which is given among men whereby we must be saved. But those who ought most to have welcomed Him, and most to have set forth His glory, were those who feared not to say, According to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself Son of God! O how real, how darkening the power of Satan, when Jews blasphemed Him boldly, and the heathen procurator “was afraid” before Him!

Fear however is not faith; and in Pilate it was not more than undefined, dread of the mysterious Man then on His trial, and a strong sense that the enmity to Him was without a cause. So entering his palace again he inquires, Whence art Thou? and, mortified at receiving no answer, he vaunts his authority to release or to crucify Him. The Lord did not answer the one query which had no better motive than curiosity apart from the fear of God or His love-but He replied to the second in terms worthy of His person, in fullness of grace and truth. Truly the hour was come that the Son of man should be glorified, and God be glorified in Him. What was the authority of a Roman governor without the will of God to sanction it? His ways, His nature must be made good; the words were now, for the deepest of purposes, just about to be accomplished to His own glory forever; and Jesus bowed absolutely to all.

Nevertheless, the accomplishing of divine counsels in Christ does not consecrate the will of man that cast Him out and slew Him; and God is righteous in judging of the evil. “On this account he that delivered me to thee hath greater sin.” The Gentile was wicked, the Jew worse: if Pontius

Pilate were inexcusably unrighteous, how much more awful the position of Caiaphas or Judas Iscariot and of all they represented that day! If God sent His Son in infinite grace, He did not fail to present adequate proofs of who and what He is, to leave all inexcusable for not perceiving and receiving Him, not only those who had God's outward authority in this world, but yet more those who had His living oracles that testified of His Son, and of Himself their center and object, with such works and words and ways as never had been known on earth, proportionately measuring the guilt of those who after such grace rejected One so glorious.

“From this time Pilate sought to release him; but the Jews kept crying, saying, If thou wilt release this [man], thou art not a friend of Caesar: every one that maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar. Pilate then, having heard these words, led Jesus out and sat down on [the] judgment seat at a place called Pavement, but in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was [the] preparation of the passover it was about sixth hour. And he saith to the Jews, See! your King. They cried therefore, Away with [him], away with [him]; crucify him, Pilate saith to them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.” (Vers. 12-15.)

How powerless is the struggle to do right, where the world is loved and one's sins unjudged, and grace unknown! The Jews saw through Pilate as he through them. How wretched not to have Christ for eternal life! Pilate preferred the friendship of the world to the Son of God, as the Jews saw no beauty in Him that they should admire Him; and both played their part in crucifying Him. Pilate may seek to release Jesus, may go in and out, may speak to Jesus and pour scorn on the Jews. But the last word of apostate unbelief passes their lips and closes Pilate's mouth, who will not be behind the Jews in allegiance to Caesar. All is over now. The prince of the world comes, and though he has nothing in Christ, Christ dies rejected of man, forsaken of God, the Righteous One for our sins; never such hatred and unrighteousness as on the world's part toward Him; never such love and righteousness as on God's part toward the world in Him.

Notes on John 19:1-30

The Christ-rejecting word was passed. Their allegiance to the Roman was a lie, their mad guilt manifest in getting rid of Messiah and God Himself and all their faith and hopes. The Jews abhorred subjection to Caesar; they owned neither his right nor their own sin, which was the occasion of his supremacy. But they abhorred the Messiah more, not their idea but the reality according to God. They had not a thought nor a feeling, not a word nor a way nor a purpose, in common with Jesus; and this because He brought God near to them in grace, because He manifested man in perfect dependence and obedience to God, and their will with a bad conscience rejected both. Hence the cross was to them most repulsive. “We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” Yet was the law plain enough that the Messiah should be rejected by man, especially by the Jew, and die that death of curse, the terrible sin of man, yet God's atoning sacrifice for sin. But will, governed by Satan to serve a present purpose in pursuance of man's lusts and passions, blinded them to His word and to their own suicidal wickedness; as ere long they were about to prove their rebelliousness to Caesar, and have the Romans come and take away their place and nation, but not before they had filled Jerusalem with the spectacle of their own penalty till there was no room left for more crosses and wood failed to make them: so Josephus.

“Then therefore he delivered him up to them that he might be crucified. They took then Jesus, [and led [him] away]; and bearing for himself the cross he went out unto the place called of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha, where they crucified him, and with him two others, on this side and on that, and Jesus in the middle. And also Pilate wrote a title and put [it] on the cross; and there was written, Jesus the Nazarean, the King of the Jews. This title therefore many of the Jews read, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, in Latin. Therefore said the high priest to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews, but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.” (Vers. 16-22.)

Faith alone preserves from the power and wiles of the devil. Pilate and the Jews were wholly opposed in their thoughts and wishes; but God was not in the thoughts of the one more than of the others. They had each his own way, but all astray, and now they show themselves the open enemies of righteousness as well as of grace, incapable of discerning the clearest ways, marks, and proofs of God present in love to man, no matter how low He might come down. The cross of Christ makes all and every one manifest. Pilate under pressure of fear for his own worldly interests gave up Jesus to their malice, though knowing Him innocent; and He bearing His cross went forth to the place of a Skull, Golgotha, in Latin Calvary. There was He crucified with peculiar indignity, a robber also on either hand, as a robber had been preferred to Him. Yet God took care that even there a fitting testimony, from whatever motive in Pilate's breast, should be rendered, to Him in the inscription on the cross; the despised Man of Nazareth was the Messiah. Where were the Jews if He was their King? The keenest adversaries of the true God, blindly fulfilling His terrible prophecies of their unbelief and wickedness under a self-complacent zeal for His name and law.

There stood His title, read by many, for the place was near the city, written in the tongues not of the officials only, nor of the polite world, but of the Jews; and all the efforts of their high priests but riveted it to the cross under the pertinacious and irritated and scornful spirit of the procurator.

But the lowest played their part at the cross as well as the highest, men used to arms no less than the ministers of the sanctuary; and every class, every man, showed out there what each was in selfish indifference to the grace and glory of the Son of God, who suffered Himself to be numbered with the transgressors.

“The soldiers therefore, when they crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and the vest; but the vest was seamless from the top woven through the whole. They said therefore to one another, Let us not rend it, but let us draw lots for it whose it shall be; that the scripture might be fulfilled that saith, They parted my garments for themselves, and for my vesture they cast lots. The soldiers therefore did these things.” (Vers. 23, 24.) Little thought the soldiers who had charge of the execution, beyond their poor perquisites. But God's eye was now as ever on His Son; and He had taken care in His word to mark it. For in one of the most manifestly Messianic psalms, Psa. 22, stands written, a thousand years beforehand, the minute prediction of the soldiers' appropriating the garments of the Savior in a way unmistakably applicable to Him. He is the object of scripture, though unbelief sees it not and has a will against it, because His person is as unknown as our own need of divine mercy in the cross. With what interest the Holy Spirit contemplated, as we should, every detail of His suffering, and of man's behavior at that hour! God counted Him not less worthy because the object of such indignities, and of all moment to make it known beforehand. The very minuteness of what is mentioned bears witness to the accurate reality of the prophecy. He is the demonstrated as well as rejected Messiah. His glory made it due to Him to name the particulars, which also bear witness of the depth of His grace in humiliation, that God and man might be fully shown out, and that word be proved His word in the face of every gainsayer.

But faith and love gathered near the dying Savior some of very different mind. “Now by the cross of Jesus stood his mother, and the sister of his mother, Mary the [wife] of Cleopas, and Mary of Magdala. Jesus therefore seeing his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, saith to his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Next he saith to the disciple, Behold thy mother; and from that hour the disciple took her unto his own [home].” (Vers. 25-27.) These were among the women who had followed Him in His ministry and had ministered to Him in life; there they stood in His rejection by the cross, when the Lord shows how little asceticism rises to the truth. He had been absorbed in the work for which He was sent by the Father; no honey mingled with the offering, any more than leaven: salt was never absent, nor the unction; of the Holy Ghost. All had been in the consecrating power of the word and Spirit of God and to God. But perfect human affections were there, though the work undertaken in communion with the Father had filled heart and lips and hands with the higher object to the glory of God. Yet eternal interests, where thus taken up, do not efface or dishonor nature or its relationships according to God; and the Lord here marks this by commending in the most solemn and touching way John to His mother as son, and Mary to John as mother: a loving trust honored from that hour. How sweet for the loved disciple to remember and record! And how strong the contrast with superstition, no less than as we have seen with asceticism! And what a testimony in all to His own entire superiority to overwhelming circumstances!

“After this Jesus, knowing that all things were now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst. A vessel [therefore] was standing there full of vinegar; and they, having filled a sponge with vinegar and put hyssop round [it], put [it] up to his mouth. When therefore Jesus received the vinegar, he said, It is finished, and bowing his head delivered up his spirit.” (Vers. 28-30.) It is not only that in human tenderness He provides for all left behind in that supreme moment, but He thinks of scripture in spirit or in terms not yet fulfilled. No doubt there is the distressing physical effect expressed of all that mind and heart and body had endured till then; but His last request is here bound up, not with His want only, but with His undying zeal for the word if only a single thing lacked to make it honorable. Every word that proceeds through God's mouth must be fulfilled; and had He not said of Messiah, “My tongue cleaveth to my jaws,” and “In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink"? Then, having drunk, the Savior says, “It is finished” with a divine calm as perfect here, as His expression elsewhere of His unfathomable suffering.

Of none but Jesus, is it or could it be said that he gave up, παρ■δωκεν, the ghost; which is wholly distinct from the expired, ■ξ■πνευσεν, of Mark and Luke, confounded with the former by our translators. To expire could apply to any one's death, the blessed Lord being man as truly as any other; to give the spirit up, as said in. John, expresses His divine glory though a dying man, as the One who had title to lay down His life no less than to take it again.

Notes on John 19:31-42

The reader will remark how perfectly the account of the Lord's death suits the general character and special design of John's Gospel and of no other. Here Jesus is the conscious Son, the divine person who made all things, but became flesh that He might not only give eternal life, but die as a propitiation for our sins. And here therefore, here only, He said, It is finished, and bowing His head delivered up the spirit. There are witnesses, as we shall see, but they are of God, not of man or the creature, and they intimately flow from His own person. No darkness is mentioned, no cry that His God had forsaken Him, no rending of the veil, no earthquake, no centurion's confession; all of which meet to proclaim the rejected Messiah. (Matt. 27) So substantially, save the earthquake, the Servant Son of God obedient to death in Mark 15 Luke 23 adds the testimony to His grace in the crucified robber, His first-fruits in paradise, and the centurion's witness to “Jesus Christ the righteous,” after He had committed His spirit into His Father's hands. It was reserved for John to set forth His death who was God not less surely than man, and as such. The Creator but man lifted up from the earth could say, in dying for sin to God's glory, It is finished. The work, the infinite work, was done for the putting away of sin by His sacrifice. Thereon hangs not only the blessing of every soul that is to be justified by faith, but of new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. “It is finished,” τετ■λεσται, one word! yet what word ever contained so much

But no heathen were more blinded and obdurate than God's ancient people who take the lead against Jesus in an unbelieving religiousness without true fear of God, and who consequently saw not that they were but accomplishing His word in their guilty rejection of His and their Messiah.

“The Jews therefore since it was the preparation that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath (for the day of that sabbath was great), asked of Pilate that their legs might be broken and they be taken away. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first and of the other that was crucified with him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they broke not his legs, but one of the soldiers with a spear thrust his side, and there came out immediately blood and water. And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe. For these things came to pass that the scripture might be fulfilled, Not a bone of him shall be crushed; and again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.” (Vers. 31-37.)

In the law, the psalms, and the prophets the Spirit of God had Christ before Him, and in the sufferings to come on Him, as well as in the glories that should follow. But the fleshly mind, as it shrinks from sufferings, is disposed to overlook and get rid of testimony; especially so if the sufferings be the effect and the proof of man's evil estate, for this is of all things most unpalatable. Thus was the Jew dull to see what condemned himself and leveled him morally to the condition of any other sinner; and rejecting the fullest evidences and His own presence in divine grace and truth and the gospel at last, he wits given over to judicial hardening when wrath came on them to the uttermost. Christ only gives the key to the paschal lamb, Christ is the main object in the Psalms. No reasoning of skeptics, even if theologians, can efface the truth, though it exposes their

own unbelief; and assuredly if the heart were made right by grace, it would desire that to be true which is the truth, instead of stumbling at the word being disobedient, or neglecting it because of indifference. In vain then do the Rosenmullers and the like hesitate or avow their dislike of the type and the allusion. To faiths it is food and strength and joy; for if God's word is instinct with His delight in Christ giving Himself to die, He also expresses it in every sort of form beforehand that the cry facts of His atoning death, the great stumbling-block, might render the most irrefragable testimony to its truth and His glory when thus manifested in shame here below.

How marvelously meet in Christ's cross the proud enmity of the Jew, the lawless hand of the Gentiles, the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and this in perfect grace to the guiltiest of Jews and Gentiles! For out of Christ's pierced side came out forthwith blood and water. And John was not so preoccupied with the Savior's dying charge concerning Mary as not to mark the sight. In the strongest form he lets us know that what he saw and testified was no mere transient fact, but before the mind as present, of permanent interest and importance. In his first epistle (ver. 6) he characterizes the Lord accordingly. “This is he that came by (sta) water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in (4) the power of water only, but in the power of water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” Moral purification however needed and precious is not enough; there must be expiation of sins also; and both are found by faith in the death of Christ, not otherwise nor elsewhere. As a fact in the Gospel the order is blood and water; as applied to us in the Epistle it is the water and the blood, and the Spirit as One personally given follows. Nothing but death flows to man from Adam: Christ, the second Man who died for sin and sinners, is the source alike of purification and of atonement to the believer, who needs both and is dead before God without both. For though the Son of God with life in Himself, He stands alone till He dies; dying He bears much fruit. He quickens, purifies and expiates; and the Holy Ghost consequently given brings us into the import of His death as well as blessing resulting from it. For it is judgment pronounced and executed by God in His cross on the flesh, but in our favor because in Him who was a sin-offering.

No wonder then that John was inspired to record the fact, not more wondrous in itself than in its consequences now made known to the believer. The salvation must be suited to and worthy of the Savior, If He was eternal, it was everlasting; if divine judgment fell on such a Victim, it was that they believing in Him should not come into judgment but have life, being forgiven all their offenses and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Such is the declared standing of every true Christian, but it is in virtue of Christ, who is all and in all. Creeds and theological systems enfeeble and hinder its enjoyment; but all this, and more than one could here develop, is clearly and plainly revealed to faith in scripture, as it is indeed due to Christ's glory.

Hence the care with which the word of God is cited and shown to be punctually fulfilled. “For these things came to pass that the scripture might be fulfilled, Not a bone of him shall be crushed; and again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced." The natural circumstances of the crucifixion, more especially on a Friday, and that Friday the eve of sabbath in the paschal week, would have called for the breaking of the legs as a coup de grace. And in fact such was the portion of the two malefactors. But Jesus as He had proved Himself in the preceding chapter the willing Captive was now the willing Victim; and this was made manifest in His dying as and when He did die. For it surprised not only the Jews and the soldiers but Pilate, as we learn elsewhere; and it superseded all need of the crurifragium in His case. But it marked the separated

Lamb of God, the Righteous One, all whose bones Jehovah keeps, not one of them broken.

Yet this very exemption led as a fact doubtless to the deed of the soldier, whose lance pierced not the malefactors but only the dead body of the Savior, wholly ignorant that so it must be, for God had said it by His prophet. All was ordered and measured; even these minute differences were revealed beforehand; yet were men and Satan indulging freely their enmity against the Son of God. And in the face of such love and light men combine their ignorance with their learning to escape from the truth into the dark once more. But we need not here dwell on such things. It is the same spirit that surrounded the cross:

“Thy love, by man so sorely tried,

Proved stronger than the grave;

The very spear that pierced Thy side

Drew forth the blood to save.”

“And after these things Joseph from Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave leave. He came therefore and took his body away. And there came also Nicodemus, that came at first to him by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pound [weight]. They took therefore the body of Jesus and bound it in linen swathes with the spices, as it is the Jews' custom to prepare for burial. Now there was in the place where he was crucified a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one was ever yet laid. There then on account of the preparation of the Jews, because the tomb was near, they put Jesus.” (Vers. 38-42.)

God uses a perilous time to call forth His own hidden ones. Joseph of Arimathea can be a secret disciple no longer. He was a rich man (Matt. 27) and an honorable counselor (Mark 15); but wealth and position make the confession of Christ only the harder. Fear of the Jews had hitherto prevailed. The death of Jesus, which caused others to fear, made Joseph bold. He had not consented indeed to the counsel and deed of the Jews. Now He goes to Pilate and besought the Lord's body. Nor was he alone: Nicodemus longer known, but with no happy reputation for moral-courage at the first, though afterward venturing a remonstrance to the haughty yet unjust Pharisees, joins in the last offices of love with an abundant offering of myrrh and aloes. The cross of Christ so stumbling to unbelief exercises and manifests his faith; and the twain waxed valiant by grace fulfill the lack of service of the twelve. They take the body of Jesus and bind it in linen swathes with the spices, in the manner of the Jews to prepare for burial. Egypt had its custom of embalming; so in a measure had the Jews in hope of the resurrection of the just. No prophecy is cited here; but who can forget Isaiah's words, He made His grave with the wicked [men] and with the rich [man] in His death? He was appointed His grave with the lawless and with the rich man, in His deaths, that is, after being slain: a strange combination, yet verified in Him, and who could wonder? seeing that He had done no violence and no deceit was in His mouth. And now we see in Joseph's garden, hard by the fatal scene, a new tomb which had never known an inmate: so had God provided in honor for the body of His Son, and in jealous wisdom for the truth, hewn out in the rock (as Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us): where the Lord was put Meanwhile in view of more formal burial when the sabbath should pass. So little did the disciples anticipate what the glory of the Father had at heart, though the Lord had so often plainly revealed it, till the resurrection was a

fact in its own predicted time.

Chapter 95

Notes on John 20:1-2

As no eye beheld what was deepest in the cross of Christ, so only God looked on the Lord rising from among the dead. This was as it should be. Darkness veiled Him giving Himself for us in atonement. Man saw not that infinite work in His death; yet was it not only to glorify God thereby, but that our sins might be borne away righteously. We have seen the activity of the world, and especially of the Jew, in crucifying Him; high and low, religious and profane, all played their part; even an apostle denied Him, as another betrayed Him to the murderous priests and elders. But Jehovah laid on Him the iniquity of us all; Jehovah bruised and put Him to grief; Jehovah made His soul an offering for sin; and as this was Godward, so was it invisible to human eyes, and God alone could rightly bear witness, by whom He would, of the eternal redemption thus obtained, which left divine love free to act even in a lost and ungodly world.

So with the resurrection of Christ. He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father; God raised up Jesus whom the Jews slew and hanged on a tree; He had laid down His life that He might take it again, in three days raising the temple of His body which they destroyed. But if no man was given to see the act of His rising from the dead, it was to be testified in all the world, as well as His atoning death. Preach the gospel, said He risen, to every creature. And assuredly he who withholds His resurrection maims the glad tidings of its triumphant proof and character, and compromises the believer's liberty and introduction into the new creation, as he immensely clouds the Lord's glory; even as the denial of resurrection virtually charges God's witnesses with falsehood and makes faith vain. So the apostle insists in 1 Cor. 15. Had death held the Savior fast, all were lost; had it been only His spirit winning its way into the presence of God, it were at most a half-deliverance. His resurrection is in truth a complete deliverance, of which the Holy Spirit is to us the seal.

Hence we find it is the grand foundation truth of the gospel. To be a witness of His resurrection was the main requirement for an apostle (Acts 1); and that God had raised up Jesus whom the Jews had crucified was the truth most pressed by Peter. (Acts 2) So it was urged by him in Solomon's porch subsequently (Acts 3) and before the Jewish council once and again. (Acts 4; 5) Just so it was in preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 10); and by Paul yet more than by Peter. (Acts 13) This was what especially grieved the Sadducean chiefs (Acts 4); this is what rouses the undying scorn or opposition of unbelief all the world over. And no wonder; for if the resurrection be the spring of joy and ground of assured salvation to the believer, if it be the secret of his holy walk as the expression of the life he has in Christ risen, and the power of a living hope, it is also the measure of the real estate of man as dead in sins, and it is the present, fixed, and constant pledge that judgment hangs over the habitable earth, for God has raised from among the dead as its appointed Judge the Man whom the world slew. The resurrection therefore is as repulsive to man, as it is apt to be slighted by the fleshly mind even of Christians who seek earthly things.

As the resurrection is thus manifestly a truth of capital moment, the Spirit of God has taken care that the testimony to it should be as precise as it is full. Hence Matthew, who from the design of his

Gospel omits the ascension, does not fail to bring out the proof of Christ's resurrection most clearly; and so does Mark; and. Luke with more detail than either shows us the. Lord in resurrection with all His loving interests in His own, a man as truly as ever, with flesh and bones, and capable of eating with them, but risen. John as usual presents the conscious Son of God, the Word mane flesh, but now in resurrection. Here the proofs are characteristically inward and personal, where the others, as fittingly present what was outward but no less necessary.

As a bulwark against philosophic skepticism the resurrection stands firm and impregnable. For it resists and refutes unanswerably the sophistry which ignores God and reduces the idea of causes to an invariable antecedence of constantly observed phenomena as in sequence: a theory quietly assumed and diligently instilled so as to set aside the very possibility of divine intervention whether in grace or judgment, in miracles or prophecy, or any relationship beyond nature with God. With God did I say? Why, according to this system logically carried out, He is and must be unknown; and if unknown, who can tell if He exist? or if all do not end in a mere deification of nature? Now the resurrection of Christ rests, as has been often shown, on far fuller evidence and surer and better grounds than any event in history, and this because it was sifted at the time by friends and foes as nothing else ever was, and because God Himself gave a multiplicity of testimony proportioned to its incalculable moment not to us merely but to His own glory; and as a fact without argumentation it overthrows of itself and instantly every opposition to the truth of science or knowledge falsely so called. For it would be the depth of absurdity to suppose that the death of Jesus was the cause of His resurrection. What then was its cause? Of what antecedent was it the sequence? If anything points to the power of God, it is resurrection no less than creation.

The truth is that the effort to reduce cause and effect to a mere antecedent and consequent springs from the desire to get rid of God altogether; for cause really implies will, design and power in activity, though we must distinguish between the causa causans and the causae causatae. These causes are in nature by God's constitution, but He lives, wills, acts; and the resurrection of Christ stands in the midst of this world's history to judge all unbelief, viewed now as a simple fact and fully proved. We may see its consequences as far as our chapter presents them later on. The Lord had distinctly and often spoken of His death and resurrection during His life. He had died and was buried; and here we learn that no power or precaution prevailed against His word. The grave had lost its inmate; and this was all Mary's heart took in-the loss of the dead body of the Lord. Deplorable forgetfulness, but of a heart absorbed in that one sad treasure here below, and it was gone!

Thus even here the proof was in the wisdom of God gradual, and the growth of the apostles themselves slow in the truth. There was afforded the most evident demonstration that, as the power in itself was of Him only and immediately, above the entire course of nature and human experience, so those who were afterward its most competent, strenuous and suffering witnesses only yielded to its certainty by such degrees as let us see that no men were more surprised than the apostles. Even the enemies of the Lord had an undefined dread or uneasiness, which led to Pilate's allowance of, a military guard with the seal of the great stone to make the sepulcher sure; not a disciple, so far as we know, looked for His rising.

Nevertheless Christ did rise the third day according to the scriptures. In this very thing, the teaching of God's word, were the disciples weak; not the uninstructed Magdalene only, but all; as

we shall see, senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken quick to forget the plain words in which the Lord Himself repeatedly announced not only His death but His resurrection on the third day.

Accordingly the opening verses have for their object to show us how the truth first began to dawn on any heart. Not only was there no collusion in feigning the resurrection of their Master, there was not so much as a hopeful anticipation in a single heart of which one can speak. The gloom of the cross had shrouded every heart; the fear of man pressed on the men yet more than on the women. Even where the fact should have been patent, she who saw the fact misunderstood its import and was more distressed than ever.

“Now on the first [day] of the week Mary of Magdala cometh early while it was yet dark unto the tomb and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb. She runneth therefore and cometh unto Simon Peter and unto the other disciple whom Jesus dearly loved, and saith to them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him.” (Vers. 1, 2.)

Mary of Magdala seems to be alone on the first day; certainly, if other women were with or near her, as other testimonies may imply (not to speak of the plural form here “we know,” which may be merely general), she alone attracts the notice of the Spirit of God in portraying a heart, first attracted irresistibly to a scene so overwhelming and withal sacred by her love to Him whose body had been laid in the tomb; then at length met and blessed by the Lord when the best resources among the saints had failed, as will come before us in due time.

Before His death Mary, the sister of Lazarus, had anointed the Lord, His head and His feet, out of the fullness of her affection which lavished what she had most precious on Him, just at that time when she instinctively felt danger impending, and hears, in answer to heartless indifference only thence hurrying on to the deadliest ungodliness, the vindication of His love which gave a meaning to her act beyond her thoughts-O how satisfying to her heart till with Himself! It was a deep and true affection met by the affection of Jesus not perfect only but divine.

And here too it was not in vain that Mary of Magdala was drawn thus early, dark as it was, to the grave, the empty grave, of Jesus. She had been there, though not alone, after sabbath had closed when it was growing dark (not “dawning,” though the word applies to either) toward the first day of the week, for this is the true meaning of Matt. 28, with which compare Mark 16; as Luke 23:54 shows they had been on the preceding evening when Friday was closing and sabbath was drawing on.

It is remarkable that this Mary runs to tell the fact of the stone's removal, and what she inferred as to the Lord's body, not to John only, but to Peter also. The latter had notoriously and grievously dishonored the Lord just before His death; but doubtless his repentance was well known to the saints at least. Still there is the record of her unhesitating appeal. Mary's heart judged who among the disciples would most heartily answer to the anxious inquiry which filled her own soul. And assuredly it was not lack of love but of self-judgment which had exposed that ardent disciple to deny his Master: on the contrary it was confidence in his own love for Him with utter ignorance of himself, and without due dependence on God, in the face of a hostile world with the shadow of death before his eyes, And the Master in the next chapter manifests His own grace toward His servant to the utmost, even while laying bare the sinful root which had betrayed him to such

shameful failure. In fact Mary was far more justified in reckoning on the sympathy of Peter and John in that which troubled her, than in the ignorance which concluded that men had carried off the Lord's body on the resurrection-day. Even the warmest love cannot without the word conceive a right thought of Him who died for us. Her notion was wholly unworthy of Christ or of God's care for Him; but unbelief in the saint is no better than in the sinner, and the very strength of her love to the Lord only brings out the more into evidence how faith is needed in order to rightly understand in divine things.

Chapter 96

Notes on John 20:3-10

As to the accounts of the resurrection, let none believe that it is fruitless to compare them, any more than to accept the perfect accuracy of each one. Whether one attempt or despise a harmony, the result must be utterly wrong if he start with interpreting Matt. 28 of the dawn on Sunday morning instead of the dusk on sabbath evening, which last to the Jew (and Matthew above all has the Jews in view) was and is the true beginning of the first day, however Western prejudice may incline to the Gentile sense of the day. This error must vitiate all right understanding for the student as much as for the harmonist.

It has been said to be impossible that so astounding an event, coming upon various portions of the body of disciples from various quarters and in various forms, should not have been related, by four independent witnesses, in the scattered and fragmentary way in which we now find it. Certainly it would be impossible if there were no God securing perfect truth by all His chosen witnesses, and in each of their accounts. The remark is therefore mere unbelief, and quite unworthy of any intelligent Christian. “Scattered and fragmentary” is not the way of the Holy Ghost, who does not employ the four like men giving evidence in a court of justice, each of what he saw and heard. Not only is this inapplicable to Mark and Luke, but it does not fall in with the facts in John and Matthew. For He leads each of them to omit what both saw and heard, and to insert only such a selection as illustrates the scope and design of the, particular Gospel. Was not Matthew a riveted spectator of the Lord in the midst of the disciples in Jerusalem on the evening of the day He rose from the dead? Was not John with the rest at the appointed mountain in Galilee?

It is not merely true then that in the depth beneath their varied surface of narration the great central fact of the resurrection itself rests unmoved and immoveable (for this might be in merely human accounts of facts), but that every one of the four had a special object or aim in the mind of the inspiring Spirit, which is carried out unerringly in general plan and in minute detail. The objection admits the honesty of the Christian witnesses, but leaves God out of their writing, which is the essence of infidelity: the more painful, as the objector is really a believer, but with a wholly inadequate and dangerous theory of inspiration. The fact is that no man, who had the material, or knew what each evangelist had before him, would ever have written as any one of them did; and that nothing accounts for their peculiar form but God giving a testimony in perfect keeping with each Gospel, so as by them all to furnish a complete whole. Where men of God only are seen, with nothing more than such guidance of the Spirit as in ordinary preaching, or the like, what a blight such unbelief entails! Calling it inspiration only adds to the delusion. Are they God's word?

Confessedly the resurrection was that above all other things to which the apostles bore their testimony, but it is, as we have seen and might show yet more fully, neglect of the evidence to suppose that each elaborated faithfully into narrative those particular facts which came under his own eye or were reported to himself by those concerned. This is a poor and misleading a priori hypothesis. Their diversity springs not from human infirmity, but from divine wisdom.

But we turn for a few moments more to the effect of the empty tomb on those who first noticed it. And certainly one cannot speak of spiritual intelligence in Mary of Magdala; but she clung in deep affection to the Lord's person; and He was not unmindful of it. She was the first, as we shall see, to have joy in Him, and He puts honor on her. Yet, what could be less worthy of Christ than her hasty conclusion from the empty tomb! “They took away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they laid him.” She can think of Him only as under the power of death. She judges by the sight of her eyes; and to her mind as yet man has the upper hand. His assurance of resurrection had left no trace as if on the barren sand. Who can glory in man thus overwhelmed before the undiscerned yet glorious power of God which had already raised Him from among the dead? Nevertheless her heart was true to Him, and she shows it, if only now by her visit to such a scene while it was yet dark, and by her extreme agitation when she saw the stone taken away, and the body gone, from the tomb. What can she do but run with the news to break it to congenial hearts?

“Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and were coming unto the tomb. And the two were running together, and the other disciple ran forward more quickly than Peter, and came first unto the tomb, and stooping down seeth as they lay the linen clothes; nevertheless he went not in. Simon Peter therefore cometh following him, and entered into the tomb, and beholdeth the linen clothes lying, and the napkin which was upon his head, not lying with the linen clothes but folded up in a place apart. Then entered therefore also the other disciple that came first unto the tomb, and he saw and believed; for as yet they knew not the scripture that he must rise from [the] dead. The disciples therefore went away again unto their own [home].” (Vers. 3-10.)

It was not John only who went forth at the tidings of Mary. Love, roused by words which sounded strange to their ears, led Peter to run along with John, with no less desire if not so fast. He had slumbered, when he ought to have watched and prayed; and, when the crisis came, he had denied his Master with no small aggravation after His solemn warning. But he was not a Judas. He loved the Lord who Himself knew that he loved Him; and therefore, notwithstanding his deep and shameful sin, his heart was moved by the news so unaccountable to him of the disappearance of the body from the tomb. So the two disciples (who were for other reasons often seen together) strove which should reach the spot soonest. Not the most distant hope of what the fact was had as yet crossed their minds; yet were they as far as possible from indifference to any circumstance which concerned even His body. That it was no longer where it had been laid, especially with such a safeguard against conceivable hazards, is enough to stir both deeply; and they are on the scene forthwith, John outrunning Peter. And as he came first to the tomb, so did he stoop down and see as they lay the linen clothes; yet went he not in. Peter, though less agile, went farther when he reached the place, for he went into the tomb, and inspected the linen clothes as they lay, and the napkin which was on his head, not lying with them but wrapped up in one place by itself. So reports Luke (24:12.), though not in such detail as John does, who describes not only the twofold examination on his own part, but an added feature in Peter's intent gaze, observing the peculiarity of the napkin wrapt up by itself: the clear presumptive proof that the body had not been taken away by enemies any more than by friends; for why should either leave the linen swathes behind? Who but one arising from sleep would dispose of the habiliments in this calm and orderly fashion? It must be His own doing as He rose from among the dead, and laid aside what was unsuited to as well as needless for His new estate. For here we may contrast the very different way in which Lazarus appeared when raised by the Lord, indicative of the different character of the resurrection.

Still there was no depth in the conviction Peter could not but form; for he returned home [the true rendering] wondering at what had come to pass. Wonder is in no way the expression of the intelligence which faith gives; it implies rather the distinct lack of it. It does seem surprising that such men as Bengel and Stier should follow Erasmus and Grotius in the idea that John merely went as far as Mary's idea in verse 2.

“Then entered therefore also the other disciple that came first unto the tomb, and he saw and believed.” It was faith, but founded on evidence, not on the written word. Mary's inference was upset by the indications John as well as Peter observed. His was a sound conclusion, based on a reasonable judgment of the facts observed; but this in itself is only a human deduction, however right in itself, instead of being the subjection of the heart to the testimony of God. And it is John himself who, here as elsewhere, teaches us to draw this most momentous distinction. But Peter seems, though amazed, to have taken in the import of what he observed as well as John. They both went beyond Mary of Magdala and inferred that He must have risen; not that either Joseph and Nicodemus on the one hand, nor that the Jews or Romans on the other, had taken away the Lord's body. On ground of the apparent facts, they rightly accounted for the disappearance of His body. But in neither was there that character of faith in His resurrection which springs from laying hold of God's word. The former was human, the latter divine, because in this alone is God believed which gives Him His true place and puts us in ours. Thus is the soul purged by virtue of the word, which is no less needful than cleansing by blood; and hence repentance ever accompanies faith. We could not be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, did we not know experimentally the washing of water by the word, as well as cleansing from our sins by Christ's blood.

Now it is not too much to say that, as far as the truth of resurrection, soon to be the characteristic, testimony of the apostles, John or Peter was not yet taught it of God. They did not as yet with the fact connect God's testimony in the law, the Psalms, or the prophets, nor even the plain and recent words of our Lord Jesus. So little is there of truth in Lampe's judgment that from this moment in the very darkness of the tomb the mind of John was enlightened with the saving faith of the resurrection of Jesus as with a certain new ray of the risen “Sun of Righteousness.” There is nothing in divine things beautiful which is not true; and this is not only not true, but the reversal of the truth inculcated by John himself in his inspired comment on the fact. They both believed in Christ, on the ground not of facts only, but of God's word; they neither of them believed in His resurrection beyond the seen facts that so it must be. “For as yet they knew not the scripture that he must rise from [the] dead.”

We have had a fair sample of Protestant (I do not say Reformation) theology which shows their loose and human idea of faith. Romanist, and perhaps I might add Catholic, views are no better. Hence the Tridentine depreciation of faith; hence the effort to bring in love and obedience and holiness in order to justification. They feel that there must be a moral element, and their reducing faith to an intellectual reception of propositions excludes it; so that they are driven to add other things to faith in order to satisfy themselves. All this turns on the great fundamental error that the thoroughgoing Papist makes faith in the church the resting-place of his soul and the rule of faith, not the scriptures. If they carried out the error to its results, no Romanist could be saved, for he believes not God's word on God's authority, but scripture and tradition on the church's word. By his own principle he excludes faith in God, and could not truly believe unto life at all. Only through

grace men may be better than their principle, as many, alas! are worse when the principle is of God. Believing scripture as God's word is of vital moment.

Facts are of high interest and real importance; and as the Israelite could point to them as the basis of his religion, to the call of Abram by God, and the deliverance of the chosen people from Egypt and through the desert and into Canaan, so can the Christian to the incomparably deeper and more enduring ones of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God, with the consequent presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. But faith to have moral value, to deal with the conscience, to purify and draw out the heart, is not the pure and simple acceptance of facts on reasonable grounds, but the heart's welcoming God's testimony in His word. This tests the soul beyond all else, as spiritual intelligence consists in the growing up to Christ in an increasing perception and enjoyment of all that God's word has revealed, which separates the saint practically to Himself and His will in judgment of self and the world. He has put off the old man and put on the new, being renewed into full knowledge according to the image of Him that created him. To “see and believe” therefore is wholly short of what the operation of God gives; as traditional faith or evidence answers to it now in Christendom. It is human, and leaves the conscience unpurged and the heart without communion. It may be found in him who is in no way born of God (compare John 2:23-25), but also in the believer as here: if so, it is not what the Spirit seals and it in no way delivers from present things. And this it seems to be the divine object to let us know in the account before us. Faith, to be of value and have power, rests not on sight or inference, but on scripture. And as the disciples show the most treacherous memory as to the words of the Lord till He was raised up from the dead (John 2:22), so were they insensible to the force and application of the written word: after that they believed both, they entered into abiding and enlarging blessing from above. This, as Peter tells us in his first epistle (chap. 1:6), is characteristically the faith of a Christian, who, having not seen Christ, loves Him; and on whom, though not now seeing Him but believing, he exults with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The faith that is founded on evidences may strengthen against Deism, Pantheism or Atheism, but it never gave remission of sins, never led one to cry Abba Father, never filled the heart with His grace and glory who is the object of God's everlasting satisfaction and delight.

Here also we have the further and marked testimony of its powerlessness; for we are told (ver. 10), “The disciples therefore went away again unto their own [home].” The fact was known on grounds indisputable, to their minds, but not yet appreciated in God's sight as revealed in His word, and hence they return to their old unbroken associations.

Notes on John 20:11-16

Mary did not, could not, take things so quietly, as the two disciples. What was “home” now to her? What was the world? Nothing but an empty tomb where Jesus had lain. Others might depart again to their own home.

“But Mary stood at the tomb without weeping. While then she was weeping, she stooped into the tomb, and beholdeth two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where had lain the body of Jesus. And they say to her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith to them, Because they took away my Lord, and I know not where they laid him. Having said this, she turned back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom dost thou seek? She, thinking that it was the gardener, saith to him, Sir, if thou didst carry him off, tell me where thou laidest him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith to her, Mary. She, turning, saith to him in Hebrew, Rabboni, which meaneth Teacher.” (Vers. 11-16.)

The sorrow of love for Jesus, that which mourns His absence, or which feels wrong done to Him in any way, is far different from the sorrow of the world that worketh death. It soon passes into life and peace through the grace of Jesus. Mary's sorrow was not fruitless, nor was it long. Other servants of the Lord and the Lord Himself whom she saw not, looked upon

her. While she wept outside, she stooped into the tomb and beheld two angels in white. But He was not there; they were sitting one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain. Yet we hear of no alarm, no amazement on her part: so absorbed was her heart with that one person, to all appearance lost to her, even His body gone so that she could not weep over it. Nor does she speak to them, but they say to her, Woman, why weepest thou? They were in the secret. She had not read as yet aright the signs of the grave. Her sorrowing heart would ere long receive better and clearer tidings still. Meanwhile she explains to them why she wept: “Because they took away my Lord, and I know not where they laid him.” She wholly overlooks the strangeness of the angelic apparition within the tomb, and takes for granted that every one must know who He was whose body was gone. But not even yet has the thought of His resurrection crossed her mind. The Lord was her Lord; she loved Him exceedingly, but to her apprehension men had taken Him and laid Him where she knew not. A soul may love the Lord, yet be dark indeed as to His risen glory.

Grace would now intervene. “On saying this she turned round and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.” How often this may be for our dull hearts! But He never acts beneath His name, and speaks that we may know Him. “Jesus saith to her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom dost thou seek?” This last was a leading question. Till He is known however, there is still darkness, though there may be love. “She, thinking that he was the gardener, saith to him, Sir, if thou didst carry him off, tell me where thou laidest him, and I will take him away.” One word dispels all the difficulty and doubt, the expression, not of our love-to Him, but of His love to us. “Jesus saith to her, Mary.” The work was done, the great discovery made. He had died, He was now risen, and He appeared first to Mary of Magdala. She that had sown in tears reaps now in joy. The Lord appreciated her abiding at the tomb in sorrow, even though but an empty tomb. Her heart was now

filled with joy, and, as we shall see, the joy would run over to gladden other hearts, the hearts of all that believed.

It was the good Shepherd calling His own sheep by name. She was the same to Him as ever; He stood in resurrection power; but His love was the same to her, certainly no less than when He cast seven demons out of her. Doubtless there was a sameness in the expression of her name which went straight home to her heart and recalled her from her dream about His person, once dead, but now in truth alive again for evermore. Soon she would learn that as He lived so did she also, alive to God in Jesus Christ her Lord. But for the moment to know Himself alive, Himself uttering her name with unutterable love was the fruit of divine grace that would satisfy her heart.

Notes on John 20:17-18

Mary had known Christ according to the flesh, and evidently thought that she was thus to know Him still. But it is not so. Henceforth we know none after this sort. Christ was dead and risen and about to take His place in heaven according to the counsels of God. The Christian is called to know Him as man in heaven, always the Son but now Man glorified on high. Hence the force of that which follows. Mary must learn to regard the Lord in an entirely new light, not in bodily presence here below, but for an object of faith as received up in glory. She is thus delivered from all her former associations, and is the given ensample of the Jewish remnant henceforward to become Christian.

“Jesus saith to her, Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended unto the [or, my] Father; but go unto my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God. Mary of Magdala cometh bringing word to the disciples, I have seen the Lord, and that he said these things to her.” (Vers. 17, 18.)

It is the more striking if we compare Matt. 28:9 with the Lord's prohibition of Mary in our Gospel. Both incidents happened very nearly about the same time. Yet the Lord permitted the other women to come and hold Him by the feet, and pay Him homage, whereas He forbade Mary of Magdala, only a very little while before, to touch Him. We know that He was divinely perfect on both occasions, as indeed always, that though man and the Son of man, it was not His to repent, for He is the truth; but we may be permitted, and I think ought to inquire why ways so different and so rapidly following one another could be each absolutely right in its own place. The difference of design in the two Gospels helps much to clear the matter. In Matthew the risen Lord resumes His relations with the Jewish remnant, and gives these women, as a sample of that remnant, to enjoy His presence on earth. For this reason too there is not only no ascension scene in the end of Matthew, but no allusion to the fact there; indeed it would mar the perfection of the picture, which shows us the Lord present with them until the consummation of the age. In John, on the other hand, Jewish feeling is immediately corrected; new relations are announced, and ascension to the Father takes the place of all expectations for the nations on the earth with the Jews as the Lord's center and witnesses. “Touch me not,” says Jesus to Mary,” for I have not yet ascended to the Father.” Henceforth the Lord is to be known characteristically by the Christian as in heaven. The Jew had looked for Him on earth, and rightly so; as by-and-by the Jew will have Him reigning over the earth, when He comes again in power and great glory. Between the broken and restored hopes of Israel, we find our place as Christians. We are baptized unto His death, and we show forth His death until He come, remembering Him in the breaking of bread; but we know Him above, no longer dead, but risen and glorified. Yea, though we had known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know Him thus no more. Indeed without boasting, in sober truth but all surpassing grace, we can say and as believers are bound to say, that we are in Him. “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” And “that day” is this day, being already come, the day of grace to the world in the gospel; the day of grace to the saints in our union with Christ. “So if any one be in Christ, it is a new creation; the old things have passed away, behold, all things are

become new; and all things are of the God who reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." Such is Christianity, and more than this was implied in our Lord's dealing and words with Mary of Magdala. "Touch me not" was a saying of eminent significance, and still more when interpreted by the words that accompany it. It is not as in Col. 2:21 μ■ ■ψη (a single transient action), but μ■ μου ■πτου, Do not go on touching me; it is a general and continuous prohibition, and this to represent the remnant taken out of their associations as Jews and put into new relations, not only with Christ in heaven, but through Him with His Father and God, as contradistinguished from those who represent the remnant allowed to lay hold of Him as a sign of His return in bodily presence for the kingdom.

But there is more. "Go unto my brethren." He is not ashamed to call the disciples His brethren. He had prepared the way for this; He had said on Israel's rebellious rejection of their Messiah, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Now on the accomplishment of His atoning work He acknowledges definitely this blessed fruit of it, not only sins forgiven to faith by virtue of His shed blood, but believers in the most intimate way related to Himself, the risen Man and Son of God. They are His brethren; to whom according to Psa. 22. He proceeds to make known the name, not merely of Jehovah, but of the Father. For now they were not quickened only, but quickened with Christ. They stood in Him risen from the dead, forgiven all trespasses. And they learn that thus related to Christ in His new place as in the condition of man according to divine counsels for eternity, all question of sin being closed triumphantly on the cross, not for Him who had no need, but for the believer, who had all possible need in guilt and an evil nature and an accusing enemy and a holy, righteous Judge, they enter into His own blessed and everlasting relationship with His Father and God. "And say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, my God and your God."

It was a moment of unequaled depth: the Son risen again after having borne the judgment of our sins in His own body on the tree and glorified God in respect not of obedience in life only, but up to death for sin, on the resurrection morning, sending through one from whom He had formerly expelled seven demons to His disciples, desponding through unbelief, a message of the new and incomparable blessedness He had acquired for them by His death and resurrection. Doubtless He is the risen Messiah of the seed of David, and the mercies of David are made sure by His resurrection, as will be proved in the kingdom restored to Israel in due time. But this must be postponed in God's wisdom and yield to the far deeper purpose meanwhile coming into evidence, the calling out of God's children, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, into the knowledge and enjoyment and testimony of Himself and His Son by the Holy Ghost, which is usually styled Christianity. It could not be before, not only because He had relations after flesh and by promise with Israel until they had thoroughly despised and rejected deliberately, through unbelief but guiltily and inexcusably, their infinitely blessed King, but because only on the ground of redemption by His death could God be free to form and gather those children of His freed from their sins and quickened together with Him whether Jew or Genesis tile. Now having died He could bear much fruit; and here He announces the fact worthy of Himself and of the God who sent Him in love beyond all thought of man. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, my God and your God."

How poor and pale are the dreams of men even in their highest aspirations, compared with the simple truth spoken by the Lord and sent to His own! Yet nothing less could satisfy His love, which must demonstrate its power, first by going down with our sins to suffer for them from God, and

next by ascending into glory and giving us as far as possible His own position as sons and saints with all evil and guilt forever gone before God, purged worshippers, having no more conscience of sins; and this, not merely a hope to be made good when He comes again to receive us to Himself, but the truth of a really existing relationship announced now on the resurrection day, sent to His disciples that they might know and enjoy it to the full, as pledged in His own ascension to the presence of the Father in heaven. It is for all saints till He come again: would that all knew it as their only true place in Him! Still grace has given the truth fresh power in our day, though by messengers who have no more reason to boast than Mary of Magdala, who came then with the tidings to the disciples (ver. 18), I have seen the Lord, or as it is more commonly read that she had seen the Lord and He had spoken these things to her. But we may and ought to glory in our risen Lord, and of such a place for the believer in Him. “Of such an one will I glory,” said a greater than any of us; “yet of myself I will not glory, but in, mine infirmities.” Of a man in Christ it is well to glory: only we cannot expect those to do so who do not even conceive what it means, and who are so depraved by a jargon of Jewish and Gentile notions, commonly called systematic divinity, that they are slow indeed to learn. If we know the truth, we may have grace not only to walk in it, but to wait on such as know it, if peradventure grace and truth may at length win their way and the saints learn their true blessedness in Christ.

Notes on John 20:19-23

The Lord's message was not in vain. The disciples gathered on that resurrection-day with the world shot out, and Jesus stood in the midst. It is the beautiful anticipative picture of the assembly, as may be seen more fully when details are entered into.

“When it was evening then on that first day of the week, and the doors were shut where the-disciples were by reason of the fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith to them, Peace to you. And having said this he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. He [or, Jesus] said to them again, Peace to you: according as the Father hath sent me forth, I also send you. And having said this he breathed into, and saith to them, Receive [the] Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; whose soever ye retain, they are retained.” (Vers. 19-23.)

How many things of spiritual weight were here brought into the smallest compass and conveyed in the simplest form! That day which in due time was to receive its appropriate designation of “the Lord's day” (Rev. 1:10), as characteristic of the Christian as the sabbath of the Jew, was marked off, not only by the gathering together of the saints, but by the presence of the Lord in their midst. So it was at the beginning of the following week; and so afterward does the Holy Spirit distinguish it as the day when the breaking of the bread is observed (Acts 20:7) and the wants of the holy poor rose up in remembrance before Him and them. (1 Cor. 16:2.) It was indeed divine guidance, though it did not take the shape of a command; but none the less precious or obligatory on all who value His special presence in communion with His own and the showing forth of His death till He come. It was the day, not of creation rest nor of law imposed, but of resurrection and of the grace which associated the believer with its rich and enduring results; on which all thus blessed come together to enjoy in common that death of the Lord which is the righteous ground of these privileges and of all others.

On that day the Lord gave the assembled disciples a signal witness of the power of life in resurrection; for where they were, the doors having been shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst. Weakness attaches to the natural body, which, unless a miracle be wrought, is stopped by a wall or a closed door or a chain or a thousand other cheeks. Not so the body which is raised in power, as the Lord here silently shows them. It appears to be the object of the statement here, and again lower down, to intimate that the risen body can thus enter, not by miracle (however wonderful it may seem to us, who view and measure things by the actual condition of this life) but normally as in the power of resurrection. There is no ground here to suppose, but rather the contrary, that the doors were caused to open of themselves. So it was (Acts 5:19) when the angel led the apostles Peter and John out of prison; so again when Peter was a second time set free (Acts 12:10), and the iron gate opened of itself, not to let in the angel who needed it not, but to let Peter out. It is no question of omnipotence, but of the risen body, which has no more need of an open door than an angel. The ancients seem to have had far simpler faith as to this than most moderns who betray the growing materialism of the day. To talk

of philosophical difficulties is puerile pretension: what does philosophy know of the resurrection? It is a question of God and His Son, not of mere causes and effects, still less of experience. The Christian believes the word and knows what God reveals. Let philosophy confess, not boast of, its nescience if dumb before creation, resurrection is to it still more confounding.

Jesus then and thus came and stood in the midst, saying to the disciples, Peace to you. This He had left as His legacy before the cross; now alive again from the dead He announces it to His own: how sweet the sound in a world at war with God! Doubly so, where earnest souls have striven ineffectually to make it for themselves with God, whatever their sighs and tears and groans, whatever their prayers, yearnings, and agony, whatever their efforts to eschew the evil and cleave to the good. For such best know that conscience and heart can find no solid peace in self-judgment or in self-denial, in contemplation of God or in labors for Him; on the contrary, the more sincere, the less have they peace. They are on a wholly wrong road. Peace for a sinful man can only be made by the blood of Christ's cross, which faith receives on His word. And so the Lord spoke it to the disciples that day, the mighty work on which it is grounded being finished and accepted of God, as His resurrection declares. “And having said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.”

Some have conceived that the second “Peace to you” was a sort of farewell or valete, as the first a salvete. As the former was far otherwise, even the deep blessing which characterizes those who are justified by faith, and ever recurring in one form or another throughout the New Testament, so the second is in connection with the mission the Lord proceeds to confer on the disciples. They first received peace for themselves; they are next charged to go forth with the gospel of grace to others. “According as the Father hath sent me forth, I also send you.” These are Christ's true legates a latere: others are but thieves and robbers whom the sheep do well not to hear. Strangers to peace themselves, as their own tongue cannot but confess, how can they tell others of a peace which poor sinners might trust with assurance?

But the Lord next proceeds to another highly significant token of new and lasting privilege. “And having said this, he breathed into and saith to them, Receive Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; whose soever ye retain, they are retained.” It was He who before He took flesh had breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life; and now He breathed into the disciples the breath of a better and everlasting life, His own life, as being both now, that is Jehovah-God and the risen second Man in one person. Never had He so done before. The right moment was come. He had been delivered for their offenses and was raised for their justification. The risen life is deliverance from the law of sin and death, as well as the bright witness of a complete remission of sins; and this not as an abstract truth for all believers, but intended to be known and enjoyed by each. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath delivered me from the law of sin and death.” What can be more intensely personal? and what more evident also that it was not only a new and divine life, but this after judgment of sin and the curse of the law had fallen on Christ, and He risen victoriously dispensing a life beyond sin, law, or judgment, and this as having borne all, and borne all away for the believer righteously? Of this His in-breathing was the sign; and He says, “Receive Holy Spirit:” not yet the Spirit sent down from the ascended Lord and Christ to baptize into one body and to give power in testimony, but the energy of His own risen life. For the Spirit ever in the closest way takes His part in every blessing; and as for the kingdom of God every one

is born of water and of Spirit, and none else can see or enter that kingdom, so here with life in resurrection, to deal with souls that hear the gospel.

For this is not all. The disciples thus blessed are invested with a blessed privilege and a solemn responsibility as regards others. Those without are now viewed as sinners, the old distinction of Jews and Gentiles for the time disappearing in the true light. But if it be the judgment of the world, it is the day of grace; and the disciples have the administration, the spirit of life in Christ giving them capacity. Hence the word of the Lord is, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted; whose soever ye retain, they are retained.” So repentant souls were baptized for the remission of sins, whilst a Simon Magus was pronounced in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. So the wicked person was put away from among the saints, and the same man after the judgment of his evil and his own deep grief over his sin was to be assured of love by the assembly's receiving him back, obedient yet taking the initiative in the act that it might be conscience work and not of bare authority or influence. It was the assembly's doing. “To whom ye forgive anything, I also; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, [it is] for your sakes in Christ's person.” He would have nothing forced, but fellowship unbroken in discipline; not he dictating and they blindly or in dread following, as in the church world, but they forgiving and he also in a communion truly of the Spirit.

Notes on John 20:24-29

On the resurrection-day the apostles were not all present, for “Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples said to him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” (Vers. 24, 25.)

His state of soul coincided with his absence on that day. He resisted the blessed news of the resurrection, and did not join the gathering of the disciples to share the joy of the Master's presence in their midst. Slow of heart to believe, he missed the early taste of the blessing, and abode in the darkness of his own unbelief, whilst the rest were filled with gladness. He becomes, therefore, no unmeet type of the Jew, not of the ungodly mass who receive another coming in his own name, but of the poor sorrow-stricken remnant, who cleave to the hope of the Messiah in the latter day, and will enter into rest and joy only when they see Him appearing for their deliverance. “And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace to you. Then he saith to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands, and reach thy hand, and put [it] into my side, and be not unbelieving, but believing. Thomas answered and said to him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith to him, “Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are those that saw not, and believed.” (Vers. 26-29.)

It is a blessed picture of the fruit of Christ's resurrection in the latter day: not the church, but “the great congregation,” brought, in infinite grace, to know and praise the Lord, when He is no longer hidden, but visibly reigning. Those before will have had the good portion, which shall not be taken from them-they saw not, yet believed. Israel will see and believe: blest indeed, but not after the same high measure of blessing. There will be no such revelation of the Father to them, no such association with the Son, no conscious link by His ascension with the heavens. The rejected One will have returned to reign in power and glory, and the heart of Israel, long withered and dark, is to be lighted up at length with the brightness of their hope accomplished in the presence of the Lord to make good every promise, when they, on their part, boast no more of their own righteousness, but take their stand on the mercy that endureth forever. They recognize the Judge of Israel that was smitten with a rod upon the cheek, and themselves given up by Him, until the birth of God's great final purpose in their favor, when He shall be great to the ends of the earth, and they as a dew of blessing from the Lord in the midst of the nations, and all their enemies shall be cut off. “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him,” in bitterness of self-reproach, but with a spirit of grace and supplication poured upon them; for truly He was wounded in the house of His friends, but wounded, as they learn afterward, for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities, stricken for the transgression of Jehovah's people.

Hence we hear nothing now of not touching the Lord because of His ascension to His Father, nor of going to His brethren, and saying to them, “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.” On the contrary, grace will condescend to those who demanded signs and

tokens ere they would believe, and they will stand overwhelmed and abashed at the fullness of visible proof when Messiah returns here below. There is peace to them, “for this man shall be the peace” in that day also, whatever the pride and power of the foe. But there will not be the same mission of peace in the power of His risen life; all their iniquities forgiven, all their diseases healed, but not the place of the church to forgive or retain sins in the name of the Lord.

Accordingly there is the characteristic exclamation and confession withal of Thomas, “My Lord and my God." So will Israel say in the kingdom. “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.” It is the truth, and true blessing for Israel to possess and blessedly acknowledge, especially for those who had so long despised Him to their own shame and ruin; but it has not the intimacy of that fellowship into which the Christian is now called. “For truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” “We walk by faith, not by sight;” and having not seen Christ, we love Him, “in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Chapter 101

Notes on John 20:30-31

Has the evangelist, as on occasion is his manner, interrupts for a moment the thread of the divine tale to say a few words on the gracious way of the Savior in the affluence of signs or significant miracles which studded His ministry here below, as well as on the purpose of blessing the Holy Ghost had in view, in selecting from that countless crowd such as were most suitable for permanent testimony to God's grace. Two objects are set out: first, and pre-eminently, the glory of the Lord's person, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; secondly, that the believer may have life in His name.

“Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.” (Chap. 20: 30, 31.)

No doubt this was a fitting moment here to pause and thus to speak. The unbelief of a believer, yea of an apostle, furnished the material, where the Lord had stooped to meet and receive His erring servant by the visible tokens and the tangible proofs he had insisted on in his folly, and to his hurt irreparable, if grace had not intervened as we have seen. It was a priceless favor to have seen the things the disciples saw. It is better still to believe without seeing. And grace would provide for those who in the nature of things could not see that they might hear and live. Hence the writing of this precious book. It was to be in witness of Jesus; it was to be known and read of all men. Not that scripture ever exhausts its wondrous theme, whatever it may be; and here above all it is as infinite in the person described, as the blessing is eternal for those who believe. God graciously selects some signs out of many, in the considerate goodness which knows precisely what we can bear; for if scripture be His word, it is given to man, even to us who believe, to the end of our enjoying that blessing in His Son, indeed the deepest which He could bestow, the communication of that nature which, as it comes from God, ever goes to Him, yea yields fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

And as the supreme and crucial test now is the person of Jesus Christ come in the flesh (1 John 4:2, 3), so connected with it is the divinely given and guarded testimony to God's grace and Christ's glory, by which the family of God, weak as they are, overcome the adverse might of the world and its prince; because greater is He that is in them than he that is in the world. And those who are of God turn a deaf ear to such as are of the world and speak as of the world whom the world hears; but have they none especially to hear? Thanks be to God, they know God and hear those who are of God, His chosen witnesses, whom the Holy Ghost was to lead and did lead into all the truth, and who in due time wrote “this book,” as did others no less inspired for the work than John. On the other hand those who are not of God do not hear the apostles, preferring the thoughts of themselves or of other men to their irremediable ruin. “By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

After this brief but worthy and gracious interruption the Evangelist turns to “the third” of the great manifestations of the risen Jesus which it was his task to describe, before he closes with the

respective and peculiar places the Lord would give Peter and John in their service here below. How any men of intelligence could say that our two verses which conclude chapter 20 are a formal close of the Gospel might have been viewed as inconceivable, if it was not positive fact. Grotius seems to have been the first man of mark who gave expression and currency to a supposition irreconcilable with the plain connection of the two first days of the week in chapter 20 with the scene which follows in chapter 21, and irreconcilable just in proportion to one's real understanding of the Gospel as a whole. Modern Germany took up this and other injurious notions of that learned Dutchman, not only Ewald, Lucke, Sanday, and Tholuck, but even Meyer, Neander, and Stier. It is painful to add that Alford, Scrivener, Westcott, &c. have yielded to the uncalled-for theory that John 20 originally ended the Gospel, and that chapter 21 is a later appendix from the apostle's own hand, though many go farther and deny it to him.

When we enter on the details of the concluding chapter we may be enabled to show more clearly how unfounded is this thought.

Meanwhile it suffices here to point out briefly the mistake of regarding as a true end the two verses which have been now occupying us. In fact, they are an instructive comment by the way, not without a glance at the signs wrought by the Lord all through, but with special declaration of God's aim for the glory of Christ and the blessing of the faithful suggested by the case of Thomas, yet delicately avoiding any needlessly direct allusion to one so honored of the Lord. It would indeed be as true to say that the Evangelist began more than once in chapter i. as to admit more than one ending in chapters 20, 21. Indeed if men are to reason thus from superficial appearances, it would be snore plausible to infer at least two if not three supplements to the Epistle to the Romans. Nor is authority wanting which transports the doxology from the end of chapter xvi. to that of chapter xiv. Yet it is to be doubted if the hypothesis there be so unnatural as it would be here to sever the third manifestation of the Lord in resurrection from the two which preceded it, or even to admit the former as a later addition, since it is necessary to the completeness of the picture. It is the true complement. In no way is it, as men have thought, a mere supplement, since it forms an essential part of one organic whole; just as John 2:1-22 pertains as a sequel to John 1 and never could be justly dislocated from it, as an afterthought supplied at a later date even by the same hand.

Chapter 102

Notes on John 21:1-6

It is impossible fairly to sever the manifestation of Jesus at the lake of Tiberias from the two previous scenes of which it is the complement; as indeed verse 14 warrants us to say with decision. It is therefore quite improper to speak of the chapter as an appendix, still more so to speculate on its being written at an interval of some length after the rest of the Gospel: an inference due chiefly if not altogether to a misunderstanding of the two closing verses of chapter 20, as has been already pointed out. The connection is immediate and marked with the two previous manifestations of the risen Lord. First, we have seen Him, (after making Himself known to Mary of Magdala and sending by her a most characteristic message to His disciples,) standing in their midst when gathered together without seeing Him on the first or resurrection day of the week, in their enjoyment of peace and the mission of peace in the power of the Spirit to remit and retain sins in His name. Secondly, we have seen Him eight days after meeting His disciples again when Thomas was there, representing saved Israel of the latter day who only believe by the sight of Him risen. Now we have the beautiful picture of the millennial ingathering from the sea of Gentiles, which follows the Jews returning as such to the Lord, as all prophecy leads us to expect.

“After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and he manifested [himself] thus. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus [that is, Twin], and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the [sons] of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter saith to them, I go to fish. They say to him, We also come with thee. They went forth, and entered into the boat, and that night took nothing. But when early morn was now breaking, Jesus stood on the shore: however the disciples did not know that it was [lit, is] Jesus. Jesus therefore saith to them, Children, have ye anything to eat? They answered him, No. And he said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye will find. They cast therefore, and were no longer able to draw it from the multitude of fishes.” (Vers. 1-6.)

Peter with his usual energy proposes to go a-fishing, and six others accompany him. But the result is no better than when some of the same disciples with the same Peter essayed to catch fish before his call and theirs. Even in the days of the kingdom the power must be manifestly of the Lord, not of man nor of the saints themselves; and Peter must and would learn the lesson, if the Catholic church falsely claiming Peter refuse it in pride. It is not yet the kingdom manifested in power and glory, but in mystery for such as have ears to hear. And although grace work its wonders, the nets break, and the boats threaten to sink, even when their partners come to share in taking the great multitude of fishes.

Here Jesus is not aboard, and there is no putting out into the deep, but with the early morn just breaking He stood on the beach, and still unknown put a question which brought out their confessed lack of success. Then comes the word, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye will find. And so it was; for so casting they were now unable to draw the net for the multitude of fishes. It is the figure of the great millennial haul from among the nations, when the salvation of all Israel will prove to be incomparably blessed to the Gentiles. If their “fall” has been so fraught with

good in divine grace, how much more their “fullness” (Rom. 11:12), of which the seven Israelites may be the pledge? The once rejected but now risen Christ is to be the head of the heathen, not only of the church now on high, but by-and-by of the nations on the earth, owned by previously unbelieving Israel to be their Lord and their God. Then will the Jew sing, God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him; and again, Princes shall come out of Egypt: Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God, Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord. In the figure of that day the nets do not break, nor is there any thought of putting the fishes into the boat, still less of gathering the good into vessels and casting the bad away. The weakness of man and of earthly circumstances wanes before the present power of the Lord who directs all.

Augustine may be safely regarded as the ablest and most enlightened of the early writers on this sign, which he compares with that which preceded the call of Simon Peter and the sons of Zebedee. He is right in distinguishing the take of fish which followed the resurrection from the miraculous draft before it. Nor does any other among the ancients add to the truth of his observations, Gregory the Great rather darkening the force of our scripture by his effort to make much-of Peter's part in order to help on the Papal pretensions then in course of rapid growth. The earlier miracle he regards as significant of the good and evil in the church as it is now; the later, of the good only which it is to have forever when the resurrection of the just is accomplished in the end of this age. (Serm, ocxlviii.- cclii., &c.)

Enough perhaps has been said already which anticipatively corrects so erroneous an interpretation of the sign before us. There is no thought of a fishing scene in the resurrection either of just or unjust, no truth in the employing of Jews or men for gathering in the risen righteous to their heavenly and eternal rest. The fathers saw nothing of the future restoring of the kingdom to Israel, nor of the general blessedness of all nations as such under the reign of the Lord in the age to come. The moderns are in general no less uninstructed; for though some see and allow the restoration of Israel to their land and the accomplishment of the glory promised so largely throughout the Old Testament, they somehow with strange inconsistency merge all into this age. They do not perceive that these are among the constituents of the age to come, before the eternal state, when there will be no difference between Jew and Gentile absolutely, as there is none even now for the Christian and the church.

But here is another source of this deep, long-lasting, and widespread misconception. Men and even good men fail to see the true nature of the church, as they do not believe in the special features of the millennial age. How much error would be avoided if they discerned the peculiar character and unexampled privilege of the body of Christ in union with its heavenly head, since redemption, while He sits at God's right hand! How much more, if they looked for His return with His bride, already complete and caught up to be with Him on high, to make His foes His footstool, and Judah His goodly horse in the battle which introduces Jehovah-Jesus King over all the earth-one Jehovah and His name one in that day. It is as egregious to confound with the church wherein is neither Jew nor Greek all this distinctive blessing of Israel and the nations on the earth under the reign of the Lord, as it is to merge both in the end of the age or in the eternity which, they assume, is to follow, blotting out the new age to come, which is to be characterized by the reign of the Second man, the Lord Jesus, the absence of Satan, the exaltation of the glorified saints in power on high, and the blessedness of all the families of the earth here below.

But these all stand indelibly written in the scriptures; and no wrigglings of unbelief can get rid of a truth which may be and is offensive to the pride of nature and the worldly mind, as it would prove full of help and value to Christian men often perplexed by their own misreading of revelation and their misconception consequently of what is to be sought or expected at this present time. For there is no error which does not bear its own baneful fruits; and the error in question, though not assailing fundamental truth, affects most extensively the right understanding of the past, the present, and the future, by blurring their chief characteristic differences, and so presenting an undistinguishable vague, where the word of God affords the fullest light on the various dispensations, as well as on that mystery in regard of Christ and of the church which comes in between and is superior to either.

Notes on John 21:7-14

The love which is of God makes the eye single, and thereby the whole body is full of light. John was quick to discern the Lord. “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith to Peter, It is the Lord. Then Simon Peter, hearing that it was [lit. is] the Lord, girt his over-coat about [him] (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits off), dragging the net of the fishes. So when they had got off to the land, they see a coal-fire laid, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith to them, Bring of the fish which ye have now taken. Simon Peter [therefore] went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, a hundred [and] fifty three: and, many as they were, the net was not broken. Jesus saith to them, Come, dine. And none of the disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou? knowing that it was [lit. is] the Lord. Jesus cometh and taketh the bread and giveth to them, and the fish likewise. This already [was the] third time Jesus was manifested to the disciples after having risen from [the] dead.” (Vers. 7-14.)

But if John was the first to perceive who He was that spoke to them, Peter with characteristic promptness is the first to, act so as to reach His presence, yet not naked but in seemly guise. He had failed miserably and profoundly and repeatedly, but not his faith; even as the Savior had prayed for him that it should not fail. Despair because of the gravest failure is no more of faith than the indifference which hears not the Savior's voice, and, never knowing His glory or His grace, never has the consciousness of its own guilt. In the Lord he thus learns experimentally to confide, after having too much trusted his own love for his Master; and Christ must be all to the heart of him who is to strengthen his brethren.

The Lord however despises none, and the other disciples follow in the small boat, dragging the net full of the fishes; for He had not given such a haul to leave it behind. Grace makes to differ, never to behave oneself unseemly. Peter carried himself suitably toward the Lord; so did they in their place; yet had they all one heart and purpose to please the Lord.

And so will it be when the abundance of the sea shall be converted to Zion. What will not be the effect of all Israel being saved? If their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? What shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? Jehovah will destroy the veil that is spread over all nations; and Israel will not only be the instrument of divine vengeance on their enemies, but of God's mercy, and blessing to all the families of the earth. “And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from Jehovah, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.” (Mic. 5. 7, 8.)

It is remarked and remarkable that, when the disciples landed, they see a fire laid, and fish thereon and bread. The Lord had wrought before them and without them, though He would give them communion with the fruits of the activity of His grace. He will have got ready a Gentile remnant

Himself before He employs His people to gather the great millennial catch out of the sea of Gentiles. The grace of God will work after a far more varied and vigorous sort than men think; and while He deigns to use His people, it is good for them at that very time to learn that He can and does work independently. Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! How verified both in Israel, and in the Gentile.

Yet the Lord would have His own enter into the fellowship of what He has wrought as well as enjoy their own work. “Jesus saith to them, Bring of the fish which ye have now taken. Simon Peter therefore went up and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty-three; and, as many as there were, the net was not broken. Jesus saith to them, Come dine.”

The contrast with all that characterizes the actual work of His servants is very plain. The parable in Matt. 13 shows us that even up to the close of the age good and bad fish are contained in the net, and that it is the marked call of the fishermen just then to put the good into vessels as well as to cast the bad away; whilst the angels, as we know, do the converse work, when judgment comes at the Lord's appearing, of severing the wicked from among the righteous. The miraculous draft in Luke 5, descriptive of present service, shows us the nets breaking and the boats into which the fishes were put beginning to sink. Nothing of this appears here where the days of the kingdom are set forth, when the Lord is with His own on earth. There are many great fishes named but none bad; the net is expressly said to be unbroken; there is no thought of the boat sinking, and the net was dragged along instead of the boat being filled. Thus a wholly different and future state of things is pictured, after this age closes and before eternity begins. The Lord will yet and then renew His associations with His people on earth: I speak not of the Father's house on high and its heavenly relations, but of those to be blessed and a blessing on earth. It is an unquestionably scriptural prospect, and most cheering, that this very earth is to be delivered from its present corruption and thralldom into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For the revelation of His sons the earnest expectation of the creation waits, though, as we know, the whole of it groans and travails in pain till now. But it will not be so always. The Lord Himself is coming, and the day of His appearing will see creation delivered, not of course as we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit are now into the liberty of grace by faith, but the creation itself also by power shall be freed into the liberty of glory.

And the Lord on that day was giving the pledge of the future widespread blessing, when the Gentile world will afford common joy, and the occasion of the manifestation of His risen power and presence, to His people. None but He could or would act after such a sort. His grace is unmistakable. “And none of the disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus cometh and taketh the bread and giveth to them, and the fish likewise. This already [was the] third time Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after being risen from the dead.” It is the day when they shall all know Him from the least of them to the greatest of them, none more needing to say, Know the Lord. “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.” (Jer. 3:17, 18.)

There would be an utter gap for this world and God's glory in it, a gap which nothing else could fill up for him who takes a large and observant view of God's dealings with the world, if there were not a period of divine blessedness here below for Israel and the nations through the grace and to the praise of the risen Lord Jesus. This does not in the least interfere with the deeper and higher things above the world to which the Christian and the church are now called. On the contrary, when the reality and the true character of the kingdom at Christ's appearing are not seen, there is a confusion of it with the proper hopes of the church, which is ruinous to the distinctive blessedness of the church on the one hand and of Israel with the Gentiles on the other.

Notes on John 21:15-17

But our Gospel, while fully revealing God in Christ on earth and in these closing chapters tracing His ways in Christ risen, first, for the Christian and the assembly, next for Israel, and lastly for the Gentiles, never loses sight of grace working with the individual soul; and Peter must be thoroughly restored and publicly re-instated: so would the Lord have it. He had been already singled out specially (Mark 16:7) at a moment when such a distinction was of all moment both to himself and before his brethren, who would naturally have regarded with deep distrust the man who had so grievously and spite of full warning denied His Master. And before the eleven had the Lord standing in their midst, He had appeared to Simon. (Luke 24:34 Cor. 15:5.) But He would carry on the gracious work profoundly in Peter's heart, and let us into the secrets of this truly divine discipline.

“When therefore they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon [son] of John [or, Jonas], lovest thou me more than these? He saith to him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I dearly love thee. He saith to him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again a second time, Simon [son] of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I dearly love thee. He saith to him, Tend my sheep. He saith to him the third time, Simon [son] of John, dost thou dearly love me? Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, Dost thou dearly love me and he said to him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I dearly love thee. Jesus saith to him, Feed my sheep [or, little sheep].” (John 21:15-17.)

The Lord goes to the root of the matter. He does not speak of Peter's denying Him, but penetrates to its cause. Peter fell through confidence in himself, at least in his love to his Master. He judged that he might go where others could not safely, and that he would stand to the confession of His name in the face of prison and death. The result we all know too well. The greatest of the twelve denied the Lord repeatedly and swore to it, notwithstanding fresh and solemn warning. But restoration is not complete though we own the fruit ever so fully. In order to thorough blessing the Lord would have us, like Peter here, to discern the hidden spring. This he had not reached yet: the Lord makes it known to His servant. There is no haste; He waits till they had broken their fast, and then He says to Simon Peter, “Simon, [son] of John, lovest thou (■γαπ■ς) me more than these?” He calls him by his natural name; for well He knew wherein lay the secret, which gave a handle to the enemy; and He would awaken a true sense of it in the apostle's soul. Through assurance of his own superior affection he had not merely trusted in himself, in comparison with others, but slighted the word of the Lord. Had he laid His words to heart with prayer, he had not fallen when tried, but endured the temptation and suffered. But it was not so. He was sure that he loved the Lord more than all the rest; and if they could not stand such a sifting, he would; and this confidence in his own surpassing love to Christ was precisely the cause, as the interrogation of the bystanders was the occasion, of his fall. And now the Lord lays the root bare to Peter, who had already wept over the open fruit.

Yet at first Peter does not discover the aim of the Lord. He does avoid unwise comparison with others; he simply appeals to the Lord's inward conscious knowledge: “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I dearly love (φιλ■) thee.” Far from denying his profession of tender affection, the Lord proves His own value for it, and His confidence in Peter, for He, the good Shepherd, about to quit the world, entrusts to His servant that Which was unspeakably precious in His eyes and Most of all needed His care: “Feed my lambs.” Thus does He prove our love by answering to His love for the weakest of saints. “Whosoever loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.” We love, because He first loved us; but it is not that we love Him only, but those that are His, not those that love us, naturally, but those that He loves, as divinely. “He that saith, I know him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he also is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.”

Did not Peter deeply and increasingly feel the Lord's loving trust thus reposed in him, more than even before he fell? The administration of the kingdom of the heavens, the keys (not of the church nor of heaven, but) of the kingdom had been promised to Peter, and made good in due time. Here it is more tender and intimate, though there is no ground to extend the flock here committed to him beyond those of the circumcision. (Of. Gal. 2) Did he not remember Isa. 40:11, in communion with the blessed Messiah in His work of feeding that flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs with His arm and carrying them in His bosom, while gently leading the nursing ewes?

The Lord appeals once more, but drops all reference to others. “He saith to him again a second time, Simon [son] of John, lovest thou me? He saith to him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I dearly love thee. He saith to him, Feed my sheep.” It is painfully instructive that even such a ripe scholar as Grotius should commit himself to an opinion so unworthy as that these marked changes of expression represent no weighty distinctions of truth. But Peter, though he no longer thinks disparagingly of others, cannot give up his assurance that the Lord was inwardly aware of his true affection for Himself. And the Lord now bids him tend or rule His sheep, as before feed His lambs. And Peter at a later day impresses the same on the elders among the Jewish Christians he was addressing, sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus and other districts of proconsular Asia: “Tend the flock of God which is among you, overseeing not of constraint but willingly; nor yet for filthy lucre, but readily; nor as lording it over your possessions, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock.” In the Lord's words, as in the apostle's, it will be noticed how carefully the lambs and the sheep are said to be Christ's, not the elders' nor even the apostle's. The flock is God's flock. He who treats Christians as his congregation is guilty of the same forgetfulness of divine grace and divine authority, as the congregation in regarding the minister as their minister, instead of Christ's. If any think these are slight distinctions, it is clear that they have no right apprehension of a difference which is as deep in truth as it is fraught with the most momentous consequences for good and ill in practice. Only this gives moral elevation, as it alone springs from faith; this alone delivers from self and gives the true relation and character, even Christ, whether to those that minister, or to those ministered to.

But the Lord speaks to him yet again. “He saith to him the third time, Simon [son] of John, dost thou dearly love me?” Here the probe reached the bottom. Not a word of blame or reproach; but the Lord for the third time questions him, and for the first time takes up his own word of special

affection. Did not his threefold denial appear in the light of the threefold appeal, and, above all, of that word expressive of endearing love “Peter was grieved, because He said to him the third time, Dost thou dearly love Me? and he said to Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I dearly love Thee. Jesus saith to him, Feed My sheep,” or, if the reading of the Alexandrian, the Vatican, and the Paris palimpsest, &c., be preferred, My “little sheep,” a diminutive of tenderness and endearment.

The work of restoration was now fully done. Peter abandons every thought of self and can find refuge only in grace. Only He who knows all of Himself without an effort, only He could give credit to Peter's heart spite of his mouth and all appearances; yet did not He know that His poor denying servant dearly loved Him? The answer of the Lord, committing afresh what was dearest to Him on earth, the gift of the Father's love to Himself, seals Peter's restoration, not in soul only, but in his relation to the sheep of His pasture. Feed them, says the Lord. To tend or rule pastorally is not forgotten; but positive nourishment, as of the lambs at the beginning, remains to the last, the abiding task of the shepherd, the habitual need of the sheep; but it demands enduring and deep love, not to scold or govern, perhaps, but to feed, and not least of all Christ's sheep. Only the love of Christ can carry one through it.

Notes on John 21:18-19

But this is not all. It is not enough for the Lord to restore fully the soul of Peter and to more than reinstate in his relation to the sheep which might have seemed otherwise compromised. Grace would give him in God's due time what he had not only lost but turned to his own shame and his Master's dishonor, the confession of His name even to prison and death.

“Verily, verily, I say to thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. And this he said, signifying by what death he should glorify God.

And having said this, he saith to him, Follow me.” (Vers. 18, 19.)

In this, as in what precedes and in what follows, actions and words are veiled yet significant. There was the intention to convey important and interesting truth, but only to such as weighed all and went not beyond the just bearing of the Lord's sayings or doings. Peter was then in his prime of natural vigor. In his youth (and he was still far from being an old man) he was ready for energetic action, and disposed to use his liberty with too little distrust of himself. He had just ventured to go whither he would, into the high priest's house; and as far as doughty words promised, one might have thought he had girded up his loins like a man to do great feats of valor, or to endure a great fight of afflictions for his betrayed and insulted Master. The issue we all know too well; and Peter had been led more and more to see and feel it, till he had now got down to the root and judged it thoroughly before God. And now also the Lord lets him know that grace would give him back what had seemed forever lost to him, the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and conformity to His death, far more in fact than Peter in his own too confident love and strength had proffered before he miserably broke down.

See how grace shuts out all ground for boasting, while it secures honor beyond what we in our most sanguine desires ever anticipated. Is not this worthy of God and suited to His saints? When Peter went forward according to his own words, he came to worse than nothing, he a most favored servant denying the Holy and Righteous One, his own most gracious Master. It was the deepest humiliation, yet was he a true saint and a loving disciple; but so it was because he entered into temptation at his own charges, instead of enduring it when tried by it according to God. Thus his fall was inevitable; for none can endure save in faith and self-judgment. To be a believer and fervently to love the Lord will not preserve in the least under such circumstances, however strange this may sound to many, who little think how often and deeply they deny the Lord practically, in great matters and small to which He attaches His name. We must be put to shame in whatever thing we are proud; and how much better is even this gain, than to be let go on in unrebuked self-complacency?

But the Lord promises Peter that, when he should be old, he should stretch forth his hands, and another gird and carry him whither he would not. Thus, when it was no longer possible to boast of

his own strength or courage, as a helpless old man, Peter would enjoy from God the singular privilege, not only of death for Christ's sake which in younger days he had essayed to face and most ignominiously failed in, but of that very death which the Lord had suffered with its prolonged agony and shame. For the Lord, as we are expressly told, said as He did, signifying not death so much as “by what” sort of death Peter was to glorify God; and after saying this, He saith to him, Follow Me.

The allusion was scarcely mistakable. In those days when such a punishment was common enough for the lowest slaves and guiltiest criminals, every one understood the meaning of being lifted up, or outstretching the arms by the force of another. Again the illustrative act of calling Peter to follow Him as He walked some paces on the shore made plain its grave intent. Yet even then and thus, another carrying him whither he would not proves how little of self was to be in Peter's death on the cross, in contrast with those who, at a later day and a way lower incomparably, sought a martyr's death to win this crown. No! Peter's close on earth was to be suffering and death for Christ, who would give him to endure at the fit moment.

The lesson of its surpassing grace abides for us who love the same Savior, and have a nature no better than the disciple's. Have we been taught it? Can one learn it safely and surely, save as following Christ? “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.” Peter when called should follow the Master; and so he did. May the same grace strengthen and guide us in the same path for life or death.

Notes on John 21:20-25

The ardent mind of Peter, kindled by the solemn intimation of the Lord, seizes the opportunity to inquire about one so closely linked with him as the beloved disciple. It is hard in this question to discern the jealousy of the active for the contemplative life, of which early and mediaeval writers say much.

“Peter turning round seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following (who also at the supper leaned on his breast and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee?); Peter therefore seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what [of] this man? Jesus saith to him, If I will that he abide till I come, what [is it] unto thee? follow thou me. This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple was [lit. is] not to die; yet Jesus said not to him, that he was [lit. is] not to die; but, If I will that he abide till I come, what [is it] to thee?” (Vers. 20-23.)

It was really loving interest, concerning one more closely associated with himself than his own brother Andrew by the bond of a common affection for Jesus and of Jesus. This made Peter curious to learn about John, now that his own earthly destiny was just revealed. But the gracious Lord, if He reproved in His own gentleness the prying spirit of His servant, did furnish ample matter for thought in the riddle He sets before Peter. One can readily see how shallow is the notion of Augustine and many since his day that the Lord meant no more than John's living to a protracted and placid age in contrast with Peter slain violently in old age, as with his own brother James in youth. Peter emphatically was to follow the Lord even in His death, as far as this could be. Not so John, who was to abide hanging on the will of the Lord till He came. There is evident and intentional mystery in the manner it was spoken of; and some have supposed that the destruction of Jerusalem and the judgment of the Jewish polity are here alluded to; and there is certainly more in such a thought than a merely peaceful death in advanced age, for death is in no true sense the Lord's coming but, rather the converse, our going to Him. We know at any rate that to John it was given to see the Son of man judging the churches, and to have visions not only of God's providential dealings with the world, whether Jews or Gentiles, but of the Lord's return in judgment of the apostate powers of the earth and of the man of sin, in order to the establishment of the long predicted kingdom of God and the times of the restitution of all things.

Out of the Lord's words, perverted as they speedily were, the synagogue seems to have had its fable of the wandering Jew, and Christendom its Prester John, to entertain minds which had lost the truth, either through rejecting Christ, or by turning to superstition.

But this we learn of great practical moment from verse 23, how dangerous it is to trust tradition, even the earliest, and how blessed to have the unerring standard of God's written word. The saying that went forth among the brethren in apostolic times seemed a most natural if not necessary inference from the words of our Lord. But we do not well to accept unreservedly an inferential statement, still less to be drawn into a system built on such deductions. We have the word of the Lord, and faith bows to it for its joy and rest to God's glory. Error easily insinuates itself into the first remove from what He says; as the apostle instructs us here that the Lord did not affirm

that that disciple was not to die, but “If I will that he abide till I come.” Yet those who let in this primitive mistake were not enemies, were not grievous wolves or men speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. It was “among the brethren” that the tradition, unfounded and misleading, got spread. Miracles did not hinder, nor gifts, nor power, nor unity. The mistake arose from reasoning, instead of cleaving to the word of the Lord. The brethren through lack of subjection to God and of distrust in themselves gave the words a meaning, instead of simply receiving from them their true meaning. No wonder another great apostle commends us to God and to the word of His grace; for if we can feebly profit by His word without dependence on Himself, we cannot duly honor Him if we slight His word. And though it is by the Holy Spirit that we are thus kept and blest, even He is in no sort the standard of truth (while He is power in every way), but Christ as revealed in the written word.

Last of all come the personal seal and attestation of the writer. “This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.” (Vers. 24, 25.) It was John and no other. Every inspired writer preserves none the less his own style and manner; and none more unmistakably than he who wrote the fourth Gospel. Yet what was written is but a sample, selected in divine wisdom, and with a specific plan subserving the grand scope and purpose of divine revelation. If everything which Jesus did were written out, well might the adoring evangelist suppose that the world itself would be too small for the needed books.

Chapter 107

John 20

It is impossible to one, in giving great principles for the help of those who seek to understand the word, to develop all that is so deeply touching and interesting in this twentieth chapter of John, on which we have often pondered with (through grace) an ever-growing interest. This revelation of the Lord to the poor woman, who could not do without her Savior, has a touching beauty, which every detail enhances. But there is on point of view to which one cannot but call the reader's attention. There are four conditions of soul presented here which, taken together, are very instructive, and each in the case of a believer:-

1st. John and Peter, who see and believe, are really believers; but they do not see in Christ the only center of all the thoughts of God, for His glory, for the world, for souls. Neither is He so for their affections, although they are believers. Having found that He was risen, they do without Him. Mary, who did not know this, and was even culpably ignorant, could nevertheless not do without Jesus. She must possess Himself. Peter and John go to their home; this is the center of their interests. They believe indeed, but self and home suffice them.

2nd. Thomas believes, and acknowledges, with true orthodox faith, on incontestable proofs, that Jesus is his Lord and his God. He truly believes for himself. He has not the, communications of the efficacy of the Lord's work, and of the relationship with His Father into which Jesus brings His own, the assembly. He has peace, perhaps, but he has missed all the revelation of the assembly's position. How many souls-saved souls even-are there in these two conditions!

3rd. Mary Magdalene is ignorant in the extreme. She does not know that Christ is risen. She has so little right sense of His being Lord and God, that she thinks some one might have taken away His body. But Christ is her all, the need of her soul, the only desire of her heart. Without Him she has no home, no Lord, no anything. Now to this need Jesus answers; it indicates the work of the Holy Ghost. He calls His sheep by her name, shows Himself to her first of all, teaches her that His presence was not now to be a Jewish bodily return to earth, that He must ascend to His Father, that the disciples were now His brethren, and that they were placed in the same position as Himself with His God and His Father-as Himself, the risen Man, ascended to His God and Father. All the glory of the new individual position is opened to her.

4th. This gathers the disciples together. Jesus then brings them the peace which He has made, and they have the full joy of a present Savior who brings it them. He makes this peace (possessed by them in virtue of His work and His victory) their starting-point, sends them as the Father had sent Him, and imparts to them the Holy Ghost as the breath and power of life, that they may be able to bear that peace to others.

These are the communications of the efficacy of His work, as He had given to Mary that of the relationship to the Father which resulted from it. The whole is the answer to Mary's attachment. to Christ, or what resulted from it. If through grace there is affection, the answer will assuredly be granted. It is the truth which flows from the work of Christ. No other state than that which Christ

here presents is in accordance with what He has done, and with the Father's love. He cannot by His work place us in any other.

Chapter 108

John 8:12 Compared With 9:5

In these chapters the Lord is presented to us as the Light in two ways. In chapter 8 He is (and that by His own testimony) the glorious person whom man is responsible to receive and to follow, and by following whom he will get the light of life; but One whose glory he cannot see under the veil of His humiliation, if his conscience be not wrought on by the Holy Spirit. In chapter 9 we are taught the way the Lord works to reveal the glory of His person to a man's heart. In chapter viii. He is the Light presented to man, and rejected. In chapter 9 we have the illumination of a man's heart by the One who in chapter viii. was the Light in His own personal glory and title. The relation of chapter 9 to chapter 8 is that of the work to the person. Consequently in chapter 8 He says, ■γ■ ε■μι τ■ φ■ς το■ κ■σμου; this was part of His personal glory and title: but in chapter 9 it is φ■ς ε■μ■ το■ κ■σμου, a certain work predicated about Him, something that He came to do.

It is as if He said, “Not only am I here as the Light offered for your acceptance; if that were all, My mission would be useless, it would only bring out your hatred of the light, and your love of darkness. But it is not all. I am going to work as light in your hearts and consciences, and, by thus working, to reveal Myself to you.” Thus the Lord says, “For judgment came I into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.” The Pharisees saw, in one sense; they prided themselves on having the truth, and on their privileges. But there was one thing they were blind to-they did not see the Son of God in that One who was presented to them in humiliation. And when they find themselves in presence of the Light (chap. 8: 1-12), they shrink from it, and retire into the outer darkness; and when He afterward testified to them of the full glory of His person as the “I am,” the only result was that they stoned Him. Thus were they which saw made blind by His presence. And so it must ever be, if we only had Christ as He is presented to us in chapter 8. For blessing to result, it is necessary that He should by the Holy Spirit carry on a definite work in heart and conscience. This is not only typified physically, but exemplified by the case of the blind man. First, as to the physical type: the Lord spits on the ground, makes clay, and puts it on the man's eyes. This in itself only intensifies, if possible, his blindness; but the moment the man washes in the pool of Siloam, all the divine efficacy of the Lord's act comes out. He gets his sight. Thus the presentation of the Lord in humiliation to man only intensifies his blindness (see the Pharisees in both chapters), unless man's conscience is wrought on by the Holy Spirit to see in the humbled Man one “sent” of God to reveal God to man; as he says afterward, “He is a prophet.” “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter,” &c. Next, as an example; how is it that he sees in Christ one who represents the mind of God, a prophet, whereas the Pharisees, with the same amount of evidence, reject Him? The man's conscience had been wrought on by the Holy Spirit, quite independently of the power manifested in his external cure. When the Lord put clay on his eyes, and told him to wash them, the mere natural man would have said, “You are mocking me.” But there was faith in the man; he would not have obeyed if he had not had faith. A work had taken place in his soul.

I do not wish to enter into the fuller revelation he received afterward of the person of Christ, nor of the place the Pharisees drove him to, outside the fold with the Shepherd-in reality “put forth” by the

Shepherd, though apparently “cast out” (the same word, as has been remarked) by the Pharisees. My object is only. to contribute towards a comparison of the teaching of chapters 8: 12 and 9: 5; the former being “the Light” in His person, and the effect on man of its presence without the Holy Spirit's work; whereas the latter is the way the Spirit works to reveal that person to the soul. In chapter 8, “I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” With what effect? “The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest witness of thyself; thy witness is not true.” In chapter 9, “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; night cometh, when no man can work. While I am in the world, I am [the] light of the world.” Chapter viii. is about “the Light,” about Himself, as the Pharisees said. The subject-matter of chapter ix. is illumination in grace.

Letters on Subjects of Interest

Beloved Brother,

I thank you for your letters, which always interest me. God is so faithful to His own, that, if there is any disposition to rise, God humbles, as we see in the meeting at—. He would not have us out of the place of security and blessing. Discipline is more difficult than people think, because they are not humbled enough to think of a brother's sin. They do not feel enough what one is oneself, nor love consequently for others.

I have been deeply interested and touched by the reciprocity of concern between the Father and the Son in their love for us. (John 17) They communicate mutually, or at least by the mouth of the Son who addresses the Father, and I learn in what way they share this love. The Father has given us to the Son; the Son has manifested to us the name of the Father; He has kept the disciples in the Father's name. Now the Father is to keep them, and to bless them because they are His own, but also because the Son is glorified in them. The Son has also given us all the words the Father had given Him for His own joy. What a thought that the Father and the Son think of us thus!

Generally in John it is the love of the Father and of the Son which characterizes grace. God is light, but light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not. But if no one has ever seen God, the only-begotten Son who is in the Father's bosom has declared Him. So in chapter 8 it is His word, and “I am;” in chapters 9, 10, it is grace, and “I and the Father are one.” They would believe they were doing God service [in persecuting His own]; and this, because they knew not the Father nor the Son.

New York, April 23rd, 1867.

The Lord is come from the Father to reveal Him to us as He has known Him. We come from Christ to reveal Him, as we know Him; that is true ministry-a happy and blessed thing, but serious in its character. “Peace be unto you,” said the Lord; “as my Father hath sent me, so have I sent you.” What a mission, although we are not apostles!

September, 1871.

Dear Brother,

That which constitutes the difficulty of the first chapter of John's first Epistle, and even of all the epistle, is, that the doctrine is there presented in an abstract manner. But in sum I believe that the mind of the Spirit is this: God is no longer hidden. We have fellowship with Him in the full revelation of His grace-with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Under the law God did not come out; man did not go into His presence. Now the Father is revealed in the Son and has given us a life in which we enjoy His fellowship. But then it is with God Himself-no more veil-and God is light He is perfectly pure and reveals everything. Now since there is no more veil and God has revealed Himself, we must walk in the light, as He Himself is in the light. But in this position one is perfectly cleansed by the blood of Jesus; next, we enjoy fellowship one with another.

It is this full revelation of God which is of the essence of Christianity: fullness of grace, introducing us into fellowship, and the Father known in the Son; but it is with God, if the thing is true, and God is light. The fellowship is with God, according to His nature, and without veil. But if we come to Him, it is as washed in the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, and we are before Him, without veil, white as snow. Now the Christian walks in the consciousness of this, having a nature which is connected with it: we are light in the light in the Lord. But this must be in the light, as God is in the light; all is judged according to the revelation of God, who judges all things. One is in the light, as God is in the light. These things are written that we sin not; if any man sin, the remedy is in the first verses of chapter ii. But the verses of which you speak teach us that we are in the light, as God is in the light. Now if we speak of fellowship when we are not in it, we lie, for He is the light.

Letters on Subjects of Interest: Justification

Canada.

Truth is eternal, and love lasts forever; both are in the precious Savior; let us hold them fast by grace. In these last days all gets more and more enlightened as the dawn of day appears; I can say that the truth of eternal things has a reality which it never had before. Christ becomes more and more everything. The things which perish have only an appearance. We have always to fight, but that which is unseen is eternal, and is ours by grace. May Christ dwell in our hearts by faith!

The objection made to the use of 1 Cor. 7:14 has no force. Amongst the Jews, if they married a Gentile woman, or vice versa, the Jew was not unholy, but he had profaned himself; the children were unholy, and he had to send away both the woman and children. The husband did not cease to be a Jew, although a profane Jew; but his children were unholy, and from that time could not even be profaned, for that which is already unholy cannot be profaned.

Now, grace having come in, it was the obverse which took place. The unbelieving husband did not cease to be unbelieving, but he was relatively sanctified (not holy); then the child was holy, not inwardly in his soul, but he had a right to the privileges which belonged to the people of God upon the earth, privileges of which the child of a mixed marriage amongst the Jews was deprived, because he was profane. He was not more a sinner than another, but he was excluded from the center, where were found the blessings granted by God to His people, and they were great ones, as the apostle said.

We are in these last days, and evidently God acts in grace to take His people out of the evil, and the judgments; but there must be more devotedness, more separation. May God act in His goodness! There is still much more to be done in calling souls, and in establishing them in the truth, that they may not be carried away by every wind of doctrine. There is so much unbelief, and the human mind is so active, that souls are exposed to dangers of all kinds. God keeps them, and His own are, after all, always in safety; only the snare is no longer formalism, but the rejection of all, or the substitution of opinions for divine truth. I always think that it is a fine moment for him who is decided. One must be an out-and-out Christian, and accept the foolishness of God as wiser than men, and the weakness of God as stronger than men. A humble walk, in entire dependence on God, in looking-at Jesus Christ, is singularly blessed, in these days; and the rest will soon come.

I do not know what thing we have to do down here mere important than better to know God, and to serve Him; but what I look for, above all among the brethren, is devotedness. I do not doubt that their place is just the witness of God, not after any wisdom in us, but by the sovereign goodness of God, and by more or less knowledge of Him. But the witness is not complete if there is not devotedness. It is not that I regard doctrine as of no importance. The more I advance, the more I see that in evangelicalism unity is lost, that it never had but resists the doctrine of Paul, not only as to the church (which has been clear for a long time), but even as to our entire position as Christians. I am daily more explicit in my witness on this subject, when the occasion requires it. It

may be useful to argue, but I believe that clearness of testimony is useful, so as to render the testimony without fear. The times are too serious; only one must know what we are doing, and what is the question in reality. But the controversy with respect to righteousness, and thus with respect to the law, has manifested the thing.

Are we in the first or Second Adam? Excepting the useful and searching Epistle of James [which has another and practical bearing] among the writings of the New Testament, only those of Paul treat of justification. John is occupied with the principle which is included in it, but not under this form. No doubt he includes the doctrine as that of the Spirit, but to be risen with Christ, and thus presented before God, is Paul's doctrine. Only if we are occupied with this doctrine, we must watch that the divine character should be fully developed-in our own spirit and in our own faith, I mean to say. That is what Paul does fully, in the manner, doubtless, which is peculiar to him: that is to say, in that line of truth in which he was guided by the Holy Spirit. And it is marvelous to see the manner in which it is outside the law, and, being outside the law, these legalists are contemptible, as far as their doctrine is concerned. We are to be the followers of God, Christ being our model, and to let the divine life in us be seen by a complete sacrifice of ourselves, and that towards God, so that the principle may be perfect. I have been occupied with that lately, and I think of sending an article on this subject to.... I believe God has lately been helping the brethren in their publications, and it is a mercy on His part. But we have to render a much more extensive testimony than we do. The workmen must have faith for all that they do. Often the complaints and questions as to the state of the brethren arise in a great measure from a lack of faith among those who express them. However, I fear the world for them. Sometimes bold assertions take place: here the evil is least; but devotedness, separation from the world, absence of conformity to the world, that is what I look for...The Lord is ever the same, so is it with man morally.

September 11th, 1841.

Justification is one point, and two things uniting with it: firstly, that the blood has washed us from our sins, and that is, perhaps, justification, properly speaking. But in fact one can add to it our acceptance in the Beloved. If any man practices justice, he is just, as Jesus Christ is just; for to practice justice flows from the life of Christ in us; but by this life we are united to Christ in us; we enjoy His righteousness before God, being rendered accepted in the Beloved. The resurrection is the pivot of it, being the proof of atonement; it introduces Christ, according to the power of this eternal life (in which we participate) in the presence of God. It is around the person of Christ, looked on as risen, on which all the troths which are found in the word turn. The union of the church with Him is the complement of them. Resurrection leaves behind it in the tomb all that could condemn us, introduces the Lord into this new world, of which He is the perfection, the Chief, and the glory: now we are united to Him.

October 7th, 1841.

... I do not exactly like this expression: “Christ has obtained justification from God,” because it presents God as unwilling, and even opposed to the thing, whilst it is the, will and the heart of God, who has prepared us the sacrifice, and all. It is true that the justice of God required the atonement and the sacrifice of Christ. It is, however, He whose love has provided for all our wants in that respect. Also it is He who justifies. (Compare Zech. 3) The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks rather of our acceptance under the form of our presentation to Him, of sanctification in the outward sense.

“That he might sanctify the people by his blood.” Also He has perfected them; they can keep in His presence as being in Him, according to the perfection of the sanctuary, without blame, without spot. Justification is the idea of a tribunal, of a judge, so to speak. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the sanctuary, and of presenting us there. The foundation is always the same: only we can look at it in different ways, and each one gives us more light on the perfection of the work of Christ, and on the effects of this work, which we enjoy.

1 Peter 1:19 speaks rather in the sense of redemption, ransomed from the hands of the enemy. The obedience of Christ during His life tended towards the perfection of the sacrifice-it was not expiatory, but perfectly agreeable. It was a question of the acceptance of His person, as necessary to His work, but this obedience was not expiatory. If the grain of wheat had not fallen to the ground, it would have remained alone; but His complete obedience rendered Him perfectly agreeable to God, as also He was. (See Phil. 2) Under the form of justification, it is the Epistle to the Romans which treats most expressly the subject of our acceptance. What I wished to say in making use of the expression, “Christ has obtained justification,” will be understood in comparing the way in which this epistle explains itself. (Chap. 3: 24.) “Having been freely justified by his grace, by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” You see the way in which it is presented, as flowing from the free gift of God. This is important for the state of the soul, and that grace should be clearly understood.

January, 1842.

To apprehend the position of the law well is a difficult thing, because we must be fully led by the Holy Ghost, in order not to be ourselves in some way under the law, as to our feelings at least. One must have well apprehended the power of the work, and of the resurrection of Jesus; without that one would be without the law, if one were not under the law. We are by no means under the law. Grace does not recognize any participation of the law in our hearts; but how so if we recognize the law as good? Because Christ exhausted it in His death. He was under the law until His death, and in His death, but evidently He is not so now. He can use the law to judge those who have been under the law, but we are united to Him. As Adam was only head of the old family after his fall, so Christ is only Head of the new family as risen from the dead. He places them in His own position as a risen man; they begin with Christ there. They recognize the power of the law, but it has put to death Jesus-there where it has lost all its power and its dominion over the soul. We belong to Another. We can use the law, if there is need of it against the unjust, because, having the divine nature, we can handle the law, and it cannot inflict that mortal wound on the divine nature from which it has gone out. We can show where man is, if he is under the law, to make the perfection of redemption come out by that. That is what the apostle does in Romans and Galatians, to make one understand that we are no longer under the law; because we are dead with Christ. By the law we are dead to the law, we are crucified with Christ. A Gentile was never truly under the law. In becoming a Christian he takes Christ at a point where He has done with the law, but having received the Spirit of Christ, he has no more need of the law to discern the perfection of redemption; he has intelligence to understand the things accomplished in the history of Messiah-His perfect work. But the thing is far from being clear in the minds of Christians, for in fact most of them have made a law out of Christianity, and have put themselves under the law.

They must come out of that to enjoy peace, but to them the discussion about what the law is, is a very important and opportune thing because of that; besides, the human heart puts itself so naturally under the law, that it is very important that each soul should be well enlightened on. this point. The law, let us always remember, reveals to us nothing of God, except that the law implies a judge. It gives us the measure of our responsibility, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbor.” There is the law. One can say that the gospel gives us new motives for accomplishing the law, but these motives are drawn from a fact which gives Christ over our hearts all the right to which the law could pretend, and puts an end by death to the power of this latter, for we are dead and risen with Christ. We shall do and avoid many things which are found in the law, and the summary which has been given to us remains the principle, or the fruit, of the life of Christ in us. It is accomplished in all that flows from this life, but we are by no means under the law, for we are one with Christ, and Christ is not under the law. The law not only condemns the conduct, but the men. The law does not only say, “Cursed is everything,” but “cursed is every one that persevereth not.” Thus one must be under the curse if one is under the law. But it is because we are not under the law that we can employ it if it is needed. The Jews wished to employ it against the adulterous woman, but they were under the law in the flash. Their law pierced their hearts to death and condemnation. Christ used it, or at least left it its efficacy, because that, although He was born under the law, it could not reach Him for condemnation, the life of God in Him being perfect. United to Him in resurrection, we can use it, because we are beyond its reach by the death and resurrection of Christ, enjoying His life in our souls. That is why one is always more or less under the law until one has understood the resurrection of Christ; and also, every time that the flesh obscures the power of our redemption, I hope you will be able to understand these few remarks.

As to the Epistle to the Philippians, it offers another very interesting feature-the desolation and personal experience of the apostle. He views the church as deprived of his care; and he himself is oppressed for the moment by the power of Satan. Thus he enters, in a very touching and powerful manner, into all that which concerns the struggle of the church, and into all that which is important for it during the period of its loneliness; also he offers the graces which would prevent it from falling into the miseries which arose in consequence of the absence of the apostle. Hence the great use of this epistle for the present time. They began to preach Christ with a spirit of dissension, and not to be of one mind, to murmur. He shows what the riches and graces of Christ consist in, particularly necessary for such a state, alas! much ripened since then. Why should I say, alas? for all that will turn for salvation, and show that the coming of Jesus is nearer.

September, 1871.

Dear Brother,

That which constitutes the difficulty of the first chapter of the Epistle of John, and even of all the epistle, is that the doctrine is there presented in an abstract manner. But on the whole I think that the thought of the Spirit is this: God is no longer hidden; we have fellowship with Him in the full revelation of His grace-with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Under the law God did not come forth; man did not go into His presence. Now the Father has revealed Himself in the Son, and has given us a life in which we enjoy fellowship with Him. But then it is with God Himself-no longer a veil, and God is light; it is perfectly pure, and reveals all. Now that there is no more veil, and that God has revealed Himself, one must walk in the light, as He is in the light. But in this

position one is perfectly cleansed by the blood of Jesus; then we enjoy fellowship one with another. It is this full revelation of God which is the essence to Christianity: fullness of grace introducing us into communion, and the Father known in the Son; but it is with God, if the thing is true, and God is light.

Chapter 111

Letter on Subjects of Interest: Fellowship

London, 1871.

I have not the least doubt that the apostle, when he said (1 John 1:7), “We have fellowship one with another,” spoke of fellowship with saints among themselves. There are three elements of Christian life. The first is to be in the light as God is in the light, without a veil. One must be found in the presence of God fully revealed. If one does not keep oneself there, one cannot be in communion with Him.

The second is, that, being in His presence, it is not with us the egotism of the individual, but the fellowship of the saints by the Holy Ghost, in the enjoyment of the full revelation of God Himself.

The third is, that we are white as snow, so that we can find ourselves with joy in this light, which only makes manifest that we are all that the mind and heart of God desires in this respect, that which our heart desires also before him. The idea is abstract and absolute, it is the value and efficacy of Christ's blood. It is not only the washing away of sin; there is an efficacy besides, which is not lost. My soul once washed, I am always before God, according to the efficacy of this blood. The washing away is rather by water, although in virtue of this blood. (See John 13, and the “red heifer.") But here it is the value of the blood in itself, and mark it well: “if we walk in the light, as God is in the light.” It is indeed a real state; but the apostle does not say “according to the light.” It is our position, now that the cross has revealed God without veil. As men interpret this passage generally, they ought to read, “If we do not walk according to the light, the blood cleanses us.” But it is not a question of any such thing here.

It is at the beginning of 1 John 2 that one finds that provision made, or what is necessary in case of failure. I do not doubt that the light searches us; but here God does not see evil, He sees the man cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

At verse 8 the consideration of acknowledged sin begins. No doubt the blood purifies us from everything, but when we think of the existence of sin in us, the knowing that the blood purifies us from everything, we are led to another gospel truth, namely, that we are dead with Christ. (Rom. 6; Col. 2; 3; Gal. 2) It is for practice, and is directed against the movement of sin in the flesh. If sin has acted, we are led to confess, not the sin in the flesh, but that which it has produced (1 John 1:9); then we are pardoned and cleansed. This is true at the beginning, but true also in the details of life.

The different characters which Christ takes in respect to these last days are these-” the Holy and the True.” Yes, this is the character which He takes, what He wishes in His own, in their walk, when He shall come soon. We have to watch over ourselves, and over our brethren, that thus it may be. I feel, for my own part, that we have in these days to watch very particularly over this holiness, though it is always an essential thing for the children of God. Evil is in the world, but we are in the hands of God. Christ has entered after the evil, and gained a complete victory over him who was the chief of it; thanks be to Him! He holds in His hands the keys of death and hades; but

the time has not yet come to take away the evil from off the earth. God uses it for our good, but the evil is there.

Letters on Subjects of Interest: The Church

February 10th, 1855.

The time to come is the church's glory and perfection; the present, that of fidelity and faith, but of a faith which counts on God that the church, by His power, may manifest His glory in this very world by its common superiority to all that governs it and to all that exercises an influence over it. The church is the seat of God's power in the world. What have we made of it? (See Eph. 3:20, 21.) The Epistle to the Ephesians presents the perfection of the position of the church before God; that to the Thessalonians gives, in a manner most interesting and to me in the highest degree edifying, the perfection of the Christian's position individually.

March 25th, 1871.

Dear Brother,

One knows little about the history of what they call the church, of what the church is as to its responsibility, nor the walk of the clergy, nor even that of all the world. It is a happy thing only to have the word to follow, and to know that it is the word of God. What an immense privilege to have His word, the revelation of His grace toward us, the perfection of the person of Jesus, and the counsels of God, what God has ordered for our glory! It is in His kindness to us that He will show in the ages to come the unsearchable riches of His grace.

From the beginning, trusting to the enemy rather than to God, man has been estranged from Him, and the two questions, “Where art thou?” and “What hast thou done?” showed where man had got to. The responsibility completely put to the test until the rejection of Christ, then God glorified in justice, His love and the counsels of His grace, before the foundation of the world, have been put before us. This places the gospel in quite a particular position, as it shows the relation of responsibility and sovereign grace with great clearness.

More than this, there is no veil on the glory of God. From thence His wrath revealed from heaven, but also the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, a witness that all the sins of those who see it are no longer before God; then all that God is morally fully revealed and shown. We know it according to His glory, and our relationship with God, our position before God, is founded on it. We are changed from glory to-glory, according to this image, for we can pin on it: it is the proof of our redemption, and that our sins are no longer before God. We are renewed also in knowledge after the image of Him who created us; we are created according to God in righteousness and true holiness; for, according to this glory, He puts Him in our hearts to bring forth the glory of Christ in the world. We are like a lantern; the light is within, but to shine without, but a dim glass (the flesh, if it interferes) will hinder the light from shining as it ought. Thus, what is given us becomes an inward exercise, the treasure is in an earthen vessel; and it must be only a vessel that we should he dead, that the life of Jesus should be made manifest in our mortal bodies. It is not only a communication of what is in Christ as to knowledge; but, if it is real, we drink from the source of the river. It is a communication which exercises the soul, makes it grow, and

judge the flesh in everything, so that we do not spoil the witness which has been confided to us.

In Christ Himself the life was the light of men, and it is necessary that the light which we receive should become life in us, the formation of Christ in us, and that the flesh should be subject to death. Death acts in us, says Paul, life in you.

That is the history of ministry-of true ministry. What we communicate is ours. It enlightens us, but it acts in us morally; and the glory of Christ is realized in us, and all that does not suit Him is judged. Now the flesh never suits Him.

The death of Christ put an end to all that was of Paul; thus the life of Christ acted by him on others, and only that. This is saying a great deal. Thus, with regard to this, there may be progress. As to my position before God, I reckon myself to be dead; and, as to living, death acts in me. There is the vessel, but it must be only a vessel, and the life of Christ acts in it and by it. If the vessel acts, it spoils all. In fact we live, but we must always bear about death, so that the glory of Christ, the image of God, may shine for others. But all the glory of God is revealed; there is no longer a veil upon it on God's side; if it is veiled, the veil is upon the heart of man by unbelief. An all-important truth! Under the law man could not enter; God did not come out. He has come forth, but in being nothing, in order to bring out grace. Then, the work of redemption accomplished, He has gone in, and there is no more veil on the glory.

Letter on a Subject of Interest: Romans

Boston, Feb. 17th, 1867.

I do not know if in my “Synopsis” I have sufficiently remarked on the structure of the Epistle to the Romans. However, this point has been much developed in my mind. In the first chapter I end the Introduction with verse 17. Verse 18 begins the argument, which shows the necessity of the gospel, because of the sins of either Jew or Gentile.

From chapter 3: 21 we have the answer of grace in the blood of Christ to sins committed, explanation of the patience of God with regard to past sins, and the ground of justice revealed in the present time. Then, in chapter 4, the resurrection as an accomplished fact is added.

In chapter 5:1-11 he shows all the blessings which flow from that which precedes; peace, favor, glory to come, joy in tribulation, joy in God Himself. This brings out sovereign grace, and the love of God-love which is shed abroad in our hearts by His Spirit which He has given us. A chief division of the epistle is found at the end of verse 11 of chapter 5. As far as the end of this verse, the apostle has spoken of sins, then of grace.

Now (from ver. 12) he begins to speak of sin. Before it was our offenses; now it is the disobedience of one. It is Adam (everyone, no doubt, having added his part to it) and Christ. It is no longer, consequently, Christ who died for our sins, but it is we who are dead in Christ which puts an end to the nature and position which we had from Adam. That is also why the apostle speaks of our death, and does not go any farther. If he had spoken of our resurrection with Christ, he would have encroached on the doctrine of Colossians and Ephesians, and would have been obliged to come to union with Christ, which is not his subject here. His subject is, How am I, a sinner, individually justified with God? The answer: Christ has died for our offenses; there are the fruits of the old man put out of sight; then you are dead with Christ-this puts your old man away (to faith).

Besides, chapter 6 answers to the objection,” Shall we sin?” &c. How, says the apostle, shall we live to sin if we are dead? You have a part in this death-certainly it is not to live. Union does not exist at all in this argument; only, if we are dead, we must live by some means or other.

Now it is to God by Jesus Christ. This suffices to show the practical bearing of this doctrine. Union relates to our privileges. We are perfect in Christ, members of His body. The fact that we are in Christ is supposed in chapter 8: 1, and affirmed in a practical manner in verse 9 of the same chapter, but there it relates to deliverance. But the object of the apostle in his arguments is to show that we have done with the flesh, and consequently with sin and that we derive our life from another source; so that justification is a doctrine of deliverance from sin, and not of the liberty of sinning. In chapter 7 death applies to our relations with law. The end of the chapter shows us the experience of a renewed soul (as to the conscience and its position) still in the flesh, of which the law is the rule-the law, which, when we are renewed, is understood in its spirituality. The consequence of all this is developed in chapter 8, which makes us see our position with God, the

effect of what we find ourselves in Christ, as chapter 5: 1-11 shows that which God has been for us sinners, and what, consequently, we have learned Him to be in Himself. The end of chapter 8 resumes in triumph the consequences of these truths.

As to your question on the Psalms, you must not believe what they tell you. From the confession of Mr. Newton, never from mine, his views are found in the Psalms, not in the Gospels. My doctrine is exactly opposed to that of Mr. Newton. He taught that Christ was born in a state of distance from God, and could only meet God on the cross; only by His piety He took away many of the consequences of His native position. On the contrary, I believe that He was born, and lived until the cross in perfect favor with God, and that in grace He entered in spirit into the troubles and sorrows of His people, and particularly at the end when His hour was come. On the cross He, in fact, drank the cup. But I do not at all think that it is a question of His sufferings only in the Psalms; I believe even that a much fewer number of Psalms apply directly to Christ than people generally think. The Psalms, looked at in their prophetical sense, depict the circumstances and trials of the remnant of Israel.

That Christ has shared in spirit the sorrows of His people I do not doubt: but I say that very few of the Psalms are direct prophecies of what has happened to Him: some of them are, as is unquestionable. But I think that the New Testament shows us very clearly the relationship of Christ with His people. No doubt the New Testament is not occupied with the remnant as the Psalms, nor with the future of Israel as the prophets, because it is a question generally of deeper truths, more important, and of another character; but it puts these things very clearly in their historical place, and quotes the prophecies which bear upon them. We see Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, announcing that which should happen either to the disciples in the midst of the people or to the people themselves. The Old Testament gives us the details as to Israel, and speaks more of the result, because that is the subject of which it treats; but the New Testament makes us see exactly the place of these things with regard to Christianity, which is its subject, and it resumes, as far as is necessary, the subject of the Old. As to the sufferings of Christ, it gives them to us historically, and in quoting the passages of which the Old Testament has spoken, it often presents to us the feelings of Christ more intimately than the Psalms do, and at other times quotes these last as explaining the history of what is past.

For my part I take what I find in the Old Testament as the same authority as the New. If the Old Testament says, “In all their afflictions he was afflicted,” the New makes us hear Jesus, who Himself said, weeping, “How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” I quite understand that many Christians do not well apprehend that which concerns the remnant of Israel, as well as the interest which the Lord has in it. That does not trouble me; but when one explains the. Psalms, one must explain them according to their true sense, and I believe this gives a much deeper sense of the patient grace of Jesus. At all events, I think it is important that this should remain a means of edification, and not a subject of contest; without that the person of Christ loses His savor for the heart, or at least the heart loses the sweetness of His grace. If one says that these sufferings (which I do not admit) are not to be found in the New Testament, but in the Old it is clear then that, in explaining the Old, one must speak of them. But the Lord speaks of His position as Zech. 13 describes it, and consequently of the state of the remnant.

Generally the New Testament has not the remnant for its subject, but Christ the Savior, and Christianity; but it also treats of the first of these two subjects in its place. Chapters 1, 2 of Luke are almost entirely occupied with the remnant historically and prophetically. Chapter 10 of Matthew only applies to this subject, and comprehends the whole time to the end, to the exclusion of the Gentiles and Samaritans. It is the same thing under another form in chapter 11.

They say that Christ only suffered in expiation and in sympathy. Do you think He suffered nothing when He rebuked the scribes, who hindered poor souls from receiving Him? Read chapter 23 of Matthew. Did not His heart stiffer? “He suffered, being tempted,” is an important truth in the word. When He asked His disciples to watch with Him, He was not yet drinking the cup, but He sweated as it were great drops of blood. This was not sympathy; He sought it, but did not find it. It is a very serious thing to deny the sufferings of the Son of man. There was sympathy at the tomb of Lazarus, but on approaching death, and always more or less, He suffered-He, in love, in grace, doubtless, but really; not, assuredly, because of what was in Him, or of His own relationship with the Father, but “it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings.”

I earnestly entreat you not to make these things a matter of controversy; it is rather a question of worship: to contest these points injures, and tends to destroy, all holy affections. When I see Paul explaining himself as he did at the commencement of chapter 9 of the Epistle to the Romans, shall I say that Christ, whose Spirit pressed the apostle to these sentiments, remained Himself indifferent to the unbelief of the well-beloved people? He died for the nation;—it is clear that it was expiatory, but it is a proof that He loved it as a nation. The sufferings of Christ are air important point, and the New Testament, as well as the Old, shows that Israel was in a peculiar manner the object of His affections, which made Him suffer. Now His sympathy was with the sorrows of humanity, but He felt, and He explained the iniquity which put an end (save in the sovereign grace of God) to all the hopes of Israel, and to the enjoyment by the beloved people of all the promises. When He says, “It cannot be that a prophet perish outside Jerusalem,” and that He called it “the city which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them which are sent unto thee"-was this said in hard indifference? The suffering was not expiatory, and He could not have sympathy with the iniquity which did that. These words only reproduce with a more touching affection, and a heart in which all egotism and self-interest were absent, the expression in the Psalms.

No doubt one may represent these things badly. The affections of the Savior are too delicate a subject for one to handle roughly without straining them, or, so to speak, hurting them; but that one should deny them is distressing to me. The Messiah has been out off, and all the hopes of the beloved people are lost with Him—to be recovered, no doubt: now, I do not believe that Christ did not suffer about it.

Letters on Subjects of Interest: Numbers

April 19th, 1845.

Lately I have read, to edification, Numbers, and the Epistle to the Philippians. The establishment of the rod of Aaron, a priest in grace, whilst being in authority, after all the murmurs of the congregation; its employment, although this was by Moses; its lack of employment at the time of the new complaints of the congregation;-all this has singularly instructed me. At the same time when God had judged and disciplined the people, the manner in which He immediately speaks (chap. 15.) of all His promises and of the land as being theirs, having been given them by Him, has touched me much. His promise and His thoughts for His people are as firm as if nothing had happened. The responsibility and the sustenance of the priests as such, and of their families as families, and the points of difference, have also edified me much.

That which has struck me much in the Epistle to the Philippians, is how the apostle has his death continually before his eyes; then, that the trials which he had endured had acted as good discipline, causing Christ to be all for him, himself being nothing. And what peace this gives! He does not know if he is to be condemned. As to himself the arrangements of the magistrates did not enter his thoughts; as to himself he does not know what to choose; but it is good that he should remain for the church: thus it is decided. He judges his ease, by the sole consideration that such a decision will be for the good of the church, and thus Christ will make it decided. Is it thus that we trust Him, dear brother? Alas! no; at least too often we are not sufficiently emptied of self. We cannot say with the apostle, “I have learned.” This is what we must learn. Well! it is the life of this man, so faithful, so devoted, and so gifted of God, the life of the Apostle Paul, taught and disciplined in this manner, and the perfect calm with which he enjoys the consequences of this discipline, which has lately been to my edification in reading this epistle.

November, 1855.

Without getting much new, I have greatly enjoyed, and I hope profited by, the word. The Psalms have been the subject of our conversation, and a number of passages here and there have had more force and clearness to my soul. I have been much struck with the effect of the judgment-seat of Christ upon Paul. He sees all the terror of it, but the only effect is, to engage him to persuade others. The Christ before whom He would appear was his righteousness and judged according to this righteousness; thus there was no possible question. That which judged, and that which was before the judgment, were identified; it was one side of the truth, and of the nature of God. The other side is love. Now it is this which consequently puts itself into activity; he persuades others because of this terror. I know few passages which show with more force what is the power of the gospel, and the perfection of justification. But there is a precious operation of this judgment-seat: the apostle realized the manifestation before him; he did not fear being manifested in the future; he was, in fact, manifested to God; conscience perfectly purified, relatively to God, took all its power, and, keeping itself in the presence of God, all that was not according to that presence was in fact manifested in the light. It was necessary, and by grace he had the light of God, to show, to have

the consciousness that there was nothing. It is very important to be there. Many things are judged there which often are not judged in a tolerably regular Christian life; and when the conscience is before God and clear, love is free. One knows also in this manner what it is to be bearing about always in one's body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal bodies; or rather, in walking thus, it should be so-one is fully in His presence.

Among other things, I have also been struck with chapters 15 and 17 of Genesis. It seems to me that the disinterestedness of Abraham at the end of chapter 14 was the reason that God in grace said to him, “I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.” At first sight one would have thought that Abraham would have nothing to do but to rejoice in unspeakable joy in thinking that God Himself was his reward; but he says, What are You going to give me? God condescends in grace when it is a question of a true want founded upon a promise. But there is an element which impresses its character upon this grace: “I am thy shield, and thy great reward.” The blessing does not surpass the wants or the personal privileges of Abraham. Quite naturally his heart enters into it and it is the development of the want of the heart according to its proper state. It is an immense favor, but a favor which, in a certain sense, measures itself by the wants of the creature. In chapter 17 God says, “I am God Almighty.” He does not say “Thy.” It is what He is in Himself. “Walk before me and be thou perfect,” upright. Abraham falls down, and God talks with Abraham. He promises him the son, and then reveals to him, like a friend, what He is going to do. Then Abraham, instead of asking for himself, intercedes for others. Also one may remark that chapter 15 does not surpass the Jewish promises; in chapter 17 he is the father of several nations. It is the difference between the goodness of God who binds Himself in grace to us and our needs, and communion with Himself.

Chapter 115

The Last Words of David

We may contemplate the close of David's life under two aspects-one historic, the other moral and typical. The first is found in 1 Kings 2:9, the last word uttered by the aged king being, “But his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.” “Blood” is the word on the lips of the dying warrior, “a man of war from his youth,” as Philistine enemies and Amalekite foes could testify. Memories of holy righteous victories, mingled with those of sin, shame, and sorrow, crowd together, as we think of Elah's valley and Ziklag's sorrow, of righteous judgment on the messenger of Saul's downfall, and the sons of Rimmon, the Beerothite. And would that the picture could end here! But Uriah's cruel death, and Nathan's “Thou art the man,” cast their sad and sombre shade over all, as we hear the judgment pronounced on the king's enemies.

How refreshing, then, to turn to the other scene, where the Spirit of God introduces us to “the man after God's own heart,” in quite a different atmosphere, and with other surroundings. As we listen to the holy breathings of the prophet in 2 Sam. 23, we learn that “no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation,” for every word he utters carries us beyond the history and the facts narrated, and the scene becomes a “gate of heaven” to our souls, as we view “great David's greater Son.”

Let us look for a moment in detail at the lovely way in which every word tells us of another and greater than he-yea, of One that eclipses” Solomon in all his glory.” “David, the son of Jesse, said.”

How this leads our heart to the manger at Bethlehem, the home at Nazareth, to Him who was a carpenter, and the Son of a carpenter! The lowly Man of Luke comes before us vividly, as He tells of “the son of David, the son of Jesse,” unknown amongst those robed in purple and fine linen-of whom, when it was asked at kingly courts, “Where is he?” the answer was returned, as of David in 1 Sam. 17, “O king, I cannot tell;” and so he has to answer for himself, “I am the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite"-a small, despised house, and he the least in the house.

Such was David, such was Jesus-lowly in heart, a companion of the poor of the flock. “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Marvelous, precious, and ineffable grace! Jehovah's Fellow stooping to the lowest place, condescending to the meanest estate. How this draws out the renewed affections, as the soul contemplates the travel-stained feet, the weary frame, the furrowed cheek of God's Well-beloved, “hunted as a partridge upon the mountains.”

But now in spirit are we carried on from the evangelist Luke to the historian Luke, as, in the opening chapter of the Acts, he presents the lowly Son of Jesse as “the man raised up on high.”

In lowliness He had humbled Himself, taken a servant's form, had gone down into death, obedient to the Father's will; and now, when the lowest point is reached in holy descent, “He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.” And His ascent was indeed glorious and exalted, for “he was set far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” The scepter of majesty is in His

hand, enthroned in the excellent glory, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is no longer the despised “Nazarene” that Peter has to announce: “God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ.”

“Worthy the Lamb that's gone on high to be exalted thus.”

This once despised but now exalted One is likewise “the Anointed of the God of Jacob,” the center and the sum of all God's purposes for Israel and for the Gentiles—as indeed of the heavenly counsels also. David was speaking of the things “touching the king,” truly “inditing a good matter.” He had been anointed with Samuel's “horn of oil;” but the Anointed of the God of Jacob passed in vision before David's soul, and he too, with Abraham, looked on to the day of glory, and saw Him who was at once David's “Son” and David's “Lord"-to Him who was “the Prince of the kings of the earth"-to “the Lord who sitteth King forever"-to Him “who holdeth the key of David"-to Him who should ask and “have the heathen for a possession"-to Him “who was set as King on the holy hill of Zion.”

The next note of the dying patriarch directs us to another glory connected with the One who was thus to manifest God's ways in rule, and we have “the sweet psalmist of Israel.”

David had said and sung sweet and holy melodies, but never such music as that which sounded through the lips of Jesus, as He “piped” in the midst of Israel melodies of grace, compassion and love. Alas! alas Israel's heart was fat, and their ears dull, and “the voice of the charmer” was unheeded. Cold, listless, careless, defiant were they, as they heard the voice of Him who “spake as man never yet spake;” hearing, they heard not, and so the voice becomes hushed in the midst of the nation, and instead of the “garment of praise,” the sweet singer has, to wrap himself in the “robe of heaviness,” and, thus robed, sits to weep that touching lament over the rebellious city, “O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, but ye would not.” He turns sadly away from the city of solemnities, “the joy of the whole earth,” leaving it desolate indeed. O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! no longer sheltered by the shadow of those eternal wings. And soon that voice of compassion is hushed in death upon Calvary's mount, but only to awake again in the morning of resurrection glory, when, having burst the bonds of the tomb, and taking His place in the midst of His “brethren"-those “He is not ashamed” to own as such, the voice is again heard, not now to win a rebellions and perverse nation, but “in the midst of the church” He sings praises to God; and we who are the favored ones in that heavenly choir answering, as Miriam did Moses, and giving back to Him all the glory of His “glorious triumph,” But this is a note altogether heavenly, and so the Spirit of God tells us that after this wondrous melody there is yet another to rise from “the great congregation” (Psa. 22:25), and Israel shall praise Him in the great congregation in millennial days yet to come, when holy adoration and “a pure offering” shall proclaim His worth.

Yet again is He brought before us as the instrument of divine communications: “The Spirit of the Lord spake by him, and his word was in his tongue.” So we read in Acts 1:2 that Jesus, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandment unto the apostles whom He had chosen. And indeed He was ever, while on earth, the humble, dependent Man, led of the Spirit in every word, act, and deed, so that all He did was by the direct power of the Holy Ghost; but not only does “the Spirit of God” speak “by him,” but Israel's God and Israel's Rock speaks to Him, and the eye of faith is directed to the moral qualities essential in the One who was to reign over all, and of whose

kingdom there shall be no end.

Let us, however, notice in passing that God is present as “Israel's Rock.” The nation failed, miserably failed; and wrath has come upon them to the uttermost; but “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance;” and so Israel will find, in a day yet to come, rest and refreshment in that One who is “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

The qualities requisite in the one who is to rule for God's glory and man's benefit, are righteousness, obedience, and dependence-alone found in that blessed One, who came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”

Saul wielded the power for himself. David and Solomon, in the palmy days of their unparalleled glories, in the list of Israel's kings, had to hide their heads in shame, and own, in the words of the humbled king, “My house is not so with God;” and so we have to turn from “his house” to Him who “had neither beginning of days nor end of life,” a kingly Priest after Melchisedec's order, as David proceeds to describe the verdant beauty of the kingdom under the reign of Him who is alone worthy; and exquisitely indeed is the picture drawn. “He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even as a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” Unsullied light will shine upon this now dry and arid scene, and “the wilderness blossom as the rose,” when “a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment, and a man shall be a

(Refuge)-” hiding-place from the wind;”

(Protection)-” a covert from the tempest;”

(Refreshment)-” as rivers of waters in a dry place;” and

(Rest)-” as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

Thus refuge, protection, refreshment, and rest will be found in Him who “shall come down like rain upon the mown grass,” as showers that water the earth. “In his day shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth; his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall he blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.” (Psa. 72) Truly we can add, in the presence of the prospect so resplendent with moral and physical glory, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.”

All now is praise and adoration as David entered into the blessedness of that reign; and, as the vision filled his soul, he could devoutly and fervently say, “This is all my salvation, and all my desire.” We may well ask ourselves, Have we the same spirit of earnest desire that animated his soul, and captivated his inmost affection? And if the vision tarry, have we patience to wait for it,” though he make it not to grow"? Are we found in “the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,” in company with the beloved John in Patmos's isle, content to let opposition, violence, and oppression take their course, until He come forth whom Jehovah “has made strong for himself"? Then shall Belial's sons feel the weight of His righteous judgment, for by “the breath of his mouth,

and the brightness of his coming” shall He “clear out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity.” “The thorns cast away” tell of righteous indignation on those who “know not God, and [those that] obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” when the mighty Conqueror shall descend, with His glittering sword and glorious apparel, “the day of vengeance in his heart.” And with Him shall be “the armies which are in heaven"-ten thousand of His saints associated with Him, “for this honor have all his saints.”

Here let me ask, is there not significance in the fact, that the names, the valor, the victories of David's associates in the day of rejection, find a connecting link with the holy breathings of our prophet? Does it not tell us that the kingdom will be the theater for the display of recognition of those who, knowing the Beloved whom earth rejected, seek to walk in heavenly association with Him now during the time when the sons of Belial are in power? Does it not point us to the time when “the Lord, the righteous Judge,” shall award the crowns of “life” (Rev. 2:10; James 1:12), “glory” (1 Peter 5:4), and “righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:8), when He shall pronounce the “Well done!” and “every man shall have praise of God,” who, suffering now, shall reign by-and-by-co-heirs, co-glorified?

If so, beloved, does it not behoove us to be “diligent, that we may be found in peace; looking for that blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,” when the “Son of Jesse,” and “the man raised up on high,” “the sweet psalmist of Israel,” “the anointed of the God of Jacob,” will—

“Give these bodies vile

A fashion like His own:

He'll bid the whole creation smile,

And hush its groan,”

How blessed to be able to say,

“Thus far by grace preserv'd,

Each moment speeds us on:

The crown and kingdom are reserv'd

Where Christ is gone.

When cloudless morning shines,

We shall His glory share;

In pleasant places are the lines,

The home, how fair!”

H. N.

Chapter 116

A Few Words on Leviticus 16

This chapter treats of the great sacrifice which was made once a year. The Red Heifer was a sacrifice whereof they kept the ashes for purification with water every time one was defiled by a dead body.

Propitiation for our sins was made by Christ once forever. (Heb. 9; 10) The presence of God accompanies all the sacrifices. It is only in His presence that we can enjoy His communion. (Ver. 2.) The high priest entered alone before God and made atonement for himself and for his house. (Vers. 3, 6.) Then taking the two goats for Israel he cast lots, one for Jehovah and the other for Azazel, that is, the scape-goat; the one to offer for sin, the other to let go, with the sins of the people confessed on its head, into the wilderness. (Vers. 7-10.) By the blood of the slain goat expiation was made for Israel as a people. Jesus who interceded for them on the cross does so still. But He is not yet come out from the holiest to make the application of this sacrifice to the people, though those of the Jews who believe enter anticipatively into the blessing, being fore-hopers in Christ (Eph. 1), as also the Gentiles who have heard and believe the gospel. The Jews as a people will believe when they see; the Christian, the church, believes without having seen, and there is an especial blessedness in this respect. Having the call of grace, we have all the efficacy of these sacrifices. Indeed typically Christians are foreshewn in the offering for Aaron and his house, in distinction from the people provided for in the goats. To speak fully, our position is identification with the high priest himself within the rent veil. The Jews await the reconciliation when He comes. We in the Spirit are viewed in Him already within according to the efficacy of Christ as the bullock, His sweet savor having previously filled the sanctuary. (Vers. 11-14.)

There were, as we have said, two goats, one for Jehovah, the other for the people. The first was killed and its blood brought within, and sprinkled like the bullock's upon and before the mercy-seat, the figure of Christ's blood presented to God. (Ver. 15.) The other goat, charged with the sins of Israel, is not brought forward till after an end is made of reconciling the holy place and the tabernacle and the altar (vers. 16-20), when Aaron lays his hands on its head, and makes confession, and sends it away into the wilderness.

That God might be fully glorified and act freely in love to sinners, expiation must be made and the blood be offered to Him. If God tolerated sin, it would not be love to sinners, but indifference to evil which would dishonor His character: such is God's love as worldly men conceive it. (Psa. 50:21.) But it is God who is to judge man, not man God; and when God pronounces in His word, man has no right to say, Wherefore? The converted have spiritual intelligence that knows God cannot accept evil.

It was meet that the Captain of salvation should be made perfect through suffering. (Heb. 2) The Son of man must be lifted up, the great responsible surety, put to death as man for sin. The character of God must be perfectly glorified, and our sins be completely banished from us, in order for us to have everlasting fellowship with God. The blood having been presented and expiation made, love can flow freely from God's throne, and grace be preached to the sinner. It is what puts

the conscience at large as to our sins which were all put on the head of Jesus who confessed them.

Observe the three things: 1st, the blood presented to God in the holiest; 2nd, the sanctuary and tabernacle and altar cleansed by the blood from defilement; 3rd, the iniquities of Israel confessed on the scape-goat. To these correspond: 1st, Christ gone into heaven by His own blood where God dwells in light inaccessible; 2nd, this world in relationship with God, where Christ suffered; our altar of burnt-offering, where we find our Savior in His sacrifice, the ground of reconciling all things; 3rd, sins confessed and borne by the great Substitute, which literally belongs to the people beholding Him come forth at the end of the age, but of course true of us now. He died for that nation, though not for it only, but for the scattered children of God who meanwhile believe, while Israel remains outside. We draw near into the holiest through the rent veil and look on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face. The way into the holiest was not yet manifested while as yet the first tabernacle had its standing. It is to-day, which makes a great difference between the Jews and us. The Jews could, according to their light, do things which would be great sins for us. We have been let into the presence of God without veil as to the principle of our relations with God. There is nothing between God and us. If the veil is rent, God in all His holiness and the world in all its sins are in presence without anything between. How is it God does not destroy the world? Jesus was made sin; but therefore it is that the sin of the Jews subsists without veil.

All the means God employed in vain till the death of Christ have shown the result of the experience God has made during four thousand years. Grace, that is, the activity of God in love toward condemned sinners—grace begins to be manifested. Christ's blood presented to God leaves God to act holily in His love toward the lost. Grace has appeared and goes forth. The world is condemned, but judgment is not yet executed. It is to-day the acceptable time, the day of salvation. Such is the actual economy. The blood is the life, the way of God's love. There is no inconsistency on God's part, if we should find our rest in Him. The blood of Christ's rejection is not on us, His blood is before the eyes of God; it has been shed, and sprinkled on the throne of God which becomes necessarily a throne of grace.

If my soul lives to God, I feel how precious is the blood. But my thoughts are not the measure of my assurance. Faith looks to the thoughts of God; and I know by faith that God estimates the blood of Christ as it ought to be estimated. He regards it always with the same eyes. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” There is the assurance of faith and our security. Nothing more than redemption has brought out God's horror against sin. To be always in God's presence; to be in rest as to our relations with God, we know the blood of Christ accepted, of God. He has received the expiation. There is no more question then of sin between God and me. That does not settle the warfare against sin. If I think of myself I have the conscience of sins; if I think of Christ before God, I have it no more. The blood is before God, and, if the sin is not entirely expiated, the blood is worth nothing. The blood, is God's answer to every accusation of Satan against me. His accusations thus fall; there is a source of continual peace. There is a perfect expression of God's love toward us. God loved us in our sins, and when wearied with them, in place of getting rid of us, He got rid of our sins by Christ. God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son. He manifested His love in the cross. He did not spare His own Son for us, and the most precious object of heaven He gave up for us. The love of God, in Christ's expiation for man-this is what Christ's cross teaches and manifests. Conscience awakes, but finds in Christ a full repose.

In the goat Azazel we see Christ substituted for us, as if He had committed all our sins laid and confessed on His head; for He was at once victim and priest. It is a great comfort to know that all my sins have been confessed before God, and it encourages and engages me to confess them. Impossible to confess my sins to God if I think that those sins will make me condemned; whereas, if Christ did, and if wrath has already fallen on Him, our heart is comforted, and we can boldly confess our sins without fear of being condemned. This is what takes guile from the spirit. (Psa. 32) Thus we understand the church to be everlastingly saved, unless Christ died in vain. Would it be just to impute to me the sins of which Christ already bore the penalty? Impossible to fathom this love of Christ. The more holy He was, the more He felt the weight of our sins. The more He understood the holiness of God, the greater was His horror of sin.

Chapter 117

On Leviticus 4 and 6:24-30

The actual subject is the sacrifice for sin. Other sacrifices show us the perfection of Christ in His sacrifice and in His death, as well as the communion of the saints with God and with Christ therein. But God also made Christ sin for us, and this is what the sacrifice for sin represents.

The sin-offering must be perfect (ver. 3); but sin was laid upon it (ver. 4), and it could not be treated as of sweet savor. On the cross Christ was treated on God's part as if He Himself had been a sinner. In the application of the sacrifices and of their efficacy for an individual, the sacrifice for sin is the first, and an absolute necessity before any other. To present the blood of Christ to God, there is what gives us boldness in the presence of God, who sees us according to the efficacy of that blood; as it is His estimate of the blood of Christ which is the ground of my confidence. He values it as it ought to be valued, and has received it acceptably in expiation of my sins.

But when the Holy Ghost acts in us, He brings to our remembrance all our sins, and shows them to us; when He brings back thus all our pollutions, He makes us feel what we are before God; the soul is distressed and tormented; but that does not satisfy conscience, we must clearly understand that Christ has borne all our sins.

There are souls who trust in the blood of Christ without having understood all the efficacy of that blood. That is what is particularly shown us in the sacrifices for sin. Unconverted people pass lightly over sin, and say that God will pardon our faults; but nothing will escape Him, neither wrongs toward others, nor sins committed in ignorance (ver. 18), unknown to us. (Lev. 5:17-19.) It is impossible to be in ignorance without sin. If I sin in ignorance, it is because I am a sinner, and ignorance is one of its consequences. If I do not love as Christ loves, it is a sin. An error in judgment arises from the estrangement of our souls from God. Our affections govern our judgment; if thine eye be single, thy whole body is full of light. Thus, in the parable of those who are invited to a feast and excuse themselves on account of their oxen, in which they have put their affections, God shows us what He sees in us, and the more the light enters into our hearts, the more it makes us discover what we are.

It is our privilege to partake of the holiness of God; all that is in us which is not in the holiness of God is sin. A bad conscience shows that we have lost the light which we had gained: when we sin in ignorance, it is because the light is not still in our heart, and doubtless by our fault. The more I grow in the knowledge of God, the more I learn to know my sin. Let us get our ideas of sin from God Himself. All that hinders our growth in the holiness and in the love of God, is sin. We cannot touch that which is unclean without being polluted. God judges according to His thoughts, and not according to ours. The more we raise the measure of our privileges, the more we raise also the measure of our holiness. God brings us all into His presence; the blood of Christ intercedes for us, but the judgment of God on us is not changed. We are admitted into the career of holiness, whilst we are set free from the very beginning of that career.

In the sacrifice for the high priest and for all the people the blood was carried into the sanctuary, and the body burned outside the camp as a thing of shame. (Ver. 12.) Christ suffered without the gate. (Hebrews 13.)

The high priest laid his hand on the victim and confessed the sins of the people. So Christ confessed the sins of His own. Expiation is already made. He bore in His own body all the sins He confessed, which often trouble the children of God. If there were a single sin of mine unconfessed and not borne away, it would be manifested in the judgment; but God has seen it to the uttermost, and therefore was Christ's blood shed. (Lev. 6:26.) The priest ate the victim offered for sin, and ate it in the holy place. Christ charged Himself with our sins in detail; and it is in seeing this weight on Jesus that we feel better the effect of sin. He could do nothing for us without bearing this weight, the judgment of sin in our stead; not merely our sicknesses and diseases in His life of ministry, but our iniquities and transgressions in His death. God would not be just toward Christ (a thing impossible toward any one) if He did not pardon the sins of all who believe. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. It is God's righteousness, due to Christ and to His work on the cross, that He pardons all who turn to Him in Christ's name. It is sovereign grace toward us; for what do we not deserve? But it is grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 118

Liberty

The Christian was called to liberty, the holy liberty of the new nature, but yet liberty. It is no longer a law which constrains, or rather vainly seeks to constrain, a nature whose will is contrary to it, to satisfy the obligations which accompany the relationships, in which by the will of God we find ourselves-a law imposed, forbidding evil to a nature that loves evil, and commanding the love of God and of one's neighbor, to a nature whose spring is selfishness.

Had it been possible to take away Christ's moral liberty-which was not possible-it would have been by preventing Him from obeying the will of the Father. This was the food He ate. (John 4) As a perfect Man, He lived by every word which came forth out of the mouth of God. He chose to die, to drink the bitter cup which the Father had given Him, rather than not obey Him, and glorify Him in drinking it. Christianity is the liberty of a new nature that loves to obey, and to do the will of God. It is true that the flesh, if not kept in subjection, can use this liberty to satisfy its own desires, just as it used the law, which had been given to convict of sin, to work out righteousness. But the true liberty of the new man-Christ our life—is the liberty of a holy will, acquired through the deliverance of the heart from the power of sin-liberty to serve others in love. All the law is fulfilled in one word, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The Christian can do still more-he can give himself for others; or, at the least, following the direction of the Spirit, he fulfills the law in love. But if they devoured one another in selfishness, contending about circumcision and the law, “take heed,” says the apostle, “that ye be not consumed one of another.”

The apostle here establishes the principles of holiness, of the Christian walk, and brings in the Holy Ghost in place of the law. In the preceding part of the epistle he had set forth Christian justification by faith, in contrast with works of law. He here shows that God produces holiness; instead of exacting it, as did the law with regard to human righteousness, from the nature which loves sin, He produces it in the human heart, as wrought by the Spirit. When Christ had ascended up on high, and was set down on the right hand of God, having accomplished a perfect redemption for those who should believe on Him, He sent down the Holy Spirit to dwell in all such. They were already children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and, because they were such, God gave them the Spirit of His Son. Born of God, cleansed by the blood of Christ, accepted in the Beloved, God seals them as His own by the gift of the Spirit until the day of redemption, that is, of glory. Having the new life, Christ as their life, they are bound to walk as Christ walked, and to manifest the life of Christ down here in their mortal flesh.

This life, produced in us by the operation of the Holy Ghost through the word, is led by the Spirit which is given to believers; its rule is also in the word. Its fruits are the fruits of the Spirit. The Christian walk is the manifestation of this new life, of Christ our life, in the midst of the world. If we follow this path-Christ Himself-if we walk in His steps, we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. It is thus sin is avoided, not by taking the law to compel man to do what he does not like; the law has no power to compel the flesh to obey, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The new life loves to obey, loves holiness, and Christ is its strength and wisdom by the Holy

Ghost. The flesh is indeed there; it lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusts against the flesh, to prevent man from walking as he would. But if we walk in the Spirit, we are not under the law; we are not as the man in Rom. 7, where, impelled by the new nature, the will desires to do good, but, a captive to sin, he finds no way of doing what he desires; for the law gives neither strength nor life. Under law, even if life is there, there is no strength: man is the captive of sin.

But sealed by the Holy Spirit, the believer is free, he can perform the good he loves. If Christ is thus in him, the body is dead, the old man is crucified with Christ. The Spirit is life, and that Spirit, as a divine and mighty Person, works in him to bring forth good fruits. The flesh and the Spirit are in their nature opposed the one to the other; but if we are faithful in seeking grace, the power of the Spirit, Christ, by His Spirit in us, enables us to hold the flesh for dead, and to walk in the footsteps of Christ, bringing forth the fruits that suit Him.

There is not really any difficulty in distinguishing the fruits of the Spirit from the fruits of the flesh: the apostle names them, those at least which are characteristic of their respective actions. Of the sad fruits of the flesh, he positively declares that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God: but the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, &c. Against such there is no law; God cannot condemn the fruit of His own Spirit. Remark, that the first of these fruits are love, joy, peace. The Spirit will surely produce those practical fruits which manifest the life of Christ in the sight of men, but the inward fruits, the fruits Godward, come first, the condition of soul needful for producing the others. Many converted persons seek for the practical fruits in order to assure themselves that they are born of the Spirit and accepted of God. But peace, love, joy are the first-fruits of the presence of the Spirit; the others follow. In order to know what is in the heart of God, we need to see the fruit of His heart, the gift of Jesus.

If I believe in Him, and through Him in the love of God, sealed of God by the Spirit, I have the sense of His love-love shown in the death of Jesus is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit, which is given to those who are washed from their sins through faith in His blood. By that Spirit we have the consciousness of our position before God, and love, joy, peace are, in the soul. The fruits which follow are, moreover, the proof to others that my certainty and assurance are not false, that I am not deceived. But for myself, it is what God has done which is the proof of what is in the heart of God, and through faith I set to my seal that God is true. Then, sealed by the gift of the Spirit, I rejoice in His goodness, and the fruits of the new life manifest to others that this life is there.

Moreover, “they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.” They have not got to die: Christ died for us, and He who died being our life, we hold ourselves for dead, crucified with Him, as though we ourselves had died upon the cross, since it was for us He suffered. Possessing another life, I do not own the flesh as “I,” but as sin which dwelleth in me, which I hold to be crucified. The faithful Christian realizes this continually. God declares us to be dead with Christ: He looks upon us thus. (Col. 3:3.) Faith, accepting God's declaration with thankfulness, holds the flesh, the old man, to be dead (Rom. 7), and through the Spirit, if he is faithful, he applies the cross in a practical way to the flesh, so that it may not act (2 Cor. 4.); besides this; God in His government sends that which is needful to test the Christian, and to effect this.

The apostle adds the exhortation, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.” The law nourishes rather

than destroys vain glory, for the law makes us think of self. When rightly applied, it is most useful for convincing of sin, not for producing righteousness.

Thus the operation of the law with regard to justification and holiness has been fully examined, and set in a clear light. It does not produce righteousness, but exacts it. It cannot be linked with Christ as a means of justification: “if righteousness is by the law, Christ is dead in vain.” Man ought surely to have kept the commandments of God, but that is not, the real question. Man has not kept them, therefore upon that ground he is lost: Christ, on the other hand, brings salvation because we are guilty.

Then, as to holiness: it is not God's way to seek to produce holiness in the flesh through the law, for the flesh is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be. God gives a new life in Christ, and the Holy Spirit, to produce fruits which are acceptable to Him; and against these fruits there is certainly no divine law. God cannot condemn the fruits of His own Spirit. It is the new creature, the new life, with its fruits by the Spirit, which are acceptable to God; it is this new creature which seeks to please Him.

Strengthened by the Spirit, and instructed by Him according to the wisdom of God set forth in the word, let us seek to walk in the footsteps of Christ, that perfect example of the life of God in a Man which has been given to us.

Chapter 119

The Lord's Coming: Correction

Dear Mr. Editor,

In a Bible printed in the year A.D. 1599 I find the following annotation to 2 Thess. 4:15-18. It occurs to me that it might prove interesting if given to your readers, and perhaps you might give quotations from still earlier writers, affording ground to suppose, or rather proof, that the truth of our Lord's coming for His living saints was not altogether lost sight of by Bible students.

I am, yours affectionately, S. P.

“The maner of the resurrection shall be thus: the bodies of the dead shall be as it were raised out of sleep, at the sound of the trumpet of God; Christ Himself shall descend from heaven. The saints (for he speaketh properly of them) which shall then be found alive, together with the dead which shall rise, shall be taken up into the clouds to meete the Lord, and shall be in perpetuall glory with Him. He speaketh of these things, as though he should be one of them whom the Lord shall finde alive at His comming; because that time is uncertaine, and therefore every one of us ought to be in such a readinesse, as if the Lord were comming at every moment.”

Chapter 120

The Lord's Dealings Now: Part 1

Heb. 9

My thought now is to enter a little more into detail with the Lord's dealings in the dispensation in which we live. But first I would take up a more general view of God's dealings with man from the beginning; and for this purpose I now read Heb. 9, as verse 26 is the great center truth on which it all hangs: “Now once in the end of the world [that is, morally] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” All that God had done up to that point was the bringing out of sin in the first man. But there followed immediately the putting away of that sin in the second Man. Then, passing over the present interval, he speaks of this second Man appearing again a second time.

Here, then, is the grand turning-point of all God's ways: the death of Christ, and its consequences—His coming again to take possession of all that His first coming had given Him a title to. They were His before, “For by him were all things created,” &c. But in His second coming He takes possession of that which His blood had bought back to Himself again. “For he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.” (Ver. 27.) “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” The end of man is to die (or rather, we may say, he there begins for eternity, and, it is terrible to think of it, begins in judgment). But God in Christ has introduced another thing; for as the end of man, either Jew or Gentile, is death and judgment, so “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” The first time Christ came it was about sin, in the sense of bearing it; being occupied with it, He was made it, in Himself the sinless One. But having put sin away, He comes the second time without sin unto salvation. In His second coming there is no question about sin whatever, but the full bringing out of God's purpose of blessing in consequence of the putting away of sin. Man's portion is death and judgment, as contrasted with the salvation Christ brings. But then mark another thing. In the meanwhile priesthood comes in; He is hidden from the world, as He said, “The world seeth me no more,” but He appears in the presence of God for us. The word “appears” is a legal term, as the One who represents His people; so He, as our High Priest, is representing us in the presence of God. He has taken His place, and sat down at God's right hand, having by Himself purged our sins. And we need such an High Priest in our daily walk; but then, as regards His bodily presence, He is gone, and therefore we have to walk as pilgrims and strangers in a seducing world, though not of it, our life being hid with Christ in God.

And then comes out another thing. The veil being rent, He has sent down the Holy Ghost to be in us, and to associate us in heart and life with Him in heaven, thus giving us the proper exclusive heavenly character of a family belonging to them now on the earth. For Christ being in the presence of God for us, our portion is in heaven. We are in the position of Stephen, who being full of the Holy Ghost, looking up into heaven through the rent veil, saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. The heavens were opened to his spiritual gaze, which is now always true to us, and all we are now waiting for is, that Christ may come and take us bodily up there.

The crucifixion of Christ was the utter rejection of the Second Adam by the first Adam. This was man's turning-point; for man had been tried in every possible way, but all in vain. Then God says, “What shall I do? I will send my beloved Son; it may be they will reverence him when they see him.” But when they saw Him, they said, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.” All the dealings of God with man, as man, ended here; and therefore it is called “this present evil world.” The rending of the veil, which closed all the previous dealings of God with man, opened the way to heaven; and, while it condemned the sinner, it saved the believer. It morally judged the world, but brought out full salvation to all that believe, associating them with heavenly things; for through the rent veil, that is, Christ's flesh, we have access into the holiest of all.

Then comes the question, how far such saved ones (for I speak now of real Christians) have been faithful in maintaining as a heavenly witness their testimony to the world's condemnation, and of their own association, as a heavenly people on the earth, with their Head in heaven. I hope, by the help of the Lord, to take up this question. But before entering on it, we will go a little through God's dealings with the first Adam from the beginning, up to the introduction of the Second Adam. We will trace all the different changes in God's dealings with the first man, till we come to this new starting-point— “Created anew in Christ Jesus.” God has taken away the first, that He may establish the second. All God's actual dealings with man, till he came to the point of crucifying His Son, show how the patient goodness of God had tried man in every way, until obliged to pronounce man, on experimental evidence, to be utterly bad (of course, God knowing what man was all the while).

First, then, we will trace God's dealings with man, as man; secondly, with the Jews; and, thirdly, with this new man in Christ. For in whatever position man has been placed, it has been only to start aside like a broken bow-to turn from God. This is a solemn truth, and one that Christians ought to know well, for never was there a time when man's thoughts of man were so exalted, when so many efforts were being made, so many theories maintained, as at the present-that man, as man, may be turned to some profit. The great cardinal truth is, that there is no good in man; and it is most important that the soul should thoroughly understand this, as it gives both simplicity and stability; for the simple knowledge that man is thoroughly bad cuts at the root of ten thousand theories, all based upon the notion that good is to be found in man. But all these deep-laid theories will drop off by thousands, like autumn leaves, if it be only believed by the soul that in man good is not to be found. The death of Christ is the great and infallible contradiction of all this. “When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

Thus on the cross was proved to the whole world that God could find no good in man. It is also given doctrinally in the Romans, and historically, in the Old Testament. The next point is, that it is God's work to bring man back; and mark the blessed way in which God works to bring man back. For, after sin entered, there was no more rest for God or man, but in that rest which God hath prepared for us. The only rest the poor sinner can find is in “God's rest.” God works, and then enters into His rest. Man rests in Christ, and then works for the glory of God. For there is no rest now but that into which Christ entered, and we which have believed do enter into that rest. It is in glory.

The sabbath rest was in connection with Jews, a sign of the covenant between them and God, which supposes that, after the work of the week is done, then rest comes; and, doubtless, in connection with creation it is a blessing to all. When Christ was on the earth, the question of the sabbath was constantly raised, and, when He healed a man on the sabbath-day, they charged Him with breaking the sabbath. And how does He meet this charge? By saying, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” A good and holy God could not find rest on a sabbath amidst the wickedness of man; there must be in such a state of things, either judgment, or working in grace. God's Son therefore came down to the earth, not to keep a sabbath in its polluted state, but to work in grace. And through communion in life with the Second Adam (God's rest) believers get all the fullness of the blessing of that rest, before it comes in fact.

But now we will look a little into this working from the beginning. And for this let us go back to the garden of Eden, for there we shall see man first put to the test in a state of innocence. And what do we find? A total and complete failure; for nothing could possibly exceed man's insensibility to God's authority, to His goodness, and to His truth. Man abandoned God to gratify his lust in eating the forbidden fruit. Nor was this all, for Adam sets up Satan as the one to be trusted instead of God. God had surrounded Adam with every blessing, and Satan comes, and says, “Ye shall not surely die.” God is jealous of pout prerogative, for He has not spoken truth when He said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” And on this liar's and murderer's word man treats God as a grudging God, for Satan says God has kept back from you that which is good; thus man believes Satan, and makes God a liar. I am not here speaking of the rejection of grace, but of the entire casting off the authority of God and His truth, and of the open manifestation of sin. Thus there was an end, without possibility of return, of man's innocence-it was gone, and gone forever. There could therefore be no return to innocence, no going back to man's paradisaical happiness; and, that he might not live on in his misery forever, God turns him out of the garden, and sets the cherubim, with a flaming sword, to keep him from the tree of life.

But what does God, in the face of this failure? He sets aside the first Adam, and brings in the Second Adam. In Gen. 3:15, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.” And mark here, the Seed of the woman is the second Adam; there was no promise to the first Adam, for he was in no sense the Seed of the woman (though we may trust he was a partaker of the blessing). There was grace, but not in connection with the first Adam. Sin had come in by the woman; and therefore Christ, the putter away of sin, came in by the woman also. All God's ways and purposes tend to the Second Adam, “who shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” The turning-point is the rejection or acceptance of Christ. Whenever the least reality of Christ is apprehended by a soul and used, the Holy Ghost can come in, and give power to the testimony, although in the Midst of many mistakes; but where Christ is not, and the dependence is on the first Adam and his resources, there may be the appearance of fruit for a season, but perishing must be the final result.

I see no signs of idolatry before the flood, but men being the children of the wicked one, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, corruption and violence filled the earth; and these two principles continue up to the end, as we see corruption in mystical Babylon, and violence in the persecutions carried on by the beast in the latter day.

Even in the garden of Eden we saw the two trees-the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. The first of these trees shows man's responsibility; the second tree is the symbol of God's gift of life. And in these two trees are set forth the two great principles that have given rise to all the controversies that have agitated the mind of man from the beginning, The simple truth is this: if man is put under responsibility-say the law, for instance-he fails; but Christ comes and glorifies God by fulfilling man's responsibilities; and then God can freely give life. Thus, in the work and person of Christ, we have the perfect and eternal solution of every abstract principle. For the very weakest saint knows that Christ bears the whole responsibility, and that He gives life; and he wonders that men should find such difficulty, when to him all is simple. For the soul that has Christ within knows that it is not merely an abstract truth to be reasoned about; for how can the Christian reason about Christ's having borne the curse for him, while be himself is in the possession of life in Christ? The saint owns his responsibility, but, he having failed, Christ has come in to suffer for his sins, and life is given in grace.

But now we will return to the double character of corruption and violence, which became so insupportable, that God was obliged to come in with the flood. Then we get Noah saved out of it, and with Noah God begins the world over again. Man is again put under trial, for God brings in a new thing: government is added. Thus man is strengthened against the violence which had prevailed before the flood, and which, man not being altered, was still to continue. That which is technically called the power of the sword is given into man's hand: “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” Well, failure comes in again, for after a while Noah plants a vineyard, and gets drunk with the fruit thereof; and Ham dishonors his father.

Before the flood there was the prophecy of Enoch (Jude 14), which was a mark of what God was going to do, and after his testimony Enoch goes up to heaven. This is the church's testimony now to man of the coming judgment which will take place when the church is removed. Noah's testimony was quite another thing; for he,” moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house,” &c. Thus Noah passed through all the judgment, and begins the world again-the type of Israel in the latter day. But Enoch warned others, and then went up to heaven, our type, before the judgment came.

Then we have another most terrible thing. After the flood idolatry comes in. There were two great results of the breaking down in righteousness of those in the place Noah was set in. First, the association of man to get himself a “name"-” Let us make us a name;” and in doing this they were associating themselves against God; for, speaking of intrinsic title, God is the only one who has any right to a name; and the only name that God will allow to be set up on the earth is that of the Man Christ Jesus. Thus, in man's effort to make himself a name, we see the principle of pride brought out; and the judgment they were fully seeking to prevent by getting themselves a name, was the very judgment with which God visited them. For the Lord scattered them abroad thence upon the face of all the earth. Then, secondly, in one man, Nimrod, who began to be a mighty one in the earth, “a mighty hunter before the Lord;” for in Nimrod we have the individual development of will, and tyranny in government, instead of righteous government; and this in Babel, in the association for a name, the principle of pride. Thus we get the two great acts of corruption. And then, thirdly, demon worship comes in. For when men were scattered abroad upon the face of the earth, not liking to retain God in their knowledge, they began to offer to demons, and not to God (1 Cor. 10:20); they became conscious of dependence in spite of themselves; and therefore it is said

in Josh. 24:2, “Your fathers served other gods.” The scripture never speaks a word in vain. And now we can understand the meaning of the call of Abraham-what he was called out from.

God appeared to Abraham, and called him out from serving other gods to serve the living and true God. The world was sinking fast into idolatry, and there was not only man's pride in getting a name by greatness on the earth, and tyranny and self-will in government, but also the coming in of Satan's power must not be confounded with man's wickedness. For Satan's power is altogether another thing, and quite apart from man's wickedness, although often most mischievously confounded with it.

Now God is calling a people out; before it was only individuals, whose hearts were successively touched with grace. But now God is distinctly separating a people to Himself. Thus Abraham is called the “father of the faithful.” And now God has a special stock on the earth, called out of the surrounding idolatry to be a depository for the promises of God, called the olive-tree in Rom. 11. In Abraham we find three great principles-election, calling, and promise. Abraham did not get into the land until Terah his father was dead; but after his father's death he came into the land of Canaan. But God gave him none inheritance in it-no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet He promised that He would give it to him for “a possession,” &c. Therefore “by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles,” &c.; “for he looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Chapter 121

The Lord's Dealings Now: Part 2

Heb. 9

After this we get another thing. A people were to be redeemed; redemption was in a figure brought in when God visited Egypt in judgment, and with a mighty arm brought out a people to Himself. The blood of the paschal lamb was the sign of their shelter from judgment, and also of their separation to God Himself. Here we see the distinctness of His love, in that it was to Himself they were brought, as it is said, “How I bare you, on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself.” Then the Red Sea passed brings out the song of salvation. And from the Red Sea to Sinai it was all grace. God dealt with them in grace; they murmured again and again, but they got the quails and the water without any reproach. It was perfect and unmingled grace.

At Sinai another change takes place, and a new principle comes in. The promises which were given to Abraham, without any conditions, are taken by the people on condition of obedience; “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” This was entirely a new condition and principle. Man now puts himself under covenant with God, in which man is to perform his part, and God His. Thus Israel put themselves under the law, to obtain by their own obedience that which God had promised unconditionally. But before they get what God had spoken-the ten commandments, they had made themselves another god; for they had lost sight of the “man, Moses,” and made themselves a golden calf, and said, “These be thy gods, O Israel.” The very thing that Abraham had been called out of idolatry-they had turned back to, the “serving other gods,” and cast off the true God altogether. Thus all was gone.

Then we have another change, another principle in action. The mediator is brought in; and all is then in connection with a mediator between themselves and God. And the mediator, Moses, deals for them with God, pleads His promises, and comes in as intervening between God and man, to maintain man in the blessings in which he could not maintain himself. Moses was but a shadow of Christ, and not the very image.

Aaron is the next established to be the priest in the temple, and offer sacrifices; but just as his consecration is ended, strange fire is offered by his two sons, Nadab and Abihu. This is, as we have ever seen, the case with man. Although vengeance is taken, man goes on sinning; and the Lord goes on raising up saviors and deliverers, until the time of Eli, when not only his wicked sons were destroyed, but God's strength, the ark, was delivered into the enemy's hand, mediatorship and priesthood having both failed; and the ark, the very place of God's presence, was delivered into the hands of the Philistines; and where there was faith in Israel, in the little remnant of that day, it could only say, Ichabod, “the glory has departed.”

But, before taking up David, we will return to Abraham again, and take up the promises made to Abraham, to show their distinctiveness from the church. First, the way in which Abraham is the father of many nations, as in Gen. 12, The reasoning of Paul in Gal. 3 is founded on Gen. 22 They were Jewish promises in Gen. 12 All the earth had fallen into idolatry, that God might make him

the stock of promise-the olive tree, as in Rom. 11; verses 2, 3 run thus: “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great,” &c.; “and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Abraham is the vessel, so to speak, in which the promises are deposited. (I drop the great nation now, that being Jewish.) Then, in Gen. 22, this promise is confirmed to the seed. Abraham offers up Isaac, and receives him back in a figure, Isaac thus representing Christ in resurrection. Then God says, “By myself have I sworn, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore.” This multitudinous seed are the Jews. “And thy seed [Christ] shall possess the gate of his enemies.” “And in thy seed [that is, Christ] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"-” in thy seed,” that is, the one seed, Christ. The promises that were given to Abraham were confirmed to him in [the one seed] Christ, for there can be no mixing up the two; for Isaac being raised up from the dead (although but in a figure, we know) keeps the promises distinct. And therefore the apostle argues, in Gal. 3:20, “If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promises.”

Thus those who believe in Jesus are “heirs according to the promise,” made not to the multitudinous seed, but to the one seed, which is Christ. There are two sets of promises-those to Abraham's seed, as the stars and the sand for multitude, in connection with the land; then Isaac, being offered up in a figure, confirming the other promises, in which all the families of the earth will be blessed in the Person of Christ, the one seed. And mark, that both of these sets of promises are unconditional. For thus Abraham was made the depositary of the promises which were given to him unconditionally, both with reference to Israel and the nations. But in Ex. 19, when God says, “Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself;” we have had an entire record of simple grace, without any condition whatever, from the Red Sea to Sinai.

But at Sinai the question of condition comes in. “If ye be obedient, ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests, an holy nation.” And Israel said “All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do.” And how long did it last? It was gone quickly. Whatever depends on man's stability is gone before he gets it. And so, before the ten words reached Israel, they had worshipped the golden calf, thus casting off God entirely. And thus Israel had lost the immediate connection with God; for it was then ordained in the hands of a mediator, having broken down in theirs, God says, Let me alone, and I will consume them in a moment. And Moses says, “Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people?” And God turns from His wrath, and goes up with the mediator: “My presence shall go with thee,” not with the people. And God calls the people the mediator's people. What beauty there is in this grace! First, God says, I will consume them in a moment, they are so stiff-necked; but their ornaments are put off, and Moses pleads their very stiff-neckedness as the reason why God must go up with them. Thus was their stiff-neckedness counterbalanced by His grace. For the moment that grace is brought in by the exercise of mediation, the same stiff-neckedness which prevented God's going up with them, lest He should consume them, was the very thing pleaded by the mediator why God must go up with them. Then God acts upon a different principle. Mediation is the grace which maintains people in the blessing brought by redemption. And this principle brings in priesthood. And here mark-for it is important to see-that redemption brings in priesthood; it is not priesthood that brings in redemption.

The priesthood maintains the people in the presence of Him who redeemed them; for, if I am to walk with a holy God, I must have that intercourse maintained. If God has redeemed us to walk in the light, as He is in the light, we need the priesthood to maintain us in the light. But if you confound redemption-and priesthood, you will never find settled peace, for you will be looking for acceptance from something to be done or interceded for. But priesthood maintains our communion with a holy God.

I now turn to the subject of man's failure. Israel failing under the law, mediation comes in; and priesthood failing under Eli, the ark is gone; and then there is another redemption by power. And now the link between Israel and God is royalty, sustained in the person of David the king. This was the last link between Israel and God, His patience still forbearing. And now we get royalty sustaining Israel under the condition of obedience. The temple was newly set up, and filled with God's glory; but royalty fails in David, Solomon, and Rehoboam. The obtaining and enjoyment of promised blessings must not always be taken as a mark of God's approval. Jacob told a lie in order to obtain the promised blessings; Solomon had asked of God wisdom, and to it God added riches and honor; but then he obtains the promised riches and honor by disobedience, for he multiplied unto himself chariots and horses, which God had forbidden. We require faith for the means as well as the end; that is, we must wait patiently for God Himself to make good to us the very blessings He promised. Then, again, Solomon loved many strange wives, and they turned away his heart from the Lord. In the very three things that God had forbidden to a king, Solomon failed. And let us ever remember that our own business is to walk with God in the humble and lowly details of every-day life, waiting on God to arrange everything for us. For God's ways towards us show out His character and His faithfulness in making good to us what He has promised. For if we obtain the promised blessings through our own contrivance, they will be accompanied by sorrow and chastening; nay, the very blessings themselves may become the source of sorrow, because we always have idolatry in the heart.

Then God meets this failure in royalty by another and fresh promise-in Shear-Jashub “a remnant shall return.” (Isa. 7:3, see margin.) The nation was at that time cut off-” Make the heart of this people fat,” Israel was called to maintain the name of the one true God, in contrast to the many gods of the heathen-(not the trinity revealed for the saving of the soul). Now God promises another thing-a seed is promised to David; before it was the Seed of the woman, but now a Seed is promised to David to sit upon his throne forever. After this God says, in Ezek. 21:25, “Thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come when iniquity shall have an end;” thus saith the Lord God, “Remove the diadem, and take off the crown, this shall not be the same; exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more until he come, whose right it is; and I will give it him.”

After this God entrusts power in Gentile hands, the first being Nebuchadnezzar-power in one man. For man's vain thought is, If I could do all that I wish, I should make the country a paradise. Well, God tries him; and what is the result? The golden image is set up, and God's awn people are cast into the fire for refusing to fall down and worship it. Secondly, the impiety of Belshazzar follows in prostituting the vessels of the temple to the honor of his false gods. And, thirdly, Darius sets himself up to be the only true God. Here are brought out three principles of evil, which will be fully developed in the latter day. Cyrus then comes in as the restorer, setting it all aside (typical of Christ). Meanwhile prophecy comes in to sustain the remnant until the Messiah came.

Then, in the rejection of Christ, it was not merely the manifestation of man's sin, but the utter hatred of man's heart against God; “They have hated both me and my father.” Thus the tree was proved to be utterly bad, and the more it was digged about and dunged, the more bad fruit it produced. Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? Then Pontius Pilate, who, being the governor pf Judea, was the representative of the authority which God had put into man's hand, and which the Lord owned, when Pilate said to Him, “Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?” To which the Lord replied, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above,” thus teaching Pilate that, having received the power from God, he was responsible to God for the exercise of it. And how did he use it? In condemning God's Son.

Thus the very one that should have wrought justice in the earth delivers up Christ to be crucified, at the same time knowing him to be innocent; as he said,

“Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him.” Thus is fulfilled that word, “I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.” What comes then? The solemn sentence is passed-the world is condemned-” Now is the judgment of this world;” “The world seeth me no more;” “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out;” “The god of this world:” “The spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.” The death of Christ closed the scene. Then the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. The very thing that brought out the judgment revealed a heavenly salvation, which was before hidden by the veil. The death of Christ is the end of the world morally. Man has been tried in every way, and failed; and sin, in every shape and form, has been brought up to a head, and met, in this one act of rending the veil. For “once in the end of the world [morally] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” When the sin is proved, it is put away. “They have seen and hated both me and my Father.” The very act that proved their hatred of God put away their sin. “If I had not come, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin, but they have seen and hated both me and my Father.” That very crowning act of the utter enmity and willfulness of man brought the sinner to God without the sin. For the Lamb without spot, by one act divine in power (by Himself), “put away the sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

The veil being rent, we with unveiled face behold the glory of the Lord. As to our bodies, we know that they are still on the earth, but our position morally is in heaven, Christ being there. The high priest under the law stood, but this Man, after He had “once offered,” sat down forever. The whole work being accomplished that connects us with heaven, we are only waiting for the redemption of the body. We are accepted in the Beloved; He is my life and my righteousness, and I want nothing more. All belongs to me now, by virtue of life in this heavenly Man, now in heaven itself for me. We are only awaiting His return, but our conversation is connected with Him up there now, for we are always confident while waiting, which may be in order to our ripening. There are three things connected with this position: first, my life is hid with Christ in God; secondly, if I should die before He come, my spirit goes up to Him immediately— “absent from the body, present with the Lord;” thirdly, if He come to take me up before I die, then I shall return with Him-” When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory;” but while He is up on high, we are members of His body down here, and cry, “Come, Lord Jesus;” and, consequent on our position, we ought to be as pilgrims and strangers on this earth, for we stand between the once offered and appearing Jesus. We have neither the world nor the glory yet, but we are identified with the

rejected One. Christ's portion is our portion, we get it along with Himself, and we are to be conformed to Him now; we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; His bride, and when she is made ready, He will come and take her up to glory, after which the Lord takes up again His dealings with the earth, to reduce it into that condition in which He can bless it.

The Lord give us to know the wonderful grace of Christ, “who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich” “who loved us, and gave himself for us” —according to His perfect work, which has set us in the presence of the Father in love.

(Concluded from page 127.)

Chapter 122

A Word on Luke 2

It is beautiful to see the simplicity of the account in the message, the wonderful message, given to the shepherds in their occupation. God comes down in grace, bringing the greatest things down to the commonest circumstances, because He cannot take up the pride of life; for when this comes out, God, as it were, shrinks from it and hides Himself. The dove could have no rest in the earth, neither could Jesus in the world; and here we find Him beginning at the manger, and ending at the cross. Here we find an assembly of angels, not merely to speak to His people as Israel, but to proclaim the great fact that Christ is come into the world, though they address the Jews according to their expectation: “Unto you is born in the city of David.” Such is the truth: Christ came into the world, but there was no place for Him in it. Nothing could show more the spirit of the world, than when Christ came into it He had no place in it! Creation was obedient. The winds and the waves obey Him. The fish comes from the ocean at His command-the animals bound to receive Him; all more than men did, who, having the great spring of rebellion in them, could allot the Savior only a manger.

But it is also the truth that the Lord comes down to the circles in our hearts, even though very narrow ones. The Lord is pleased to take notice of our circumstances. The saints that apprehend this, and know the comfort of a God of providence, are apt to stop there, finding their need thus met by Him in providence. There must, then, be a great danger of slipping—making God a helper to them in the world, thus having limits to their hearts about Him and His truth; and this is often seen where there is true faith. Whilst guarding against this, as deriving our experience of His goodness and dealings about ourselves, instead of following the Spirit in the wide range of all that affects His own glory, we still find He does come down to our several circumstances-even to the one most weak and cast down. So He came to the shepherds in their circumstances. This is a blessed instruction, that God is thinking about us when we are not thinking about ourselves. When, too, our thoughts are unworthy of Him, He is pleased to come down.

If I am firm on the Rock, I can stretch out my hand to meet others in need in their circumstances. When the heavenly hosts commence their strain-our proper place, then we get the knowledge of what God is. Man's place for God on earth is a manger; God's thoughts to man on earth are “Good-will in men.” There is glory to “God in the highest,” because He did come down to the very need of man's wants. God's nature of love is thus shown, and peace also in its nature. But man so opposes and hates it, that, instead of receiving the peace, it comes as a sword into the household-” the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law,” &c., and the “man's foes shall be of his own household.” But this is not the case with those who get their hearts in heaven, there is peace. Glory here is worthy of Himself. It is exceedingly glorious to sing glory to God. They sang on earth, and all is the portion of real saints who see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, for when cast out the Spirit of Christ is theirs. “if ye are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you.” (1 Peter 4) Christ has peace stamped on Him. The fruit of the Spirit is “love, joy, peace,” &c. The Spirit of Christ is from Him in heaven; but God's dealings to man are seen in grace downwards. He finds delight in showing His “good-will to

men.” As it is said in Prov. 8, “My delight is with the sons of men.” If we understand this, not merely to the church, but the outflowings of love and kindness to all, it would lead one to act in the same spirit I receive from Himself. Even if I met a little child in the street, I should thus feel according to the love God took when the angels brought this news of good-will towards men. Here is what God is showing, and, if we have His Spirit, we shall show God's nature towards all.

Two marks of Christ are: one in total opposition of nature and principle to the world, and therefore no room for us; the other is, by having a place in heaven, to have all the love of God's nature flowing forth in love. Let us plead our weakness, for God's strength can then come into us; and what a loss it is to our souls not to have this! We should be like Solomon, desiring to have our hearts enlarged as the sands of the sea, the very principle of grace.

Chapter 123

Fragment on Matthew 21-22

Observe here, that from Matt. 21:26 to the end we have the responsibility of the nation looked at as in possession of their original privileges, according to which they ought to have borne fruit. Not having done so, another is put in their place. This is not the cause of the judgment which shall be executed on Jerusalem, and which will accomplish the destruction of the city. The death of Jesus, the last of those who had been sent to look for fruit, brings judgment on His murderers. The destruction of Jerusalem is the consequence of the rejection of the testimony to the kingdom sent to call them in grace. In the first case the judgment was upon the husbandmen-the scribes, and chief priests, and leaders of the people. The judgment executed on account of the rejection of the testimony to the kingdom goes much farther. Some despise the message, others ill-treat the messengers; and, grace being thus rejected, the city is burned up, and its inhabitants cut off.

Chapter 124

Moses: 1. Moses' Loss of Canaan

Moses had his ordinary shepherd's rod in his hand, when God called him to feed Israel. (Ex. 4) It then became God's rod, for God made it the symbol and instrument of Moses's authority and grace in Israel. He was thenceforth to take it, that by it he might do his wonders in Egypt and in the wilderness, for judgment on the enemy, and for blessing to the people. (Ex. 4:17.)

It first swallowed up the rods of Egypt, to show that no strength could stand before God's strength, thus giving Egypt notice that it was hard to kick against the pricks. (Ex. 7:12.) But Egypt would not learn that lesson. And then the rod brings the plagues of blood, of frogs, and of lice, till the magicians own that they could not measure their strength with the Lord's. (Chap. 8: 19.) It is then used in the plagues of hail (chap. 9: 23), locusts (chap. 10: 13), and darkness (chap. 10: 22), and finally for the destruction of the firstborn as well as the deliverance of Israel, and for the overthrow of Egypt in the Red Sea. (Chaps. 12-14.)

Thus was it the instrument of judgment and of grace in Egypt. It was but a weak shepherd's rod at first, but as such it was the more fit to become God's rod, for He ever perfects His strength in our weakness, and chooses the weak things to confound the mighty.

But we are still to see the rod in the wilderness, for Moses with it opens the rock in Horeb. (Ex. 17:5, 6.) By the same Shepherd's strength and grace He now feeds the camp in the desert, as that by which He had redeemed them from bondage.

By all this use of the rod, Moses (and Aaron, his associate) should have been fully submitted to by all the congregation. The wonders they did (of which this rod was the symbol) had fully accredited them, and entire subjection to them as the king and the priest, or God's dignities, was the righteous place of the congregation. But it happens otherwise. The congregation despise these dignities, and are for setting aside this king and this priest of God. (Num. 16:3.) That was a solemn moment in Israel. The rebellion of Korah and his companions was an awful consummation of despite of the Lord. But then the Lord pleads the cause Himself. He judges the offenders, and in a solemn trial of the question, He determines by the budding rod who His dignities or officers were, that the murmuring of the congregation might be silenced forever, and that they might thus be saved from death. (Num. 17:8.)

Now we have much of the way of the Lord Jesus in all this. Jesus was set forth to Israel at the first as their Shepherd. He did His wonders of grace and strength. His miracles and healings and teachings were enough to accredit Him, so that they owned for a season that this was He. (Matt. 12:23.) But Israel at length rose up against Him, they despised God's king and Priest, like Korah and his company, crucifying the Lord of glory. But God pleaded His cause against the nation by raising Him from the dead. Jesus brought forth in resurrection is the budding of the rod, the dead stick blooming blossoms and bearing almonds. Jesus in resurrection has all the virtue of this rod, both in silencing the murmur of every rival, and securing from death the soul that will trust in him, and allow His claims. These two virtues of the resurrection are largely preached by the apostles.

The resurrection has made Jesus a Prince and a Savior. It has vindicated His claims and made Him the dispenser of life. By it God has fully declared that all power is Christ's, that He is the spring of life and the executor of judgment. And the apostles were the preachers of the resurrection in these its virtues, and the angel at the tomb so witnessed to it. (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:36; 17:31; 3:13, 16; 5:31; 1:22; 4:10-12; Rom. 1:4.) And now all blessing must flow through it, through this new rod, the budding rod, not Jesus as before, born of a virgin, but Jesus brought from the dead; not the rod that was first in Moses's hand, but the rod that was brought from before the Lord. (Num. 20:9; 18; 7)

It is quite true that many, perhaps, at future seasons would not hear the voice of the budding rod, as now many will not hear the voice of the resurrection; but that does not alter the voice. Whether they will hear it or not, it silences murmurs-the budding rod and the resurrection have established those claims, for which Moses and Jesus the Son of God had been previously rejected and reproached.

This seems to me a simple following out of the history and the mystery of the rod. But then this also gives us the character of Moses's and Aaron's sin, by which they forfeited the land.

God will be sanctified in them that come nigh Him.

(Lev. 10:3.) He will have the provision which He has made, for either His own service or His people's blessing, honored by them. And the contrary of this was the sin of Nadab and Abihu. They took fire of their own, and did not use God's fire, the provision He had made for His own altar. Thus they did not sanctify Him. And this was the sin of Moses and Aaron here. They did not sanctify God in His ordinance of the budding rod. They did not use it according to God's mind about it. They did not give it its ordained place, or duly own its virtues before the congregation. They acted as they did before, striking instead of speaking. They did not know the power of this rod-using strength instead of preaching the virtue of it. Nor did they duly honor the grace of the rod, for in it God's grace had greatly abounded. In spite of all their sin in the matter of Korah, God had set up this other witness for His praise and their blessing. But Moses and Aaron act no more in full sympathy with the grace than they had with the power of the rod, for they upbraid the people as well as strike the rock, while they were told merely to speak to the rock, and to do nothing with the people, but bring them forth the water. Their conduct, therefore, was unbelief in the virtues of this mystic rod. It was unbelief in the present ordinance, and a return to previous dispensations. They forgot the lesson of Num. 17 for a moment, and thus they forfeited the land.

Such was their sin, and such their judgment. And it is like present unbelief in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. For Christ risen is God's great ordinance now. The resurrection, as I have said, is the true budding rod. It is that ordinance which has the virtues of Aaron's rod in it. When the resurrection is not honored in its fullness of grace to sinners, and of glory to God, as that which silences every tongue that should rise against the holy claims of Jesus, and also hinders the death and feeds the life of the poor sinner that will trust in Him, God's ordinance is not honored, and then comes forfeiture of all blessing. For God must be honored in His ordinances, and sanctified in them that come nigh to Him.

Now to this I would just further add, that Saul of Tarsus offended against the resurrection. He was chief among those who killed the witness of it. (Acts 8:1.) But Saul was brought to know it, and by

that knowledge to die himself, and to live to be the witness of a higher glory still, even of ascension or heavenly glory. And so with Moses here. He offends against the budding rod, and loses Canaan, but afterward shines in the glory of the church on the top of the hill. (Matt. 17:3)

Chapter 125

Moses: 2. Moses' Heavenly Glory

IN the previous paper I have meditated on Moses's loss of Canaan. I would now trace the testimony to his heavenly glory. For though he lost the one, the Lord through abounding grace had prepared for him the other.

From Acts 7 we learn that the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by the earth was the occasion (I speak, of course, as remembering that “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world") of giving him a glory in heaven, and in connection with a family there, of an order higher than any glory He would have known or gathered, had the earth received, instead of rejecting Him. But that chapter also tells us, that that mystery had been typified in the histories of both Joseph and Moses. Joseph was sold, and Moses was refused by their brethren, but, by reason of that, Joseph got joy and glory and a family in Egypt, and Moses got the same in Midian; and each of them was thus, in his day, a foreshadowing of the glory and joy of the Son of God, in the midst of the church or heavenly family, consequent on His being rejected in His day also by Israel and the earth.

But, in the progress of Moses's history, we get him a second time separated from Israel, such separation being also followed by the same heavenly results. The sin of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, by which the covenant was broken and the blessing forfeited, casts Moses again into the same heavenly character. Upon that sin of the golden calf the tabernacle is removed, and pitched without the camp, the Lord in righteousness disowning His revolted people. But there Moses meets Him, and meets Him too in a new way, “face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” (Ex. 33:11.) This had not been so before. It was the expression of increased intimacy between the Lord and Moses. It was letting him into friendship with the Lord, such as the church now stands in. (John 15:15.) It was a new thing with Moses, a fresh character of glory in Him, as his previous dwelling in Midian among the Gentiles had been new in its day. And it was just the thing that distinguished Moses from all Jewish worthies or prophets, and took him above them; as we read, “there arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” (Deut. 34) And being in this place of intimacy, or in this heavenly place, he acts according to the high prerogatives of it. He passes and re-passes between the glorious tabernacle which the cloud guarded, and the camp of the congregation. (Ex. 33:11.) And this movement expressed his equal access to heaven and to earth, and thus that he was the mediator, the shadow of our heavenly Priest, Christ Jesus. Joshua the while was kept in the tabernacle, as the servant separated, it is true, from the defiled and revolted people (as the righteous remnant will be in the latter day), but still not let into the place of intimacy, the heavenly place, which Moses filled.

And in another case he acts according to the high prerogatives of his new and heavenly character. He marries an Ethiopian woman. (Num. 12) He takes another wife from among the Gentiles, and those too who were, in common esteem, the very basest of the Gentiles. (Jer. 13) His natural kindred, his connections in the flesh, are not prepared for this; and they speak against him, and are for refusing his place and authority. He being a man of heavenly temper, more meek than any

who could have been found on the earth, says nothing to all this. But the Lord pleads his cause, and in doing so vindicates him on the very ground of that heavenly character which he had acquired in the days of the golden calf, or of the apostasy of the earthly people. “Hear now my words,” says the Lord to Aaron and Miriam, “if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream; my servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house; with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore, then, were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?”

Here the Lord very strikingly pleads in favor of Moses, and in full vindication of his doing an act which earthly or fleshly kindred did not understand, and were not prepared for, the intimacy with Himself which Moses had acquired by the former sin of that earthly people. That intimacy, or speaking “face to face” with the Lord, had thus raised him quite above the Jewish or earthly level, and had clearly given him a heavenly character, one of the prerogatives of which he had been now exercising, in marrying an Ethiopian woman, as he had before, as I have shown, exercised another of them, in passing and re-passing between the Lord in the tabernacle of glory and the camp of the people.

And I must notice the value of the word” all” in this passage. It is very striking in connection with my subject-” who is faithful in all my house,” says the Lord, words which went to tell Aaron and Miriam that Moses was a person of special dignity, having access to all parts of the Lord's house. It was not only that he was faithful, but faithful in all parts of the house, baying title to be in the holiest, or heavenly place, as well as in the tabernacle of the congregation or the courts. For it is Moses's dignity as well as fidelity that his divine Advocate is here pleading.

All this strikes use as being very clear and strong; and thus Moses's second marriage, or with the Ethiopian, has the same voice as his first marriage, or with the Midianite. Both show him in heavenly character, or as the type of the Lord in union with the church.

Thus Moses becomes a partaker of the heavenly calling, and according to this, as we may now further see, at the end he occupies the heavenly place.

We see him for instance, in the Mount Pisgah, viewing the land of Canaan stretched out beneath him. (Deut. 34) That was a new mount of God to him. It lay a little outside the promised land, but it afforded him a full view of it. It was a high eminence, the top of Pisgah on Mount Nebo, in the mountains of Abarim. The earth had now ceased to own Moses, Israel also knew him no more the wilderness too had all been passed, and the Lord alone is his company on the hill that overlooked the land of promise. What an expression of the place of the church or heavenly glory, the whole of this is On high with the Lord, Moses looks down on the earthly inheritance, the place of the tribes of Israel, Gilead and Dan, Naphtali, Ephraim and Manasseh, with all the land of Judah to the sea, the south too, and the valley of Jericho, with the city of palm trees unto Zoar! A place that could command such objects beneath, and in such company, is heavenly indeed. Moses is on high with the Lord, looking on the cities and plains where the redeemed and happy families of the earth were to dwell. It is from heaven alone that such blessing and occupation of the earth, in righteousness and peace, will be seen by the Lord and His children of the resurrection.

And again as another witness of Moses in the heavenly place, we see him: in the New Testament, on another mount, the Mount of the Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John are there, representing Israel and the earthly people, and they are on the outside. But Moses is there, again in company with the Lord and another co-heir of the heavenly glory, and they are within, enwrapped in the cloud of the excellent glory, the true veil that is to separate the holy place from the courts, or the heavens from the earth. Moses is on the heavenly side of that veil, glorified in the likeness of the very Lord of the glory Himself.

These are two strong and clear testimonies to the heavenly glory of Moses striking exhibitions of him in the heavenly place, being in company with the Lord on the top of two hills, from the one of which he sees the earthly inheritance beneath him, and from the other, the earthly people outside him. And thus I judge, from all these witnesses which we have here listened to, we gather both the heavenly calling and glory, or the heavenly character and place of this honored and faithful servant of God. A child of the resurrection he is, and a joint-heir of God with Jesus Christ.

Thus does Moses lose the earth, but gains heaven. He loses Canaan by his own wrong, trespassing, as we have seen, against the grace and power of the budding rod, but he gains glory on the top of the hill that overlooked Canaan, through the abounding kindness and love of God his Savior. Law says that “no man shall take advantage of his own wrong,” and justly so; for righteousness forbids the thought that anyone shall gain a benefit by his own misdoing. But grace does not act by law, for the glory we reap through it, as pardoned sinners, is richer and brighter far than that which Adam in innocency knew. God's riddle is solved in our history-the eater has yielded meat, and the strong man sweetness. Moses and the church both illustrate it; both are traveling onward through forfeiture of the earth, led by the hand of the Son of God, to the top of that hill which looks down on the goodly tents of Jacob beneath. O beloved, what manner of people should we be! May the life and energy of the indwelling Spirit keep us more and more separated to heavenly character and heavenly hopes! Amen, Lord Jesus.

Chapter 126

The Mount of God: Part 1

I SEPARATE these chapters because they present us, I judge, a distinct subject for meditation, and afford us some of the grounds on which it is that Horeb, or Sinai, in Arabia, is called in scripture “the Mount of God.”

They open with Israel in Egypt, and that land is seen in her guilt before God, for it is here written of her, “Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.” That land was thus the ungrateful, the rebellious. She had departed from Joseph, and so from God Himself, from Him who had filled her storehouses with plenty, and her throne with honor and strength. Thus Egypt was in miniature the world—the great apostate from its rightful Lord and gracious Benefactor. And the Lord had no sanctuary, no altar, there. His people would have sacrificed the abomination of that land (chap. 8:26), and therefore they must go into the wilderness to hold their feast, or do their service to the Lord. All was apostate and ripe for judgment. Joseph's memory had been despised, and all that remained to Joseph was put to the brick-kilns. (Chap. 1)

But in such a place the Lord has a cluster, and in the cluster a blessing. The cluster of Israel in the vineyard of Egypt at this time savored, it is true, too much of the soil where it grew; for as the one had forgotten Joseph, so does the other now refuse Moses, saying, “Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?” But God has His remnant even in such a generation, his blessing in such a cluster (Isa. 65:8), and it is found in the tribe of Levi, to which this second Joseph (the offered, but rejected, deliverer of his nation) belonged. “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.”

But the name of this child, this predestined deliverer of His people, has its meaning. Pharaoh's daughter, as we know, called him “Moses,” because she had “drawn him out” from the waters. But God had His purpose, it appears, in that name also, for it is from henceforth to the end owned by the Spirit of God. He was another Noah. Noah had been “drawn out.” An ark had kept him in the waters till the dry land again received him; and that was, as we are divinely taught, a like figure with baptism of death and resurrection. (1 Peter 3:20, 21.) And so Moses now. He had been kept in an ark through the waters, that place of death, till he stood again in the place of life, as one that had died and has risen. (Chap. ii.)

Thus was he mystically the dead and risen man; and he acts, “when he was come to years,” in the power of resurrection, refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, rather choosing affliction with the people of God; that is, disclaiming his advantages in the flesh and in the world, and walking by faith, seeing Him who is invisible, and having respect unto the recompence of the reward.

Such an one is he, thus, both in his person and character, ere he goes forth to run his appointed service, whether among strangers or in Israel. Through their present unbelief, rejecting this deliverer, the children of Israel are left for a time longer at the Egyptian brick-kilns. But he whom

they thrust from them is accepted in another place, and seated, not at the head of a nation, but of a family, enjoying intimacies and affections sweeter and closer than ever he had known among his own kindred. A stranger receives him. Jethro, the Midianite, opens his house to him, and gives him his daughter in marriage, because he had been her deliverer, though, in spite of the same grace towards them, Israel had just refused him.

This family of strangers is mystically the church taken from the Gentiles during the Lord's estrangement from Israel, as has been often observed among us, beloved. I do not therefore stop to look at it particularly. But (as we generally know) the blessing is not to be spent on this family of strangers. Israel is had in remembrance still, though they have once refused the deliverer. Accordingly Moses, in due season, is called forth to change the scene of his action again, and bear God's redeeming love and strength back to Israel in Egypt. For He is their only hope and channel of blessing. If in their distress Israel cry to the Lord, the answer must come by the hand of Him whom once they refused. The Lord has no other help for them. From the outcast Joseph alone is the Shepherd and stone of Israel. But He can and will answer. The ears of the Lord of Sabaoth have heard the cry, and Moses is immediately put in readiness to return from Midian into Egypt for the help of Israel.

The burning bush is now the symbol of God's constant care of Israel, though in the furnace of Egypt. It tells Moses how in all their affliction the Lord had been afflicted, and how the angel of His presence had still preserved them. And it is in connection with this mystic bush that Horeb is first called “the Mount of God.” For now it is that the Lord is first telling of Himself there. He “who dwelt in the bush” had a “good-will” towards them, for if the Son of God be in the furnace with His people, it is to preserve them. And this same spot which now thus testified of grace should by-and-by testify of glory to them, as is here said to Moses, “When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God on this mountain.” (Chaps. 3, 4)

Thus was it now between the Lord and Moses at this holy mount. Then by miracle upon miracle, in the sight of Egypt, and with plague upon plague, and fury poured out, this deliverer rescues Israel from under the hand of their taskmasters. It was the day of judgment to Egypt, as afterward it was to Canaan. For Egypt was the world, as I have said. She had filled up her sins. She had despised the day of grace in Joseph, and now comes the day of judgment by Moses. It is as the wrath of the Lamb coming on those who refuse the blood of the Lamb. Pharaoh said he knew not the Lord, but Pharaoh must know Him. (Chap. 5:2; 9:14) If Pharaoh would disown Him in goodness, he must know Him in righteousness, for His judgments were now to be made manifest, and “the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth.” As His holy prophet says to Him, “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” God would be known in grace; but if that lesson be refused by Egypt, she must know Him in the uplifted hand of power, as she now does, till the strength and flower of her people lie on the banks of the Red Sea. (Chaps. 5-15)

But I desire, in the midst of these scenes which these chapters give us, to look for awhile at the children of Israel between the paschal night and the banks of the Red Sea.

The blood on the lintels had secured the first-born, and the Egyptian had then allowed Israel to pass out of the land. But the Egyptian himself was not yet destroyed, neither was Israel clearly beyond the borders of the enemy. These results waited till the Red Sea was reached and crossed.

And till then they are not at ease, nor have they any song. The Egyptian has gone out after them, and they judge, as it were, that it is nothing but death before and behind. They see the cloud, and they cannot but remember the shelter of the blood, and that they have, in some sense, left Egypt. But in some sense also they judge themselves to be in a worse state than ever. And such often is a stage in the history of a converted soul. There is the quickening, the rising up as out of Egypt, the sudden new direction which the soul takes, with some sense of the value of the blood of Christ. But withal, this quickening, this rising up, does but lead the soul to judge worse of its condition than ever. A new sense of death comes in, guilt by trespasses and sins is apprehended, and no adequate assurance of the completeness of redemption. There is a shutting in between Jesus and God, if I may so speak. The soul can look to Jesus-His blood on the doorpost has told of His love, but God has not been so apprehended as to give certainty and ease of heart. All the virtue of the cross is not known, as all the virtue of the cloud and the rod is not known by Israel here. For the cloud had virtue not only to lead the redeemed, but to overthrow their pursuers. It could change its ground, and stand between the two camps, and while it was light to the one, be darkness to the other; as its companion, the rod, could make a passage for the one, and bury the other in the mighty waters.

And so in like manner has the cross its full and double virtue. It rescues the sinner and silences all his accusers. But until those virtues be understood, the soul will be kept as in the interval from the passover to the Red Sea. Let, however, the cloud and the rod fully display themselves-let the cross of Christ publish all its virtue in the ear of faith, then Israel can sing their song, and the believer can say, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” God as well as Jesus can then be triumphed in, the whole character of the cross being made known to the soul. The enmities are seen to be all abolished (Eph. 2)-the law to have found its end (Rom. 10)-sin to have paid its wages, and thereupon discharged (Rom. 6)-the great enemy to have been led a captive with all his powers (Colossians death to have been abolished (2 Tim. 1)-and the flesh to have been found out, rebuked, and discharged also. (Rom. 7; 8) And as the enemy is thus seen dead on the shore, so the believer sees himself fully rescued—accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1)-happy in the adoption and love of God (Rom. 8)-treated as in the Spirit, and not in the flesh (Rom. 8)-safe in that hand out of which none can pluck (John 10)-dwelling in that love which leaves no room for fear. (1 John 4) Israel has passed the waters.

Thus is it ofttimes still with the soul, as here it is with Israel. Of course the full victory of Jesus for the sinner may be understood at once, for the gospel publishes it without reserve. But till it be, the song is not learned, the redeemed one is on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea.

But the sea once crossed, Israel understands the cloud and the rod, and Egypt and its enmity are gone forever. Ere; however, they reach “the Mount of God,” where they were to hold their feast, they are to learn the hand that would lead them, as well as the arm that had just saved them. For there is to be a journey from the sea to the mount, as there had been from Egypt to the sea; and on this second journey we would also linger with them a little space. (Chaps. xv.-xvii.)

Five distinct lessons are taught the people on this journey, the value of each of which the soul of the saint, still also enters into. The song has already instructed them in the Lord's victory, and that song should be kept alive in their hearts all through, whatever other lesson they might learn, for that was a deathless victory, and the fruit of it they were gathering every step of their way. But after

it we get the healing of Marah, the wells and palm-trees of Elim, the manna, the water from the rock, the discomfiture of Amalek. These five distinct actions, displaying the Lord's varied grace and power, pass before us in this interval from the Red Sea to “the Mount of God.” And each of them tolls us of His care for His congregation in the wilderness. The healing of the waters of Marah by the tree tells us of the consolations which are provided to meet the sorrows of this evil world. Paul gathered of that tree, when he could say, “sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing.” The wells and palm-trees tell us of the occasional refreshings which the saint gets through communion and ministry. The camp passed them, and saw them no more, after taking, as it were, one repast of them. So the apostle could sit down at them for awhile, when comforted by the mutual faith of himself and others. The manna, in its turn, tells us of blessing also. It speaks of Jesus, the bread of life. Unlike the provision of Elim, it remained. It waited, morning and evening, for forty years on the camp, and fed them till they reached the land of corn and oil-as the true bread which the Father gives can feed us, let the plane of the desert be what or where it may. The water from the rock tells us in due order of the Holy Ghost, the abiding Comforter. Unlike the wells of Elim also, this water follows through all the way, as the Giver of the true water says, “that he may abide with you forever.” And, lastly, the overthrow of Amalek tells of the strength of the right hand of the Lord over that which would dare to withstand the way of that ransomed people over whom the Lord of the glory was hovering.

Thus they learn the sufficiency of God's grace and strength for all their necessity. He has the bread and the water for them, the healing tree, and the palms of Elim, though the place be desert and dry, and victory for them when the enemy appears.

And here let me say that the Lord acquires His holy honors by all those acts and mercies which He accomplishes for His poor people. Thus His memorials are engraved on our blessings. Wonderful grace and perfection of goodness this is, that God should be celebrated by and in that which blesses us He got the title of “Jehovah-jireh,” because He graciously provided a ram in the place of Isaac; He was celebrated as” a man of war,” because He got the victory for His people in the Red Sea; He was “Jehovah-rophi,” because He healed the bitter waters for the camp; He was “Jehovah-nissi,” because He was their banner against the face of Amalek. And so I might show still further. But this is enough to tell us how the Lord makes Himself a name, as Jeremiah says (Jer. 32:20), by His doing for us, and acquires (such is His grace) His own praise and honor by that which secures His people their blessing. The victory of Christ was over our enemies. If we believe His victory, we must believe our own salvation. To question our blessing is to refuse Him His praise. And it is a blessed economy of goodness that thus weaves the two inseparably together.

But the last of these lessons has large instruction in it, and I would look at it a little more particularly. Amalek was the grandson of Esau, and Esau, as we know, was the profane one-the man of the world. And Amalek appears before us in this place as one in that long line of willful ones who run their course across the face of the earth, “mighty hunters before the Lord,” or defiers and rivals of God Himself. At this moment the glory was seen over Israel, and the rock was following them with its streams. But what was all this to Amalek? What did he care for the glory? Such as Isaiah or Daniel might learn their own vileness from it, and Peter in its presence might know himself to be a sinful man, but the glory had no lesson of holy fear for such as Amalek. He comes out the rather to measure strength with it. He is as the one who by-and-by will dare to plant his idols on the battlements of the holy city, and his tabernacles on the glorious holy mountain.

What is the glory to such as these? “Our tongues are our own,” say they. Their standards may rival the Lord's pillar. But the hand that holds them shall wither, as Amalek here falls, and as the last of the race shall hereafter fall (Dan. 11), with none to help him.

This may be fearful, and it is so; but it ends the trial and discipline of Israel. As in that future day also, when the last Amalek falls, Michael will stand up, and every one found written in the book shall be delivered, so here the discomfiture of this enemy makes full and easy way for Israel to “the Mount of God.” That place, out to which they had been called from Egypt, under promise that there they should serve the Lord, and hold their feast to Him, is now reached, their toil and discipline and danger all over.

And this long promised and now attained mountain is again called “the Mount of God.” The first time Moses is seen there, the burning bush, as we then saw, told him of grace; but now there is to be something to tell him of glory. Then he saw the pledge of redemption, now he is to see the pledge of the kingdom. (Chap. 18)

Zipporah and her children had been sent home to her father's house; and, as far we can judge, immediately after the circumcision of the child (chap. iv.), and naturally so. For there was something in that action that was not according to the mind of a Gentile wife. But Moses, when returning into connection with Israel, should have owned the circumcision of the God of Abraham. Coming back to his kindred in the flesh, he should have remembered the legislative national token in the flesh. The reproach of Midian should have been put away then, as the reproach of Egypt was afterward. (Josh. 5) But Zipporah, who had no fleshly kindredness with Israel, could not have been prepared for this, and therefore with her the Lord had no controversy. It was Moses or his child, and not Zipporah, whom the Lord would have slain at the inn, according to the, ordinance. (Gen. 17:14.) And his life being forfeited to that ordinance, it was grace that spared him. And it is altogether likely that it was just at that moment Zipporah was sent home. The Spirit, however, has left it without certainty. And justly so, as I judge, because her departure home to Midian is typically the hiding of the Gentile, or heavenly family, in the Father's house, till the Lord, the true Moses, conducts those judgments on this Egypt-world, which are to issue in the deliverance of His earthly people and the kingdom.

But Egypt being judged, Israel redeemed, disciplined, and led to the borders of the mount, the due time had come for the re-appearance of Zipporah, the Gentile wife. She is now manifested, led out by the hand of her father, for re-union with Moses at “the Mount of God,” when all the action of judgment and redemption was now gloriously and fully accomplished.

The scene here is thus strikingly beautiful and significant. We have here (as another has justly called him) “the mysterious Kenite,” for Jethro is a type or mystery, a sign of that which is especially the mystery. He here meets the redeemed heirs of earthly blessing till now a stranger to them. He comes from regions unknown to Israel. But when they meet there is no want of full companionship. A common hand seems to have led them towards each other. The deeds of the Lord, His famous deeds for Israel, are rehearsed, when Jethro and Moses had kissed each other, and the family affection had taken its course. The strangers congratulate the earthly tribes on their recent rescue and prosperous journey to “the Mount of God,” and now the union of the great deliverer of Israel with this distant unknown family was made manifest. Hitherto this had been a hidden union. But now the wife and the children, led forth by the father, appear in the presence of

his fleshly kindred, and take a place nearer to Moses, the great center of the whole scene, than any of them.

The stranger likewise soon takes the highest dignities, as well as fills the place of nearest affection. He occupies, as it were, both the throne and the temple, giving direction to the lawgiver, and offering sacrifice in the presence of the priest. The last is first—the younger before the elder-the stranger in higher honor than the kindred.

But what is all this but in figure the dispensation of the fullness of times, the gathering together in one of all things in heaven and in earth? What is it less than the raising of the ladder between heaven and earth? Do we not here listen to the intercourses of the kingly priestly stranger with redeemed Israel, rejoicing in their blessing, but holding still the place of holiness and honor? Jethro assumes the place of Melchizedek. In no less glories than those of king and priest together does he here shine before us. He offers the sacrifices and spreads the feast for Aaron, and sits as chief in the seat of judgment with Moses. And when he had thus displayed his glories, rejoiced in the prosperity of God's chosen, and led their praise for the mercy, “he went his way.” As was said of the God of Abraham before, “and the Lord went his way as soon as he had done communing with Abraham.” (Gen. 18) So now Jethro, having rejoiced with Israel and displayed his glories, goes his way. For both were as strangers in the earth, and a distant way led them to their proper home.

Thus we have great things in this chapter. The opening of it shows us the heavenly One descending, and the close of it shows us His return or ascending in figure, as the angels of God once ascended and descended on the mystic ladder, and will again upon the Son of man. And it shows us also in figure all things in heaven and earth gathered in that one who has connection with the two great households, though in different ways, while they themselves were unknown to each other till now. All this tells indeed of the dispensation of the fullness of times. (Eph. 1:10.) This mount, where all this is seen, is now again called “the Mount of God,” as being in this manner the place of glory, as before when it was called “the Mount of God,” it was as strikingly the place of grace, or the burning bush. It well deserves the praise. It surely is the mystic holy ground where the traces of the blessed God are thus to be seen, and when, we learn those ways of His, that establish the heart both in faith and hope.

This intercourse between the heavenly and earthly families having one great center, as it will be enjoyed in the coming kingdom, so has it been typified in many past shadows. The ladder which Jacob saw, and to which I have alluded, gave it in figure to us. The passing and re-passing of Moses from the cloudy tabernacle to the camp of the congregation (Ex. 33), was another expression of this intercourse between the place of the glory and the earth. The vision on the mount of transfiguration, where the glorified family were seen, and also the representative of Israel, gives us another pledge of it The interviews between the risen Lord and His disciples, still in their earthly places, is a like figure: for then at seasons He showed Himself to them, but His place was more duly in heaven, His word being “touch me not,” though at times He would eat and drink with them as before. So, the notice that is taken of the ascent, by which Solomon went up to the house of the Lord, and which was one of the principal objects that rested on the vision, and filled the spirit of the queen of Sheba, is another intimation of the same (2 Chron. 9); for it looked somewhat above, and apart from, the mere earthly places, to which the sitting of the servants, the

furniture of the tables, and all the royal magnificence and fullness pertained, and would properly have drawn her thoughts upwards. And so this our closing chapter shows the same. Here is the ladder again, the communion of the heavens with the earth in the days of the glory. Moses's estrangement from Israel for a season, his secrecy among the Gentiles with his father, his wife, and his children there, then his return to Israel, and their redemption and discipline under his hand, the overthrow of the great enemy who dared to affront the glory of the Lord, and finally, the place of peace, “the Mount of God,” where the strangers and Israel (both, though differently, having found their union with Moses the common deliverer) meet for the first time to rejoice together, while the stranger fills the nearer intimacies and the higher dignities: all these tell out the mystic tale of the heavens and the earth in the coming kingdom or fullness of times. The union of the bride and the bridegroom, which before had been hidden, is now published, and the Gentile stands nearer to Moses than all his kindred in the flesh.

There is a voice in all this, beloved, that we cannot but hear. For thus will it be in the kingdom, surely. Is not all that is royal and glorious to be on the earth then, with the ascent to heaven from Jerusalem? Is not the true ladder to be there, and the ministers of the kingdom passing and re-passing upon it? Is not the glory then to be a covering on the dwelling-places and assemblies of Zion? “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.” Tales of mercy and salvation will then be rehearsed, as here; and the church will learn the joy of Israel's deliverance, though they never knew each other before, for the church's path had been heavenly, and Israel's earthly, and thus they lay not in the same regions at all. But then they will find that all the while they have had a common center in the true Moses, the true Bridegroom of the true heavenly stranger, the true deliverer and leader of the tribes of Israel. And then as Jethro here spreads the refreshments and gives the blessing, so the golden city, the city of the heavenly strangers, will pour forth its light and its waters, the effulgence of its glories and the streams of its fountains, to gladden and refresh the earth, and Israel with her attendant nations shall be blest in the millennial kingdom of the Son of man.

The next chapter (19) introduces us to other scenes and thoughts altogether, so as to allow us to look at this scripture (chaps. 1- 18) by itself. And it is, as it were, one of the title-deeds of Horeb to the holy dignity which it bears. It shows us why it should be called “the Mount of God.” For grace and glory, as we have now seen, both display themselves there, and they belong to God. The next scenes are still, however at the same mount, and they will give us to read again, though in other lines (the Lord giving us grace and His blessing), the title of that mount to bear the same holy inscription upon it. And if we still linger upon it, beloved, may our souls get some little increased strength to rise above the level of this corrupted earth, and all its low ambitions and vanities.

Chapter 127

The Mount of God: Part 2

Ex. 19-40

I have already looked at Horeb, “the Mount of God,” as the witness of grace and glory, or of redemption and the kingdom, being the spot where the Lord of Israel first showed Himself in the burning bush, the symbol of grace or salvation, and afterward displayed the glories and joys of the kingdom in the intercourse of Jethro with the ransomed tribes of Israel.

But though all this has passed, the congregation are still in the same place; and the place, as we shall now see, is still giving us to read its title to be called “the Mount of God.”

In the opening of our present chapters we reach the third month since the exodus. A new era is thus noticed by the Spirit, and accordingly new scenes and new thoughts will be found to unfold themselves. The heart of the people is here called into exercise. Moses the mediator passes and re-passes between them and the Lord; and all this tests the mind that was in them, and ends in proving the security of the natural man, and his confidence in himself to do all that the Lord shall command. (Chap. 19.)

But this their way was their folly. They had been brought out of Egypt by Him who dwelt in the bush, “the God of grace,” the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and the same hand had led them through the desert up to the mount where “the God of glory” had in figure shown His kingdom and joy to them. But now, as soon as the Lord, having thus shown what He was, turns, as it were, to inquire what they were, and whether they would now trust in themselves rather than in Him, the ground of the heart is discovered. Man is found to be self-confident and boastful, ready to enter upon terms with God, rather than be simply debtor to Him for grace and glory.

Accordingly this mount, where all so lately was the peace and honor of the kingdom in the presence of Jethro, now on the departure of that mysterious stranger becomes the fiery mount. It puts on new attributes altogether. It is preparing itself to consume the sinner, a mount of blackness and darkness and tempest, where the voice of God is heard in righteousness, where the ten words (or the covenant of the law of works), putting man to the trial which he had too confidently submitted to, are now to be published.

But what will such trial end in? It must leave all their comeliness as rottenness. The burning mount of the law here gives them at once to know the terribleness of that righteousness which they had challenged, and they can but cry out in the fear of it. (Chap. 20.)

This, however, so far was as it should be. This cry of fear was the proper seasonable fruit of the ground on which Israel now stood, as the Lord Himself afterward says. (Deut. 5, 18.) And according to this fear they stand afar off. But the mediator draws near to the thick darkness where God was, and there, as between the Lord of Israel and His people, he receives the statutes of the kingdom which were to make Israel the Lord's nation-a separated people, who were to have the Lord for their God and King, bearing His image and superscription upon them. And he is promised

also an angel to go before him, presiding, as it were, over this covenant of the nation, in whom the name of the. Lord of Israel was to be; so that if they obeyed Him they should be blest, but, if they refused, He would not pardon their transgressions. (Chaps. 21-23.)

The mediator having thus received the book of the statutes of the realm, and the promise of the angel of the covenant, the covenant itself is solemnly sealed. It is dedicated with blood. (Heb. 9:18, 19) The altar and the twelve pillars are raised, and the altar is sprinkled. Then the book of the covenant is read; and, on the people undertaking obedience, they are sprinkled likewise. Thus Jehovah and Israel are joined in the conditional covenant, the blessing of which rested on their allegiance; and the representatives of the nation are called up to eat and drink in the presence of the God of Israel. For all as yet is reconciliation, the blood of the covenant being upon them, and no trespass as yet committed. It was the sight of “the God of Israel” they now get. They may look unhurt and unalarmed. There is no danger of gazing here as there had been when the law of the ton words was delivered. (Chap. 19: 21.) It may last but for a short moment, but this is a sample of that day when the God of Jeshurun shall be known as riding on the heavens for Israel's help, and in His excellency on the sky (Deut. 33.); when the King shall be seen in His beauty, when Zion shall be a quiet habitation, a city of solemnities, and the glorious Lord shall be there, Lawgiver, Judge, and King. (Isa. 33) The glory did not make them afraid, the hand of such an one was not heavy upon them. There He was in all His honor, but they could eat and drink before Him. (Chap. 24.)

Thus the covenant in which the nation was now to stand is settled, the parties to it bound, and the whole avouched and concluded. Moses is then called to take up another position. And this is done with due solemnity also. His minister, Joshua, accompanies him a certain stage, but he goes upward to the mount where the Lord was. The glory was still there, as devouring fire in the eyes of the children of Israel, but the cloud covers it for six days. Then on the seventh (expressive, it may be, of the rest into which Moses was now about to be conducted, beyond all the terror of the fiery mount), the voice of the Lord out of the cloud calls him, and Moses goes up into the midst of it, and gets him into the mount. Hitherto he had been either on a level with the people, while the ten commandments, the moral law, was delivered, or it little separated from them as the mediator of the nation, while the statutes of the realm were published. But now he enters into further intimacies with the Lord. He is called to the top of the hill, beyond the region of darkness and thunder altogether. The heads of the nation are left in the camp, the vision of the God of Israel is folded up, and he is called to the very midst of the cloud, where the Lord was dwelling and shining.

But he is not long there before we learn the secrets of that holy place, and how it was that he got there, and in what that virtue lay which could enable him to pass, as it were, all the devouring fire unharmed. He is there in company with Christ. That is the secret. The shadows of good things to come there pass before him, and one by one tell out the glorious truth-that God can be a just God, and yet a Savior-that He can conduct a sinner safely up the fiery mount, without the smell of it passing on him. For Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth. God's claims in righteousness are all answered in the person and obedience of Jesus. The brazen altar, with all that intervened from that to the mercy-seat itself in the holiest, is shown here to Moses. All pass in review before him. And the minister of the sanctuary, in his mystic garments, is shown to him also. And thus he learns Christ in His fullness; and, learning this, he learned how he could stand in such peaceful communion with God beyond the summit of the fiery mount. He saw in Him that mercy

could rejoice against judgment; that provision was made in Him, and by Him, for the discharge of sin, for the magnifying of the law, fur the acceptance of the sinner, and for the letting out the full flow of boundless and unmingled goodness to save and to bless us. (Chaps. 25-31.)

All this, however, was to Moses only. The people were still within view of the mount as a mount of devouring fire. (Chap. 24: 17.) And they speedily show themselves to be material fit for such fire, vessels fitted to destruction, incurring the vengeance of that holy place, by refusing the very first voice that had issued from it. For instead of having none other gods than the Lord who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, they take a golden calf, which their own hands had made, to be their god. This was entire forfeiture of all blessing under that covenant; and in token of that, Moses, on returning down the hill, breaks the tables of the law to pieces, and never puts them into their hands to keep and to do them. (Chap. 32.)

This was a great moment for the discovery of what man was. O how differently the path of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had ended, the God of grace and salvation, who dwelt in the bush! He had led them forth in entire safety out of Egypt, the place of the taskmasters. Not a dog had wagged its tail against them, not a hoof was left behind, not a feeble person was among their tribes; all harnessed and full-handed they had gone forth; and He never left them, as we saw just now in our previous paper, never forsook them through the droughty desert, till He had planted them in the joy and glory of “the Mount of God.” But they then trusted in themselves and took their own way; and all now is closed in disaster and ruin, the very pledges of their covenant, the ground of their confidence, being shattered to pieces. This was sad and shameful indeed. But while we thus mark their sin, we are called to see their repentance also. They mourn on hearing the word and anger of the Lord. They put off their ornaments. They go outside the camp, as conscious that the place of convicted sinners or unclean lepers became them. They watch the ways of the mediator, and stand adoring. And, may I not add, that they feel unable to stand before the bright light of righteousness, so that Moses has to veil his face? (Chaps. 33, 34.)

All this was repentance, the way of poor convicted, self-condemned sinners. And while they are thus, the Lord is preparing something blessedly suited to them. He makes known to them His secret. Moses delivers the patterns of heavenly things to them. And all that they have to do for their full comfort is to follow by faith this unfolding of God's counsels concerning them. They have only to do according to the patterns, and they shall soon read their title to unmixed blessing. Just like Noah. He had only to build an ark according to God's command, and he should soon find that he was building something for his own safety. Obedience was his blessing. And so here. They have but to render the obedience of faith, by just giving forms and substances to the patterns as Moses commends, fold then they will see in the sanctuary a refuge and relief for guilty sinners destroyed by the thunders of Sinai, as they now were.

And so they do. Blessedly are they here seen rendering the obedience of faith and of a changed mind. They do all for the tabernacle, as Moses commands, and that too with willing hearts, so that he has to restrain their zeal and devotedness. And with all this willingness, there was no willfulness, for they are careful to follow the patterns in all things that all may be according to God's purpose, though rendered willingly by them.

All this was further proof of repentance. I do not know that in any period of their history we see them in a healthier, happier, condition of soul than now during their making of the tabernacle. The

materials were supplied by the willing offerings of the people, and the silver half-shekels which they had paid as atonement-money. These materials were then fashioned by workmen divinely skilled, according to patterns divinely exhibited. And when all was finished, they brought it to Moses; and Moses had but to say of it, that it was all good, all according to God, and to bless them. Judgment they reaped before (chap. 32: 28), but now blessing. (Chap. 39: 43.) Then after all had been finished for the sanctuary in this obedience of faith, the mediator presents the whole in due form to God, compacted, as it were, and fitly framed together; and then the Lord has only to crown and quicken it all with His presence. The cloud rests on it, and the glory enters into it. (Chaps. 35-40.)

And other fruit of repentance continues to be produced, while they remain round “the Mount of God.” Thus their waiting on the consecration of Aaron (Lev. 8; 9), their clearing of themselves of the blasphemer (chap. 24.), their dedication of the altar (Num. 7), their surrender of their brethren, the Levites, to the service of the house of God (chap. viii.), their keeping of the passover (chap. 9.), and, finally, their Quitting of the mount in holy order, the light and approval of the Lord resting in full satisfaction upon them (chap. 10.): all this evidences their state of faith and obedience. And there is no public trespass committed from the day of the golden calf till they leave Horeb. They maintain their place and allegiance all through, and finally move onward to the land of promise under the unfurled banner of the Lord God of Israel.

Thus it is indeed that the Lord now meets them; not as obedient servants, but as pardoned sinners. As debtors to obedience under the burning mount, they did not stand for a moment; but in His own grace the Lord provides a sanctuary of salvation for them, and there they rejoice as pardoned sinners, debtors to mercy. And how truly blessed their new standing is! They come into vision of things altogether differing from the fire on the hill. The form of something that Moses himself had seen, in regions far higher than that of the lightning and thunder, now fills their vision also. They now get into his secret. If he then stood in peace beyond all the reach and terror of the law, so may they now. Christ in His fullness and grace, and not the law in its judgments, was bore. Here was an altar shown to them that could attract the fire from the mount, and let it spend itself on the victim that was there, and not on the people around. Here was provision in God Himself for all the mischief which man had wrought, and all the penalty he had incurred. Mercy was here heard to rejoice over judgment.

This is what “the Mount of God” now tells us; and thus telling of God Himself and His ways, it shows us again its title to be honored with such a name. Here God first showed Himself in the burnings and thunders of this mount, to tell us of the terribleness of righteousness; but then here He showed Himself also in the shadowy tabernacle pitched at the foot of it, to tell us of His provision in Jesus to let mercy rejoice over judgment. And thus He is still declared here. His name is still written on this holy hill, the name of the just God, and yet the Savior. The tables of testimony, as we find here (see also Deut. 10:1-5), are now laid up in the ark, that is, magnified and made honorable in the person of the Lord of the temple, while sinners who come up to worship see only provision for their sins in the various furniture of the sanctuary. And if sinners now (as the tribes might have read their names on the priest's breast-plate) will by faith only see themselves borne on the heart of Jesus before God, they may know at the same time, to the full repose of their consciences, that the law is there before them. As he says, “thy law is within my heart.” So that the sinner's blessing and salvation is thus kept in closest intimacy and company

with God's fullest praise and honor in righteousness. The sinner is borne on that heart in which God's law has been kept and treasured up. These tales of redeeming grace, which are here told out at this mystic mount, are indeed wonderful, beloved. The glory now changes its place. It had seated itself, as we have seen, like devouring fire on the top of the hill (Ex. 24:17), but now it comes down to fill the tabernacle that was pitched at the foot of it. In its first place it was death to approach it. If so much as a beast did then but touch the border of it, it was to be stoned or thrust through. But now it is life to come up to it. If a poor trembling sinner now do but touch the hem of it, she shall be made whole.

And we may well know the readiness with which the glory thus changes its place. It was its own delight to do so. As our hymn says, beloved, "'Tis His great delight to bless us-O how He loves!" To quit the fiery mount, and seat itself in the sanctuary; to put the place of judgment behind it, and to fill the place of grace; this was its happy path. As afterward, when it came to occupy the house which Solomon built for it, it took its throne there with full complacency. "Arise into thy resting-place," said Solomon. "This is my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it;" answered the Lord. It was the good pleasure; the desire of the glory, to fill the place. And so when it does come down actually (as we see here, and also in 2 Chron. 5), it spreads itself, if I may so speak; it stretches itself out as though it felt itself at home. The holy and most holy places are filled, and its train so flows forth into the courts, that neither Moses now, nor the priests then, could stand to minister.

But what comfort this is to the poor sinner, that the Lord delights to take those paths which thus bring Him into the midst of His people in grace and with blessing! They are not strange or uneasy to Him. And what have we sinners to do, but to let the blessed Lord take His own way of grace with us? It is true that we have, like Israel, by our golden calves sinned away all right to blessing. But it is as true that the Lord has spread out before us His golden sanctuary, furnished with its altars, its laver, and its mercy-seat, to tell us of His abounding grace, and Christ's victory for sinners. I learn salvation in Jesus from that same word which tells me I have destroyed myself. And there is not a thing in God's sanctuary that does not tell of mercy through Jesus. No trace, no voice, of judgment or of death, is there. And we have to shout, like Israel, at the door of this sanctuary. (Lev. 9:24.) And this is faith. Love may bring services afterward to testify obedience, but faith first tells God of His goodness. The glory has taken its path from the fiery top of the hill to the mercy-seat in the sanctuary; and we have only by faith to follow it-to follow it as simply as it has moved willingly, and thus to meet our God, not in the fires of judgment, but in the dwellings of love and peace.

Chapter 128

The Mount of God: Part 3

This we get here in these chapters, and thus read, though in other lines, the title of this mount to be called “the Mount of God.” For here God is thus still revealing Himself. Grace and glory had passed before us on this hill in the previous chapters, as we saw grace in the burning bush, and glory in the assembly of the strangers and Israel. Judgment, and mercy rejoicing over it, have now in their turn passed also before us at the same place-judgment in the fire at the top of the hill, mercy in the tabernacle at the foot of it. And thus the Lord, in these ways and at this place, makes Himself known to us, and Horeb is indeed “the Mount of God.”

Thus I have with desire surveyed this holy hill. But I cannot finally leave it till I have another little meditation at the foot of it.

All that we have seen is Revelation of God. This hill is the place for God's showing Himself. Now our obedience to revelation is faith. If God reveal Himself, faith is man's obedient response. And on faith I would now in closing say a little.

There is a peculiar character of excellence in faith, and no wonder the scriptures so much speak of it. It glorifies God above everything, just because it takes God's account of Himself, and lets Him do His pleasure-” He that cometh to God must believe that he is.” Adam ought to have been a believer, for God to him was a revealer. God had revealed Himself in a warning, and Adam should have had faith. But Adam failed in that; and through unbelief, or making God a liar, he sinned and fell.

We now, in like manner, are called to have faith in God, for God has revealed Himself to us also-in another way, it is true. But still God is a revealer of Himself to us sinners now, and we have now to render the obedience of faith. And “without faith it is impossible to please him.” Just as with Adam: all his joy in the garden was as worship. If Adam delighted in the flavor of its fruit, the scent of its flowers, or the singing of the birds there, all might be counted as worship. But Adam should have believed also, and his faith would have been the highest act of worship. For the heart would have rendered its service to God by faith or confidence in His word, while the eye and the ear and other senses would have been exercising themselves in the garden of God as in the holy places of a temple.

Thus Adam was called to faith, and faith would have been his best service and worship. Sin having entered does not at all change this. Faith still renders the best service, and performs the highest acts of worship. Only we sinners have other objects proposed to faith than untainted Adam had. Necessarily so. One threat of death was revealed to him. [Not life only but] union with the Christ of God, and all its consequent glory and joy, is made known to us. Our circumstances give opportunity of returning to God larger service and worship, through faith, than Adam's did. If faith gives to God His highest glory from the creature, we, by our circumstances as sinners, being called to larger exercise of faith, have competency to yield larger praise. There is more, much more, in our condition than there was in Adam's to exercise faith. Sin and its necessities and

sorrows have induced this. This world is the very place for the largest possible exercise of faith in the blessed God: and if we indeed desired God's praise, we should rejoice in such opportunities of giving Him the worship and honor of faith.

And such an one in this world of ours was Jesus. Without sin, He was made sin. He came into this world of sinners. And how did He carry Himself here? “I have put my trust in him,” says He. All through He was rendering to God the obedience and worship of faith. He trusted Him, and trusted in Him. He believed and was confident. Nothing weakened or disturbed His cleaving by faith to the living God. He had laid hold on Him, and nothing slacked His hand. With all against Him, He trusted in God. This was glorifying God beyond all glory that God had ever received. The life of faith which the Man Christ Jesus led in this world was constant worship of the highest order. Angels could never have so glorified Him, or rendered such worship. But that was worship and praise indeed which was brought by the faith of this “wondrous man,” in scenes which our fallen world alone could have afforded. For “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It deals with such things as are neither enjoyed nor visible. And it is our circumstances in this world that admit of such most abundantly. Adam had present things to which he might give himself, and through the joy of which he might glorify God, and only one warning or threat revealed to his faith. Angels, too, have their full visible present delights. But the saint is in a world where all that is present is more or less astray from God, and against Him, so that he must go forth from them by faith towards things hoped for and unseen. This calls faith into the most varied and constant exercise, and this makes the saint a competent worshipper of God in the highest order of worship. And Jesus valued this opportunity of worshipping Him, for He loved God perfectly. He waited in such a temple continually. But we (with sorrow may we learn to say it!) want a heart to value God and His praise.

But while we thus look at the principle of faith, grieving that we know it so poorly, we may also look at the object of faith, and there we shall find abundant cause for joy. For God is good, unspeakably good. God is love. His delight is in mercy, and accordingly that which He reveals to our hearts, or that which He proposes as the great object of faith in this fallen world, is salvation. He offers this to our faith, that our hearts may at once rejoice before Him. The apostle says, “we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle:” a strong testimony to God's salvation, or the object of the sinner's faith. The servants or worshippers in the tabernacle were not made perfect in the conscience. The very place bore witness that the way to God was not then made manifest; and the sacrifices, with which the worshippers dealt continually, kept their sins in remembrance. (Heb. 9; 10) For such sacrifices could never dispose of sin. There was no such blood in them as could ever, let it be applied again and again, take it away. But now the saint has a purged conscience, because on his altar he sees blood which has obtained eternal redemption. His altar witnesses remission, and not remembrance, of sins.

This is the mighty distance between them. This keeps the worshippers in the tabernacle and the attendants on the New Testament altar, as the apostle tells us, asunder. The one cannot stand in company with the other. To understand the virtue of the altar is of necessity to quit the tabernacle. Assurance of heart in the remission of sins, or a purged conscience, is the due attribute of him who waits on the one, constant sense of sin the due condition of, him who serves or worships (λατρε■οντες, Heb. 13:10) in the other. And this being so, what offering is that which the worshipper at the altar brings? Having apprehended the virtue of the blood there, what sacrifice

does he in return pay? The answer comes, “by him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.” (Ver. 15.) Praise is the due fruit of a heart that has learned salvation, or the value of the altar-not prayer, but praise. A sinner has not prayer to make, but praise to render. A saint has many and many a prayer, it is true; daily weakness and short-coming and necessity lead him that way. That a sinner in prayer denies the value of the altar. Praise suits salvation, and it is as God the Savior that our altar reveals God to faith.

And what has faith to do but to let the blessed God take His own way, and show Himself in His goodness and glory? The heart that believes is silent before Him while He passes by. He is pleased by this altar which He has raised and revealed to provide for sinners; and who are we that we should stay His hand, or narrow the flow of His rich mercies? Let Him do His pleasure: He is the Lord. If the gospel propose to let us sinners see Him in the exercise of unspeakable goodness, it is the duty of the sinner just to look at Him; it is the way of faith to do nothing else. Faith thus in filthy Joshua allowed change of raiment without a question. He never broke silence, but just accepted the blessing and the glory. (Zech. 3) Faith in the convicted adulteress was silent while Jesus passed by in the still small voice, writing the memorial of her shame as on a sandy floor, which the next breeze would efface forever. (John 8) Faith in the camp of Israel, as we have now seen, after they had sinned away all their blessings by the golden calf, followed the patterns which were, one after another, unfolding the pledges of God's salvation in the golden sanctuary. (Ex. 35-40) All this was faith, which ever lets the Lord take His own way with the sinner, taking His own blessed revelation of Himself without a question, and thus honoring above everything, allowing that He has a right to bless even sinners if He please, and us ourselves as well as other sinners.

And this was the voice of the basket of first-fruits. (See Deut. 26) On the nation being settled in the land, they were to fill a basket with the various fruits thereof, and offer it before God's altar; acknowledging at the same time that all His promises had been made good, that He had accomplished all the goodness and mercy of which He had spoken to them, of which this mystic basket was now the witness and sample. And then they were to rejoice before the Lord their God, the nation thus simply owning all He had done for them, and all that He had been to them, and that they, poor perishing Syrians in themselves, could indeed rejoice in Him.

And this is just the pattern of a perishing sinner's faith, be he Syrian, Greek, or Jew. We have to lay out our basket before the Lord. This is faith. Conscience may confess sins that we have done; love may bring services and obedience: but faith tells what God is, and what He has done, in a rich and varied and overflowing witness. Liberty of conscience, joy in God, assurance and ease of heart, hope, largeness of desire, with other exercises suited to a soul consciously brought home to God, these should be the holy fruit to fill our baskets before the Lord. Affections, such as our altar may well awaken, should fill the heart and run over; affections that become pardoned sinners, the due fruit of that land to which the Savior brings us. This is our “first love,” our basket of first-fruits. Ephesus lost it. The fruit in the basket there had withered a little. For let come what other sacrifices may into God's house, this first offering should be always there in its freshness. Faith should always rejoice in what God has done, that thus the first love may be over young and lively.

But this is far from being the way of the, natural heart of man. His mind is not of this order. He clings to the law. Grace is too great and generous a thought for him. Work, rather than faith, is his master-principle. And this separates between his mind and God's mind. And this principle in man

shows itself at times in God's choicest servants. For it is of the flesh, which is in us all. Look at David in 1 Chron. 17. He thought to do something for the Lord. But in that he wronged God. He did not think so, or mean so, but so it was; by that he was wronging God's love. For shall David be before the Lord in kindness? Shall David be better than God? Will David think of building God a house before the Lord has built him a house? That must not be. God will be God in His love as in everything. He will be better as well as greater than we. And therefore that very night, as though He could not rest under such a thing, the Lord tells Nathan to go and stop this purpose of David's heart. God's love had been wronged by it. The Lord would build him a house first, and then David or his son (in this sense the same) might build the Lord a house. And when David hears this through Nathan, the whole temper and current of his soul is changed. He at once sits before the Lord as a receiver, and does not act for the Lord as a giver. He does not talk any more of building a house for God, but rejoices in the thought of the Lord building a house for him. He leaves Martha's place, and takes Mary's more excellent place. (Luke 10:38.)

And this was faith again-faith that ever allows God to take His way and show Himself. What right has man to stop the way of the Lord? Shall he say to the Lord, when the Lord rises to unseal the sources of the river of life, “Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther"? If goodness will glorify itself, shall unbelief dare to dim it? Who shall close the hand of the Lord of the vineyard, if He be pleased to give the penny? If they talk of law, is it not lawful for Him to do what He will with His own? God is the Lord of the well of life, and may He not turn its streams, if He please, to water the dreariest lands? He owns the springs themselves; and therefore let His rights as such owner be weighed and tried even in the balances of law, and it will be found that it is lawful for Him to use them as He may-He has a right to bless sinners if it please Him.

Faith simply gives Him His rights, and allows the lawfulness of God acting in grace to us; yea, even to ourselves, as well as to other sinners like us. For the less is blessed of the better; and as God justly claims for Himself the place of the better, faith fully owns the claim, and receives the blessing from Him, even the richest blessing, the blessing of eternal salvation, life and glory.

Thus it is faith which chiefly glorifies God, for it sets Him in the place of “the better.” Service renders to God, faith receives from Him, and thus faith honors Him in the holiest place that He graciously fills for us. In a sinner walking before Him, in the artless liberty and confidence of faith, God is especially honored. For “God is love,” and to glorify such an one we must be free and happy in Him. Love can be satisfied by nothing less than that. Of course, love knows how to “comfort the feeble-minded;” and where is “little faith,” it can well come and “support the weak,” for it tells us to do so. But still our joy in Him is His will, and even His commandment. The bread of mourners was not to be eaten in the sanctuary; it would have defiled the presence of God, as the offering of an unclean heart would have defiled it. For if holiness become God's house, so do liberty and joy. And it is faith that brings in this liberty and joy, for it apprehends the altar of which I have spoken; it apprehends God engaged for the sinner in a love that is perfect, so as to have nothing in the soul inconsistent with itself, as the bread of mourners would be. It casts out fear, and fills the temple within with its own clear, free, and refreshing element.

May our faith, then, beloved, grow exceedingly! May we know the repose of heart, the silence of conscience, the triumph of hope, and the song of praise in the spirit, which it gives, more and more! The revelation which our God has made of Himself is so blessed, that it is only such a faith

that can duly honor it. O that in connection with our subject we were, beloved, more in harmony with the spirit of those sweet words which we sometimes have sung together-

“Look forward to that happy place,

Beyond the bounds of time and space,

The saints' secure abode:

On faith's strong eagle-pinions rise,

And, force your passage to the skies,

And scale the, mount of God:”

(Concluded from page 37.)

Chapter 129

Not Man's Conscience or Spirit but God's Spirit

A Christian is not under law at all; he is dead to the law by the body of Christ. But it is one of the characteristics of modern rationalism, to take certain advances in truths which the church at large does not see, and to pervert them to evil. Here the conscience and spirit are identified; and the spirit gives no truth, but guides into it (that is, it is man's growing up into it); but there is no revealed truth. There is a life, an example: we are allowed “to know what our Lord doeth.” The human race is left to itself, to be guided by the teaching of the spirit within, which is only conscience. But it is left to itself; no truth given, no precepts ever found in the word; and in addition to all this the authority of God wholly set aside. The law we have is this conscience or spirit within-is not a law imposed on us by another power, but by our own enlightened will; we bow to the majesty of truth and justice; to God never. He may neither give truth nor impose a command: God's word-His precepts, the Spirit giving any truth, the authority of God, obedience-is wholly denied.

Now the scheme of Christianity is the opposite of this. It teaches of a Comforter, the Holy Ghost, who is sent by Christ from the Father; whom the Father sends in Christ's name; who comes and convinces the world. He testifies of Christ; and the disciples also bear witness. He does not speak of Himself; but what He hears He speaks. He was to teach the disciples all things, to show them things to come, to bring what Christ had said to their remembrance; and he who loved Him would keep His commandments, as he that hath His commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loves Christ.

Chapter 130

Not Many Folds One Flock

There is no thought of meddling in these pages with the Irish Church, or its handmaid the Irish Methodist Society, any more than with any other denomination in particular. But it is serious to find a grave man calmly seeking a sanction of the principle and fact of different denominations in scripture, when it never speaks even of the tendency toward them save with reprobation. There were churches of course in different localities. But scripture only knows of the church on earth. “There is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling.” “In (or By) one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.” The house of God in which we (like Timothy) have to learn how we ought to behave ourselves is “the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” A late evangelical dignitary used to speak of churches on earth, and the church in heaven. The Archdeacon of Meath goes farther apparently, and hints at something like distinct niches in heaven itself. “The one flock under the one Shepherd, as it will dwell in many mansions hereafter (John 14:2), so it sojourns here in many folds (John 10:16, Revised Version).” (Page 4.) This principle is a key (he adds), unlocking difficulties to which a more stringent theory of ecclesiasticism affords no outlet; and so he proceeds to draw from it a measure of consolation at the sight of disunited Christendom.

But the principle is false, the encouragement illusive, and the interpretation of scripture absolutely unsound. The Revised Version lends no more countenance than the Authorized Version to this mild justification of sects. There is not a trace of “many folds” as Dr. R. rashly infers. “Other sheep I have,” said the Savior, “which are not of this fold.” They were Gentiles, outside the chosen nation whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the divine service, and the promises. The Jews alone composed the fold to which Messiah came. Rejected by the Jews, He becomes the door of salvation to sinners of the Gentiles as much as to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But as of old there were no folds recognized by Him among the heathen, so now He forms, not many folds, but “one flock,” whether of the Jewish sheep led out of the fold (or enclosure of the circumcision), or of His wandering sheep among the nations. Both He not only saves, but gathers into one by virtue of His death (John 11:52), and pleads with the Father that they all may be one, that the world may believe that the Father sent the Son: not yet perfected oneness in glory, that the world may know; but responsible oneness in grace, as a testimony for the world to believe.

No, Dr. R., this will not do. “Schisms” (or divisions within) are evil; “heresies” (sects or parties without) are yet worse. But worst of all is the effort to make one part of scripture, through an erroneous exposition, reverse the positive testimony throughout the epistles, which condemns (root, branch and fruit) all denominationalism (or many folds), as directly contrary to the will of God, the word of the Lord, and the operation of the Holy Ghost for and in the church. “Be it far from Thee, Lord,” said Peter in all amiable feeling, shocked at the announcement of His coming shame and suffering unto death. But such language, such feeling, was of the enemy: Peter was minding not the things of God, but the things of men. Let us see to it that we have our senses exercised to discern good and evil.,

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:12, 13.)

Open Exclusivism

1.——Visited, for a short time, the brethren at Plymouth, where I found less comfort than elsewhere, feeling that their original bond of union, in the truth as it is in Jesus, had been changed for a united testimony against all who differed from them."-P. 342.

2.——The moment the witnessing for the common life as our bond gives place to a witnessing against errors by separation of persons and preaching, (errors allowably compatible with the common life,) every individual, or society of individuals, first comes before the mind as those who might need witnessing against, and all their conduct and principles have first to be examined and approved before they can be received; and the position which this occupying the seat of judgment will place you in will be this: the narrow-minded and bigoted will rule because his conscience cannot and will not give way, and therefore the more enlarged heart must yield. It is into this position, dear D——, I feel some little flocks are fast tending, if they have not already attained it. Making light not life time measure of communion."-Letter to J. N. D., March 10TH, 1836.

3.——As to our liberty in Christ to worship with any congregation under heaven where He manifests himself to bless and to save, can there be in any Christian mind a doubt? If my Lord shall say to me, in any congregation of the almost unnumbered sections of the Church, ‘What dost thou here?' I would reply, ‘Seeing Thou wast here to save and sanctify, I felt it safe to be with Thee.' If He again said, as perhaps He may amongst most of us, ‘Didst thou not see abominations here, an admixture of that which was unscriptural, and the absence of that which was scriptural, and in some points error, at least in thy judgment?' my answer would be, ‘Yea, Lord, but I dared not call that place unholy where Thou wast present to bless, nor by refusing communion in worship reject those as unholy whom Thou hadst by Thy saving power evidently sanctified and set apart for Thine own.' Our reason for rejecting the congregations of apostate bodies is, that Christ does not manifest Himself among them in their public character, though He may save some individuals as brands plucked from the burning. To these churches we cry, standing on the outside, ‘Come out of her, my people; come out of her.' Among the others we stand, as the Son of man, or rather with Him, in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks (Rev. 1:13), telling them to remember their first love, first purity, and first work in all holy doctrine and discipline, lest the Lord take away their candlestick; but we would rather linger, in hope the impending judgment may be stayed, or some yet repent, than say, like Edom, in the day of Judah's sorrows, ‘Down with her, down with her, even to the ground.' (See also Obad. 1:10, 14)

“To the question, Are we not countenancing error by this plan? our answer is, that if we must appear to countenance error or discountenance brotherly love, and the visible union of the Church of God, we prefer the former, hoping that our lives and our tongues may be allowed by the Lord so intelligently to speak that at last our righteousness shall be allowed to appear; but if not, still we may feel we have chosen the better part, since we tarried only for our Lord's departure; and as the candlestick retired, and its light vanished, we pronounce our sad farewell; but so long as Christ dwells in an individual, or walks in the midst of a congregation, blessing the ministrations to the

conversion and edification of souls, we dare not denounce and formally withdraw from either, for fear of the awful six of schism, of sin against Christ and His mystical body."-Letter to J. N. D. p. 528.

4.-" Whenever it is the Lord's pleasure that I should return, I do most fervently pray that my soul may be filled with Himself, and not with those angry questions: what seems really wanted is that true humiliation of soul before God, which makes the beam in our own eyes visible, and the mote in the eye of another comparatively disregarded. 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?' often recurs to me, when I read those exaggerated statements; and I often fear that if such a state of things continue, some signal mark of God's displeasure will rest upon it all. For myself I would join no Church permanently that had not some constituted rule. I have seen enough of that plan, of every one doing what is right in his own eyes, and then calling it the Spirit's order, to feel assured it is a delusion; and I consider it far more dishonoring to God, than where no pretension is made, beyond that of governing according to the best of the spiritual wisdom given us, guided by the word and Spirit of God, which is always promised to us for asking."-P. 413.

Are not many of the "open brethren" as "exclusive" ecclesiastically towards other Christian bodies, as the "exclusives" are towards them? And what a repulsive spectacle to outsiders is this twofold exclusiveness I prompting the question:-

"Tantaene animis coelestibus irae?"

Chapter 132

Paul: A Good Conscience Before God

The Holy Spirit often puts Paul forward because in him are manifested the ways of the heart, and this under grace. He displayed a patience truly admirable in caring for the church. We can sound the ways of God and of the human heart in the history that the Holy Spirit has given us of Paul. He had an immense activity and great force of character. This chapter contains circumstances which show what a good conscience before God is.

If the conscience is not good, the Holy Spirit is grieved, and some, having put it away, have even made shipwreck concerning faith. If a child has offended his father, he is no more at ease before him, and cannot open his heart.

In the history of Paul we see his conversion in verses 3-16. Then he is in a trance or ecstasy (vers. 17-21), in which the Lord commands him to depart from Jerusalem. It is for him to regulate these things. Paul in his answer says to the Lord that he is precisely the man suited to bear witness for Him in Jerusalem. I have persecuted Thee, and they know it; will they not see in me the efficacy of Thy grace? Such was the reasoning of Paul. But the Lord takes no account of it.

That which strikes one most is that Paul recalls to the Lord all his iniquity; and this, because his conscience was perfectly purged before God. It is necessary that it should be thus if one would dare to speak to God in detail of all our offenses, of all our sins. There is a false repose in the child of God when the conscience is not perfectly good and opened out before God. Paul replaces before the eyes of the Lord all the detail of his sin. He does not confine himself to saying, Thou knowest all; he puts all before God, without having the idea that anything can be imputed to him. He talks about his sins as of an affair irrevocably settled. He can even present these sins as a motive for being an apostle, for bearing testimony to Jesus in Jerusalem. Paul reasons with the Lord as a person with his intimate friend. This is what Ananias also does. (Acts 9:13-16)

When God has purified the conscience for us by His perfect grace, the interests of Jesus are ours. Jesus is no longer our judge; He has taken our sins, He, has united us to Himself, having taken our cause in hand. Instead of seeing in Jesus our judge, we see in Him a friend. Instead of being affrighted at Christ, we are full of confidence in Him, because we are assured of His love. There is in the heart a complete change.

The reasoning of Paul was true, as we see in 1 Tim. 1:15. God had prepared Paul in that he had been the greatest enemy of the Lord Jesus, and chief of sinners; because, if Paul had spoken of other things than God's righteousness by faith and man's perfect pardon, his mouth must have been closed.

Peter was prepared by denying Christ, which is even worse than being His enemy. That closed his mouth for every other thing than preaching grace. They had, the one and the other, a profound conviction of sin. If we would be strong and bear testimony to grace, we need to have the sense of the evil whence God has taken us up. If the occasion presents itself, we can speak before men of our sins, provided that all has been laid clearly before God. The Christian converts at Ephesus

brought their books of magic, and confessed all their actions by the power of the Holy Spirit. If the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, we have more shame for our sins before God than before men. To have a good conscience we must keep the conscience pure. Paul exercised himself to have in everything a conscience without offense toward God and men. When we have grieved the Holy Spirit, we do not feel the love of God in the same way. A conscience defiled cannot be at its ease before God; and when God enters, there are dark corners that one hides from Him. Impossible then to have that perfect confidence in reasoning with God as with a friend. If we have beforehand the sense of our feebleness, we shall be forced to seek strength in God.

Can we with boldness and without pain recall before God all we have thought, said and done? To be unable to do so is not to be in the presence of God; to do so is to recall to God His immense grace in having pardoned us. Without Christ who would venture such things? Sin hidden corrupts the heart, hardens the conscience, and renders us blind and proud. It is of all moment for us that our conscience should be entirely emptied before God. We can afterward forget those things; we shall not be judged because of it. Be faithful in this sense-to have a pure conscience before God and men.

Chapter 133

Peter and Paul

How often have we not heard Peter spoken of as head of the church! That Peter, ardent and full of zeal, began the work at Jerusalem, the Lord working mightily by his means, is certain: we see it plainly in scripture. But he had nothing to do with the work carried on among the Gentiles. That work was done by Paul, who was sent by the Lord Himself; and Paul entirely rejected the authority of Peter. For him Peter was but a man; and he, sent by Christ, was independent of men. The church among the Gentiles is the fruit of Paul's, not of Peter's, work: it owed its origin to Paul and to his labors, and in no way to Peter, whom Paul had to resist with all his strength, in order to keep the assemblies among the Gentiles free from the influence of that spirit which ruled Christians who were the fruit of Peter's work. God maintained unity by His grace; had He not kept the church, it would have been divided into two parts, even in the days of the apostles themselves.

It is marvelous that so many should hold as head of the church among the Gentiles Peter, who was the apostle of the circumcision, and who openly left the work amongst the heathen to Paul, who had already labored in it independently for more than fourteen years, sent and blessed by the Lord and by the Holy Ghost, without any reference to Peter, and who had moreover expressly rejected Peter's authority, which the false brethren sought to impose upon the Gentile churches. Peter, though greatly blessed by the Lord, is the apostle of the circumcision, and of the circumcision only; Paul, of the uncircumcision, that is, of the Gentiles. Paul alone among the apostles speaks of the church, the body of Christ: this truth was confided only to him as its administrator.

Verse 11. Paul recalls another case; one in which he had been compelled to reprove and withstand Peter, who had come to Antioch, where the church had been founded among the Gentiles, though there were Jews among them also. Poor Peter! he showed himself at the beginning quite ready to eat with the Gentiles, being free from the prejudices of his countrymen; but alas! when certain came down from Jerusalem, from James, who was the leader of the work and of the assembly in the civil and religious capital of the Jews, where the law was still observed by the Christians-then Peter, full of ardor but sensitive to the opinion of others, and timid in the presence of reproach, withdraws, and no longer eats with the Gentiles.

This was to destroy the divine work, which had already been wrought at Jerusalem-an evident act of unfaithfulness. The more a man is honored-and in this case there was true ground for respect-the greater the stumbling-block to others if he fail; and thus it happened here. All the Jews, and even Barnabas also, dissembled with Peter, and no longer dared to walk with the Gentiles. The unity of the Spirit was lost, as also the truth of the gospel. Paul could not let this pass; and when he saw that Peter walked not uprightly, he reproved him before all. Authority cannot make evil good, nor good evil. We see moreover that Peter had not the very smallest authority over Paul; and this is why the latter recalls the fact. Peter deserved to be rebuked, and Paul rebuked him in presence of all, saying: “If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?”

This leads us away, from the history and from the question of owning Peter's authority, to that of the truth of the gospel, which he was imperiling. Not only did Peter show a false and deceitful spirit, boasting of his liberty one moment, and the next concealing what his previous walk had been, but he was also establishing error; and there was danger; forasmuch as in him lay, and as far as it depended upon his authority, he was destroying the truth of the gospel: “we,” continues Paul, “who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.”

Paul begins here to treat of doctrine, not, merely of Peter's authority, leaving aside the question of the work committed to him among the circumcision. He reasons thus:-Peter, being a Jew like the rest, was building again the system of the law, when he refused to eat with the Gentiles; he was seeking to be justified by works and by the exact observance of legal ordinances. But he had abandoned this means of justification, in order to believe on Christ, that he might be justified by the faith of Christ; and in building again the system of the law, he made himself a transgressor in having left it. But it was Christ who had led him to do it. Christ then was the minister of sin! this could not be. If he built again the things he had destroyed, he became a sinner in having destroyed them—and Christ had led him to do it!

Chapter 134

The Prayer of a Saint

The tenor and subjects of our prayers will ever be in accordance with our knowledge and apprehension of God, and of the relation in which we recognize Him as standing toward us and us to Him. Thus, if we regard God as having given us only the hope of the attainment of salvation by Jesus Christ, our constant desire before God will be for the brightening and strengthening of that hope, as that which we feel to be needful for our comfort and peace of mind. But as to any farther revelation which God may have given of His mind and purpose, we can feel but little interest, whilst there remains a doubt as to our being personally concerned and having a portion therein.

But if we are enabled, in the undoubting simplicity of faith, to take our stand upon the sure foundation which God has laid for every sinner, in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of His beloved Son, our desires will naturally go forth after the knowledge of more of what is the purpose of God, in connection with the manifestation of the glory of Him in “whom we have obtained an inheritance.” Now, one great design of God in the gift of His Son was the manifestation of His love. His power, His unspotted holiness, must be exhibited; His justice, as the Supreme Governor, must take its course. But in Jesus all can be displayed and exercised in love. God is love. And in Jesus “dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” What Jesus expressed of God was love, as set forth in that short summary in His own blessed words: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16.) Thus the first step of a sinner's knowledge of God is, that He so loved him.

But it is in the farther increasing knowledge and apprehension of the love of Christ that we are led on to the fullness of God. Now this is the prayer of the Spirit of God, Him who makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God; asking, of course, only for that which it is our blessing to receive and know, and God's glory to bestow and communicate. We are too apt, judging of God by the narrowness of our own hearts, to remain satisfied in the attainment of a clearness of hope as to a future and final deliverance, looking upon the glory to be revealed as no portion of our present knowledge. But this is surely wrong, it is all the portion of faith now. “We have the mind of Christ,” and the Holy Ghost abiding with us and in us; and although “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,” yet “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” (1 Cor. 2)

It is true that in present circumstances, as being yet in the body, and in the region of sin, we “see through a glass darkly,” but yet it is “all things,” and thus our power and capacity of understanding are now in kind, though not in degree, the same as they will ever be. But we are not sufficiently careful to distinguish between the perceptions of the natural mind and the perceptions of the spiritual mind by faith. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3.) “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; but he that is spiritual judgeth [discerneth, marg.] all things.” (1 Cor. 2:14, 15.)

Being born again, and having spiritual life and perception, we are capable of receiving the things of the Spirit of God; and it is in the exercise of our spiritual powers, in the diligent study and meditation of what God has revealed, that we grow up “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:13.) To be satisfied with any measure of attainment in divine things is fleshly, natural; so it is to be satisfied with less than God has seen fit and necessary to give-” the fullness"-” all things. But the true secret of our willing ignorance, is, that every step of attainment in the knowledge of God involves painful self-denial and crucifixion of the flesh. It is the prevalence of the “carnal mind,” which is “enmity against God,” over the “spiritual mind,” which receives and delights in the things of God, as being of Him. Thus there is so much of death in our life, for the “carnal mind is death"-” the spiritual mind is life and peace.”

Oh, how much of present joy and peace in believing should we experience, if, at once discarding from our hearts all fellowship with the “weak and beggarly elements of the world,” we took our stand practically and constantly on the “sure foundation” of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, yea, risen and ascended to God; “growing up into him in all things, which is the Head.” Hence, indeed, would the deep vistas of eternity open to our view, stretching out in peaceful calm and light-the King in His beauty-with all around subject in the holy and blissful harmony of love. The fellowship of all this would give joy and repose to the soul, in the trying scenes around us, and the conflict within us.

The testimony of the Spirit in the scriptures is characterized as being to Christ-” the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” (1 Peter 1:11.) “And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in ALL the scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:27.)

Christ is the mystery of piety. God “created all things by Jesus Christ.” (Eph. 3:9.) “All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” (John 1:3.) “All things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” (Col. 1:16.) “I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” (Rev. 22:13.) The mystery of Christ is “the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 5:32); the man and the woman, in the great purpose of God-” This is a [the] great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Eph. 5:32.) “And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first.; born from the dead.” (Col. 1:18.)

In Genesis we read that “God created the heavens and the earth,” and man “in his own image;” and He looked upon all that He had made, and pronounced them “very good.” But we find that both the heavens and the earth became defiled by sin. “The angels kept not their first estate” (Jude 6); and man, listening to the temptation of Satan, likewise fell and sinned in disobeying God. Thus did the design of God seem to be frustrated, and the course of this world, dead in trespasses and sins, has ever since been running on in sin unto death, under the power of him who has the power of death. But God's purpose was not defeated, for it was in Himself He purposed, “according to the good purpose of his will,” “according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” — “before the foundation of the world” —as depending, not at all upon the obedience and rectitude of His creature, but upon Himself. And herein we learn the needful lesson-that, separate from God, there is no endurance for the creature, and that it is only by the grace of His own imparted power that the creature can live. All God's dealings have tended to

show us what we are, yea, more, what all creatures put on their responsibility of obedience must be; and what He is—God—the sustainer of all things. Thus man continued to stand, apparently upon his own responsibility, but as a sinner, and incapable for ages, but with obscure intimations, known to faith, of grace. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17.) And the incarnation of the Son of God contains the whole of the mystery of God (developed to faith by the Spirit), as to creation, redemption, and the sure standing and continuance of the creature by grace IN HIM. “By him all things consist” —him was life."

Thus, in the Gospel by John, the especial testimony to the Son of God, we are at once led back by the Spirit to that which was before the visible creation existed. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1) “And the Word was made flesh.” (Ver. 14.) This, as the sure foundation of the state of things, whereby to be made known and manifested, and as enduring (κατ■ πρ■θεσιν), and that wherein shall be shown the TRUTH of that said of man, “in the image of God” —and of all things-” very good.” But redemption required that there should be blood, death, resurrection; and all these intervened before the full declaration of the hidden mystery could commence—and that He should take His place as the Head of all things, in order to the Spirit's testimony going forth as to what was. (John 7:39.) But now is come forth from the Spirit the full announcement of the mystery of “the dispensation of the fullness of times;” and surely to know our place and portion in those arrangements which are to be enduring, and forever built up securely in God, must be a matter of the highest interest and importance; and also, in knowing that we have a portion therein, to be enabled now to enter into the mind of God in the revelation of the mystery He has given, should be a subject of interest. This is our present portion, for we have the Spirit, the earnest of our inheritance. It is in the knowledge of what we are in Christ, as before God, and what God is to us in Christ, that we are capacitated to receive the further communications of the mind of God, as to what Christ is to all things, and this in order to our being “filled into all the fullness of God.”

It should be the subject of our prayers, the object of our unwearied diligence, to be filled with God, and to have His mind in all things. It is the power, ever so regarded in scripture, of our deliverance from this present evil world, into the world of faith—God's world—into that state of things which shall endure with the permanency of God, under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this, as God's object and purpose, should be our object and desire, in attaining true knowledge and understanding therein. It is, moreover, the true secret of power and facility in the discharge of those duties which more especially belong to our present position and circumstances as being in the world, as the children of God here, in a place of testimony and service to Him. We may observe, that this prayer of the Spirit by the apostle (Eph. 3:14) is on behalf of those who had been made partakers of the “riches of his grace,” in redemption through the blood of Jesus, and who had been sealed with that “Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest of the inheritance.... to the praise of his glory.” (Eph. 1:13.) It is now on the ground of glory that the apostle prays “according to the riches of his glory.” It is not only of grace, though all be of grace, but of glory, that we are made partakers, “who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.” (1 Peter 1:21)

The character in which God is recognized and addressed here is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole [every] family in heaven and earth is named"-His children thus as named of Him, standing in the same relationship to God, and the glory of God, as He Himself

does. (Eph. 1:3.) And indeed, in any recognition short of this, the whole character and subject of the prayer would be unmeaning and presumptuous. But this is true, and the character and standing of every believer in Jesus, as known to God, and as being one with and in Christ in resurrection life. Thus, in the declaration of the Lord after His resurrection, “I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God.” (John 20:17.) This more fully shown by the Spirit, as sent from Jesus, returned to the bosom of the Father, as showing us “plainly of the Father,” in the abundant testimony of the Spirit in the epistles to the churches. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Galatians iv. 6.) “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” (Rom. 8:16.) “Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet [■καν■σαντι ■μπαςi] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” (Colossians i. 12, 13.)

Hereupon the apostle prays that we may be “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,” the “new man” in Christ Jesus; strengthened in that which alone is capable of receiving and understanding farther communications of God-that which is of God, born of God, begotten of God, a new, a spiritual and a holy nature. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” That all that Christ was and is to us, and all that He has done and will do for us, may be constantly and habitually present (κατλικ■σαι) with us-not drawn away by, objects of sense and present attraction, but having Christ as the one great subject of our meditation: and what a blessed field of thought is here! Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capernaum, Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Gethsemane, Calvary, the crown of thorns, the cross, the grave, Emmaus, Mount Olivet, heaven, the right hand of God-” a little while, I will come again.” And all this of Him who is the Eternal Son of God, the Word, in the beginning with God, and God-the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, yet Himself truly man. We sometimes hear of the first principles of the truth, but the first principles are all; Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; He is all and in all; the beginning and the end, the first and the last; the beginning of faith, the end of faith; wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; the power of God, the wisdom of God, the glory of God, the love of God; and, O blessed thought “Ye are complete in him.”

It is thus when strengthened in spirit, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, our power and capacity to “comprehend” become enlarged and expanded, and this in proportionate measure, progressive and increasing, “the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.” We come to know that here is the unfailing stream of love, gushing forth in unabated freshness and fullness, through the ages of a boundless eternity. It is that wherein GOD shall be known to the whole family in heaven and earth, when, every cloud of sin forever removed, the calm and hallowed light of His unveiled glory shall shine forth, to gladden their hearts forever. The love of Christ is that wherein the boundless infinity, the fullness of God, is and shall be manifested.

Its height is hidden in God, coming forth thence, as the counsel of the infinite mind in the beginning, of which all we can know or say is, that “God was.”

Its depth is infinite, it has reached below the lowest possible depth of sin and pollution, and distance from God, even beneath that depth where there was no hope.

Its breadth comprises the utmost limits of God's creation, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth.

Its length, too, is infinite as God and eternity. When God ceases to be, and eternity comes to an end, then, and not till then, shall we find the limit of the love of Christ.

In a word, it is the fullness of God, into which it is our joy, our blessing, our portion present and future, to be tilled; and this in the increasing comprehension of the love; of Christ. IT IS THE LOVE OF CHRIST, THE Fullness of GOD.

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen,” G. V. W.

Chapter 135

Our Priesthood

Num. 18:1-19

All the children of God are priests. Peter speaks of a double priesthood of Christians (1 Peter 2:5-9), of a holy and of a royal priesthood: spiritual, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ; royal, to show forth the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. The apostle makes allusion there to Christ as being Priest according to the order of Melchizedek who will come thus to manifest His excellencies and His power. Being royal priests we are called to bear testimony to this power as being children of light in the midst of darkness.

All the character of priesthood which is in question here (Num. 18) is grace. After the murmurs of the people of Israel (Num. 16:41) God took away the rod from the hands of Aaron, whose election showed grace (Num. 17:5), to conduct the people Himself across the desert. “And it shall come to pass that the man's rod whom I shall choose shall blossom; and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.” The love of God is greater than the sin of the people: without that they would never have been able to cross the desert. The rod of Aaron is thus the complete manifestation of the grace of God. It is not a question here, as to our priesthood, of our personal relationships with God; for we are already under grace by the death and resurrection of Christ. To be able to understand my priesthood, I must be convinced beforehand of my position under grace.

God, without ever sanctioning sin, permits it in the case of some, who failed to learn otherwise, to show that His grace is greater than sin. He puts these persons, spite of their sin, in relation with grace. Grace here consists in the development of love in the midst of evil; but the foundation of all is ever the individual conviction of the state of grace. The standing of a priest means to be in the midst of evil in relation with the grace of God. The perfection of Christ's love is to be occupied with His people in whatever state they may be. He would that God should be glorified, and thus He carries everything on His heart. In this position grace is manifested more powerfully than the evil. In the midst of evil the priest may glorify Him in grace; and it is a great privilege to be the vessel of this moral glory which is manifested in the midst of evil. The angels desire to sound the depths of such grace as is shown thus powerful in the midst of evil. (1 Peter 1:12.) Naturally God manifests already His glory in heaven because of the purity of all that surrounds Himself; but the denizens of heaven cannot otherwise understand how God can manifest His glory in the midst of evil. Our position is in the midst of evil, the tent of the meeting-place in the midst of the people, where God Himself dwells in the midst of a people miserable and sinful. There has God set His priests. The Holy Spirit ever kept in activity by the love of God brings home the want of holding fast the grace of God in the midst of sin and for it. As a priest of God the Christian has the power of God's love in presence of evil.

Two things are to be remarked here, responsibility and grace. According to responsibility all that which hinders the soul from being in relation with grace is a sin also of my priesthood, and

therefore sin against the sanctuary and my priesthood. The priests who draw near to God ought to speak of God's love in presence of sin and of sin in presence of God's love.

All the tribe of Levi is joined to the priesthood, and there is found the tabernacle of witness, the tent of the meeting where God manifests Himself. The church has this position. The world has rejected God in Jesus. The church is the tabernacle of the testimony, the epistle of Christ before the world, and this far more than the priesthood in Israel.

Verse 5 sets forth the responsibility of these priests; verse 7 sets forth their position and ours. The church, as a testimony, ought to carry the wants of all on the heart for the blessing of God to be in and on the church.

In verse 8 we see that the priests were anointed, as we are with the Holy Ghost. (Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:27) Thus have we the unction from the Holy One, and God is He who has anointed us, and also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. How many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea; wherefore also through Him is the Amen unto the glory of God through us.

The priest was to eat, but only in the most holy place, in the presence of God Himself. It is only on Christ in His presence that we can nourish our souls. If I carry the wants of the church on my heart, then it is impossible not to feel the grace of God, to be able to carry those relations to God and of God to us. It is only when I understand the riches and the fullness of the grace of God in Christ that I can approach God about evil. It is only in communion with Him, in the possession of peace, in the presence of grace that I can thus draw near.

Verses 11-15. All belongs to the priest's house as to a family. It eats the fruits of the land, on which the eyes of Jehovah rest continually, the land of promise. In all the whole house rejoiced, and with all the whole family was nourished,

But the priest has not this position only; he is also anointed. It is a delight to rejoice in the promises that are accomplished in Christ, which are accomplishing, and which are to be accomplished in Him. The Holy Spirit gives joy as well as the bread of life; but what is still more is to find the fullness of grace in the midst of evil before God, and occupied with wants.

It is now for us to ask ourselves up to what point we are suitable for carrying on our hearts the wants of the church and the love of God; up to what point we nourish ourselves in the presence of God, and we own the riches of grace, of God's love in Christ.

Chapter 136

General Remarks on Prophetic Word

There is at the outset a great distinction to make between the prophets. Some wrote before the captivity and called the Jews to repentance, as hoping that they might still heed the warning, whatever the solemn light on the future judgment, but with blessing at last. The others wrote a little during or after the Captivity on the basis of the judgment of God. Isaiah is in the first class, Jeremiah and Ezekiel being transitional; Daniel is in the second, as well as Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Jonah stands alone as a sort of final testimony to the Gentiles while Israel was still owned as God's people.

Isaiah prophesies in general of all the hopes of the people of God and of the nations in their relations with Israel. The book is divided into two very distinct parts, the first ending with chapter 35, the second beginning with chapter 40, and an historical portion forming a parenthesis between those two parts. The former part contains the judgment of God on Israel and on the nations; the latter presents the consolation of Israel by sovereign grace and in view of their guilt, first by idolatry, next by the rejection of Messiah, who comes again for their deliverance to the glory of God.

Chapter 1 prophesies about Jerusalem; chapter 2 is the judging of the nations in relationship with the Jews, chapters 3, 4 developing yet more the grounds of the judgment and its divine character and result; as chapter 5 sets forth Israel's sin and ruin notwithstanding all the goodness and painstaking of God from the first. In chapter 6 we see a kind of introduction which gives us the character of prophecy as to the Jews only. The prophecy of chapter 7 does not close till chapter 9: 7. It divides into two sections: from chapter 7 we learn of Immanuel, from chapter 8 of Immanuel's land. Then commences a new subject at chapter 9: 8 which terminates with chapter 12.

Chapter 13 opens a series of judgments on the nations, beginning with Babylon, in chapter 24 involving all the earth, and concluding with chapter 27. It is to be remarked here as elsewhere that every judgment ends with blessing, the glory of Christ being the object of all these prophecies.

From chapter 28 to chapter 35 inclusively are found special judgments on Israel in the last times.

In chapters 35 to 39 we see the overthrow of the Assyrian, the sickness unto death but raising up (in type) of the Son of David, and the lover of Babylon as carrying away the Jews foreshewn.

Chapters 40, &c., to the end predict the state of Israel, not externally like those before the history, but internally and Godward, as tested by their call to witness the one true God and to await the Messiah, with the grand results when mercy rejoices over judgment in glory at the end and forever.

As for Jeremiah, we see that, Manasseh having fully consummated the iniquity of Israel, judgment becomes necessary. (2 Kings 23:26; 24:3; Jer. 15:4.) This judgment is irrevocable: Jeremiah is the prophet of it in the midst of Jerusalem. Up to the end of chapter 24 he does the pleading of Jehovah against His people to convince them of sin in every manner.

From chapter 25 Jerusalem (considered as quite pagan) is judged with all the nations. The new covenant is introduced in these chapters. The throne of Jehovah ceases to exist at Jerusalem; but Jerusalem shall surely be so called once more when all nations shall be gathered to it.

We have in Ezekiel the rejection of all that was Jewish or Gentile. He prophesied among the captives of Israel, not of Judah. He pronounced judgments upon the nations as a whole, on those who remained in the land after the captivity, on Pharaoh who wished to help them to hinder the establishment by Jehovah of the first of the four great empires, and he speaks of what will happen to the nation (ten tribes and all) when the last of the four monarchies shall have been judged. The restoration of Israel begins with chapter 24.

In Daniel we have the history of the four great monarchies which have replaced the throne of Jehovah for the earth. They subsist on His part who reigns by them. Thence it comes that Paul declares all the powers that be are ordained of God. Kings reign by His sanction; as on the contrary the principle that it is by the will of the people is the presage of the anti-Christian spirit. What restrains the manifestation of the lawless one is the presence of God's Spirit on the earth in the church. This being the object of the grace and work of God, He will not let the bridle loose to the nations for them to spoil and destroy. The presence of the church on earth hinders then the manifestation of the lawless one. The Holy Spirit being in the church recognizes the powers as ordained of God, whilst the Antichrist will own no man, either God or any authority whatever. Men are advancing evidently toward this epoch; but there is something that hinders its manifestation and holds back the lawless one it is the presence of the church, and of the Holy Spirit in the church.

In Hosea we have the judgment of Israel, though also that of Judah, and their restoration together in the latter day. Meanwhile Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi tell the tale, Judah being specially in view up to the end of chapter iii., whilst in general the details that follow from chapter 4 look at Israel.

Joel gives the revelation of the great and terrible day of Jehovah. To announce it the Spirit of God take the occasion of some particular judgments at that time.

Amos occupies himself particularly with Israel and the nations connected with Israel.

Obadiah predicts the judgment of Edom, which alone among the nations is to be destroyed without a remnant.

Jonah furnishes the last prophetic appeal to the nations before they have assumed the Babylonish character, to prove the interest God takes in all the creation, although in His mercy He has chosen a people for Himself to preserve the knowledge of His name on the earth. The power of Nineveh was anterior to that of Babylon as imperial.

Micah prophesied during the period of Isaiah. He treats of the invasion of the Assyrian and his threats in order to present in a special manner the judgment of Judea, but at the same time Jehovah's blessing in Christ.

Nahum is the judgment of the world in general, not of the corruption of Babylon lint of man, of his power which is presented in the case of Nineveh.

Habakkuk complains of the iniquity of God's people end develops the chastening that will fall on them to he effected by those still more wicked than they-the Chaldeans—who, because they give loose rein to their violence, became in their turn of jests of the judgments of Jehovah. But His glory and His righteousness shall be manifested in both one and the other, types of the Jewish people and of the world.

Zephaniah speaks of the awakening that God in His grace works in the midst of His people so that judgment should not fall on them. In that day shall be a time of repentance and salvation for many souls. He proves nevertheless that the divine counsels cannot be changed, that evil is always in man now, and that God will gather all the nations to punish them, but that then the remnant shall be blessed in every way.

Haggai, insisting on the re-building of the temple, takes occasion thereby to reveal the manifestation of Jesus in His glory coming to the house of God in the latter day.

Zechariah takes up all the relations of Israel with the nations after the captivity. He sets out the mutual rejection of Christ and the Jews at the time of His first coming, and the ways of God toward the Jews and the nations at the time of His second coming.

Malachi pronounces the judgment of Judea after the return to the holy land; and he makes known the message of Elijah to call the people to repentance before the clay of Jehovah.

II. New Testament.

Matt. 24 up to verse 44 is the judgment of the Jews; from verse 45 of the same chapter to verse 30 of chapter 25 it is the judgment of those to whom the Lord Jesus has confided His service during His absence; and from verse 30 to the end of chapter 25 it is the judgment of the nations, not of the dead but of the quick.

2 Thess. 2 shows the mystery or secret of lawlessness, even in apostolic days already at work, ending, when the restraining power is gone, in the display of the lawless one in the power of Satan. It is the same personage called in the epistles of John the Antichrist, who is predicted in Dan. 11:36 as the king who “shall do according to his will;” that is, his character not moral but political in his relations with the land and people of the Jews.

After that which concerns the seven churches, the Revelation presents the government that the Lord Jesus exercises in the midst of the throne on the earth before His manifestation here below. The general history of this government terminates at the end of chapter 11.

Chapter 12 shows the opposition of Satan to the glory of Christ; chapter 13 lets us see the instruments of that opposition, as chapter 14 the ways of God after He begins to act towards the remnant on the earth until He judges finally the body of the apostasy. These three chapters contribute to give us one vision.

Chapters 15, 16 are another vision showing us the last judgment of God (not of the Lamb) on the earth. The saints were already before God.

Chapters 17, 18 describe the guilt and judgment of the great harlot, Babylon, the features of her character, and her relations with the beast or Roman empire.

Chapter 19 reveals the marriage of the Lamb, and the judgment of the beast and the false prophet, who is identical with the second beast of chapter 13. Chapter 20 gives us the binding of Satan in the opening verses; then front verse 4 the reign of the glorified saints over the earth for a thousand years; next the loosing of Satan for the last insurrection of the wicked then alive and their destruction; and then the final eternal judgment of the dead, or all the wicked since the world began, followed by the new heavens and earth when God is all in all, the mediatorial office of Christ being closed, and all evil in the lake of fire. From chapter 21: 9 to chapter 22: 6 is a vision of the state of things in the millennium; from verse 7 final exhortations.

Chapter 137

The Prospect

Beloved, let us sit down, and consider how long it will be before we shall see His face! His face, His own, even His, who is the chiefest amongst ten thousand, the altogether lovely-Jesus, our Lord. Some of us are but young, others are hoar-headed. Even should He not come in our lifetime, it cannot belong, a very few more years at the very longest, and we shall see Jesus.

It will do you good, beloved, to sit still in your chambers, and to meditate upon the greeting, the meeting, so close at hand. Perhaps it shall be that, lying upon your bed, the flesh failing, the body perishing, your last hour shall come, the last moments of which shall be the soul's straining to catch a sight of Him. Then He shall smile upon you, and your friends shall see His beauty beaming upon your dying countenance, and shall watch your responding smiles of greeting, as your spirit hastes away to be “forever with the Lord.”

What is this life? A vapor that appeareth for a short time, and then vanisheth away. Yes; but it is our time for learning the Lord, and longing to see Him. Come back, brethren, to the love of Jesus. True, of many of us our spring-time is past-true, the early sweetness of our affectionate devotedness to Him is gone by. What have we penned—Is it true? Is it so that we love Him not as once we did? Is the measure, as well as the manner, less? He knows all things, let Him answer; we will be silent. But the early freshness has gone, like the bloom of childhood from our cheeks; we are getting into years, and the years, each one of them, declare to us, “Nearer home, nearer to the Lord Jesus.” Those who have lived to middle age have lived long enough to have their hearts broken. This, it would seem, is one great object for which we are allowed to live a handful of years in life's school. We have seen our parents die, we have seen our children's spirits wing their way home; and we have seen and felt His presence by the dying couches of the aged and the young. Yet we have lived long enough to have our hearts bound up by His hand, beloved, as we are broken by the sorrows of life. And each succeeding year heaven becomes not only nearer, but dearer to our hearts; more treasures are stored there yearly, as the years roll by, and each period of time teaches us what we could never have conceived of Jesus, had it not been for sorrow.

He is so real, as a person who is the beloved of our hearts; so near as a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother. Hence, we say again, let us sit down, and count up the longest time that it possibly can be before we shall see His face. We know the shortest time it may, be-” a moment, the twinkling of an eye;” yes, we may be winging our way home before the next tick of the clock, for come He will, and will not tarry. But the longest, how long shall it be? Sit down in your solitude, alone with the Lord, and consider His greeting, and your meeting of His eye.

What is life? It is the privileged moment for glorifying the Lord on earth. Here we are set to walk as He walked-to shine as lights in the world for Him-to be His epistle, known and read of all men. And as we think of seeing Him, we can but think of pleasing Him. Is it too much to say that many of the Lord's people have a tissue between their affections and the Lord's heart? A something exists. They are not bright. Peace, this through His blood, they have, but His peace does not fill their hearts. It is of no use disguising—the truth-many of God's people are not at this hour in personal

intercourse with Christ. The spiritual countenance lacks expression. The features of Christianity are there, but the spiritual eye lacks luster; Jesus is not close to the soul, Christ is not dwelling in the heart by faith.

This is not heaven upon earth, nor is it longing after Himself. Spiritual intelligence is not spiritual affection, and without its love the lamp is dim. And with such thoughts, again, we say, Come, sit in your chamber alone; meditate upon the hour beyond this life and this world, when we shall behold His face. What a remedy this is for present spiritual ailments! Some have one nostrum for the soul's state, then another, but all fail, save “Jesus only.” We thank God for the doctrines, and thank Him more that each doctrine is a door opening into the presence of the Lord. Are we outside these doors? Many are! They know well what they are like. There is that of shittim wood, and that of silver and that of gold; there is knowledge of His spotless humanity, of His redeeming blood, of His God and Father's glory through Him. But open the door of His humanity, and behold Himself, beloved. Before you is the perfect Man; open the silver door of redemption, and behold His once streaming wounds; open the golden door, and see Him where He is in the glory on high. It is Jesus only with these hearts of ours; let us seek more of His blest company. His presence will shed its holy glow over our very selves. It is but a little while, and we shall walk with Him in white; and now, in this day of Christian talk, our words shall speak the one language of heaven, if only we are in His presence.

Ah! fellow-Christians, our souls sigh out, “What a change there would be in us if Christ formed our hearts.” The strife of tongues would cease, pride would vanish, sin would be confessed, and men would take knowledge of us that we had been with Jesus.

H. F. W.

Chapter 138

Psalm 1-41: 1-15

The five Books of Psalms are divided thus:-First, from 1 to 41 inclusive;

Second, from 42 to 72;

Third, from 73 to 89;

Fourth, from 90 to 106; and

Fifth, from 107 to the end.

The subjects of each are different, and may be thus briefly distinguished.

In the first book the Jews are not driven out, but go up to the temple, and mix with those in the land. The name of Jehovah regularly occurs; he is in recognized relationship with them.

In the second book they are driven out, and only a small seed left. The Gentiles combine with the nations against the godly, who flee to the mountains. It is Judah driven out. “God” is characteristically used here, not Jehovah, except when hope is expressed.

In the third book it is not Jews in Jerusalem, or driven out, but all Israel are taken up. The ways of God with the people and the nations, as such, are found here.

The fourth book begins another range of subjects. While they own Jehovah the dwelling-place, the bringing of Christ into the world again is celebrated; the progress of His presence in glory; His sitting between the cherubim; and the nations coming to worship.

Then the concluding or fifth book is a review of all, winding up with a chorus, which consists of thanksgivings for the blessings brought in, of which Israel is the earthly center around and under the Messiah.

Book 1. (Psa. 1-41.)

Psa. 1-16

There are two great subjects laid hold of from one end of scripture to the other, founded on the relationships conferred: the government of God; and the church of God. When I speak of the church of God, I speak of His grace, that which stands only in grace; and when Christ reigns, the church reigns with Him, the weakest and feeblest saint is taken up, and put in the same place with Christ. Grace is conferred on those who least deserve it. There is also the government of the Father for those in the church, but this is quite different from the government of God in a general sense. It is true that gracious principles come in there; but the church is the body of Christ, members of His body, by the Spirit. To be His brethren is another relationship. God's government of this world is quite a different thing from that. It is interesting for us, because we have a personal association with the Lord Jesus in His humiliation and His glory, and there is nothing connected with Christ but should interest us.

The immediate government of God is brought out in connection with Israel, and the book of Psalms has a peculiar character in relation to this. The Psalms express the feelings and thoughts of those who find themselves in the circumstances that give rise to them. When under government, the power of evil must be set aside, in order for those who are separate from it to get free of their sufferings. With us it is quite different. We leave the evil, and rise into the glory. There is also the difference of reigning and being reigned over. The government of God for earth is entirely connected with Israel-our home is elsewhere. They are on earth, and government is connected with earth.

In Israel God gives certain laws. Now grace reigns through righteousness which another has accomplished. There will be righteousness on earth when He comes again. Now it is exactly the contrast. Righteousness is only in connection with heaven now. Christ is exalted in heaven, but rejected on earth. The principle on which all God's dealings with the Jews go is government, although you find mercy put first.

Two things are connected with them in Psa. 1; 2: God's law written on their hearts (Psa. 1); and their Messiah coming to them, God's king set up on God's throne. (Psa. 2) These are two fundamental principles connected with God's people on the earth.

In Psa. 1 we have the effect of godliness, present blessing; and in Psa. 2 the place Christ has as King.

In the first is the application of God's government on the earth, on the godly and the ungodly ones. There will be the cutting off of the ungodly ones like chaff, and those who remain are the godly. There is a godly remnant in the midst of the ungodly, and the ungodly are to be cut off. That is the basis of all we have in the Book of Psalms.

The first characteristic of the godly ones is in contrast with the ungodly. They delight in the law of Jehovah. They have tasted the sweetness of the principles in God's word, and know a Christ, not in heaven, but come down. The law characterizes all the moral condition of the godly man. (Psa. 119) The remnant in the latter day are associated in character and circumstances with the remnant who believed and followed Christ at His first coming.

The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, which is spoken of as a present thing. The godly are set in the midst of the ungodly in the presence of judgment, which brings in the day of the Lord.

Psa. 2 is the time when the judgment is ending, and government is made good by the power of the Son exercising His wrath. “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings,” for if the Son's wrath be kindled, all will be over with you. This has nothing to do with the gospel of God's grace. The kings of the earth are not in rebellion against the Father and the Son, but in rebellion against Jehovah and His Christ. It is a direct question of judgment-the closing scene-distinctly brought to the last day, the day of Jehovah. He is setting up the King of Israel, never mind what the kings of the earth do. God's King shall laugh at them. When Christ was born into this world, God had this purpose in view, and when the King is brought in, the eye will be turned to Him who was before born into the world. He is to be set up King in Zion, and He is to have the heathen for His possession. But what does He do? He breaks their bands in sunder. I can understand this if it is government, but not if it is gospel. Matt. 10 shows the gathering out of a remnant, and passing over this time to the end, when the Son of man will be there. All connected with the gospel is left out, and the kingdom is the

subject-those worthy, not sinners. It is the witness of the kingdom that is carried on to the time when He comes.

In John 17 Christ says, “I pray not for the world;” I ask not for the heathen now, “but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world.” He is gathering these now, but He will have the heathen. He is asking for those who are to be with Him, the results of redemption-work; nothing about the world, not even breaking nations to pieces. Again, in John 20, He says to Mary Magdalene, “Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended,” &c. The time was not come for Him to be King, but He would make His brethren know the relationship into which He brought them. He was not coming to take the kingdom yet, but He would give them the same place that He had.

Rev. 2:26, 27 alludes to this psalm 51. Under the government of God there is law for rule. (Psa. 1) Psa. 2 declares that, in spite of all the world, He will bring His Son in again, and set Him King. In the one psalm we get the principles of His government, and in the other His counsels. The godly ones are exercised amongst these ungodly ones who are in power.

Then remark that Psa. 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 express the exercises of the godly. In these psalms we find the righteous remnant in the presence of the judgment, looking for the Lord's coming to sustain their faith, and make good His word; but they go through all sorts of trial:-Christ not yet reigning, evil not yet judged, yet the trials and exercises of the godly remnant before God's judgment on the ungodly helps their faith. God is standing back, as it were.

Psa. 8 is of another character. Jehovah is to be glorified in this. earth, and His glory above the heavens. He has never been so yet. The Father's name is glorified in the hearts of His children, but Jehovah is not glorified universally. 1 Cor. 15 shows Christ as the Head of the new creation: government in the kingdom is to come in, and, as in Col. 1, it is to be as Head of the church He will take the kingdom as Son of man. The psalm presents Him thus coming, and is not yet fulfilled. “We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus,” &c. He is now gathering the church, who, when He comes, come with Him. The only thing in which I can separate myself from Christ is, where He became sin. Looking at His glory is looking at our own.

Psa. 9 looks at the wicked as not yet put out. The time is not come for righteousness to be made good. Divine righteousness is accomplished through His death, but government in righteousness is not yet established. Psa. 2 is not fulfilled, only the opposition of the kings, &c., as fully shown by Jew and Gentile in the cross of Christ.

In Psa. 10 there is distress for the remnant until the interposition of God comes. It is the inner enemy.

Psa. 11 to xv. disclose the feelings of the remnant; but there is confidence in God in time of trial. Christ puts into their hearts just what they want in the circumstances. Psa. 12 is the extremity of their distress—a godly man scarcely to be found. Psa. 13 is deeper distress of soul because of a sense of its being from God. The faith of God's people cannot go on forever; they cry, “How long?” “Art thou treating us as if given up? If it goes on thus, I shall faint under it!” Psa. 14 is the character of the wicked to be cut off. Psa. 15 is the character of the remnant who stand. The practically godly remnant will have the blessing when Christ comes.

Thus in Psa. 9; 10 is the history of the tribulation-the fact of judgment; and then, in Psa. 11; 12; 13 their condition, thoughts, and feelings; and in xv. the character of those on the holy hill contrasted with the wicked set forth in Psa. 14

In Luke 9:21, 22, being morally rejected as the Christ, He therefore would not set Himself up as the King. Then He takes another name-" Son of man," and as such He must suffer. He drops for the time the title of Christ, and Psa. 2, which sets Him forth as the anointed King, and takes the title of Psa. 8" Son of man." But He must suffer. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die," &c. As the Christ they may say nothing about Him then. As Son of man He is to have all under Him, not only is He to be King in Zion. This will be accomplished too; but, according to Isa. 49:6, He is to have the Gentiles also. He is to be over everything; and as a man He is to take all things. He will gather together in one all things in Christ, we being in the heavenly part, and Satan under our feet. In the Psalms we get the Christ we are associated with, but not our association with Him. The scheme of the government of God has never yet begun. It has not yet been the new covenant, but the old. Christ is to be King, and this is prophetically, not historically, given in Psa. 2; He is also Son of man in Psa. 8, which is prophetic.

"In thee do I put my trust." This is quoted in Heb. 2 to prove Christ's humanity. There are two things make perfection in a man-dependence and obedience. They were in Christ, the contrast of what was in Adam when he sinned. His heart could be moved with compassion, and not only could He show His power to work miracles, but He would take this place of the dependent and obedient One, where the heart gets food.

God has His food in the offering, but there was the meat-offering, and part of the peace-offering, which the priests ate. He says, "therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." Then we feed. The Father has given us the very object He delights in for the object of our affection.

In Psalm 16 then He first definitely takes His place with the excellent of the earth. He is thus the comfort of His people in sorrow; and when we have peace, He is the food of our souls-the heart has the perfect good to feed on. He is the object before the soul; He is properly the food of our souls, not in glory, but in humiliation, as here. "I am the true bread that came down from heaven." It does not say, the bread that went up to heaven. Then His flesh is needed for life: we must know Him as dead. We cannot feed on Him as the living and glorified Christ, but as the dead Christ. What draws out our affections to Christ is what He was down here, going through all the difficulties, making His passage through everything about which He has to intercede for us now.

In Psa. 16 Christ, before taking His place on high, has experimentally "the tongue of the learned." "Thou hast said to Jehovah, Thou art my master." Now I take the place of a servant; I am my Master's-I am taking the place of dependence, leaning on Thee, looking to Thee. Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament, not excluding the Father and the Spirit. (John 12; Isa. 6) "My goodness extendeth not to thee;" I am not taking a divine place now. That is, "To the saints, and the excellent, in them is all my delight." If His soul disclaimed the one, He had joy in the other. He became a babe-was growing in wisdom and favor-anointed to service-has the tongue of the learned; then comes fellowship with the excellent-He takes His place as identifying Himself with them. (Phil. 2)

The saints cannot have a sorrow, or a difficulty, that is not Mine. See Prov. 8: “My delights were with the sons of men.” In the first movement of spiritual life in them, however poor and feeble they are, He goes with them; they are the excellent: it is not what they had, but what they were. During His life He was going with them-at the cross He went for them, they could not go there. If they begin to live for Him, He lives with them; not one difficulty on the road, but Christ has gone before in it; and as to sin, that He has borne. “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them.” He met the lion on the way, and destroyed him that had the power of death. Every step that the Spirit of God in a man treads through this world, Christ has gone. I cannot get into a trouble that Christ has not been in before.

“Thou maintainest my lot.” This is just what the poor saints will want in the future day. Could the Man of sorrows say that? “Thou maintainest my lot; the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places.” Yes, He knew who had given Him all. “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup.” Jehovah was His portion, and always He could say it. This truth of Christ's entering into all our sorrow, when the Spirit of God works, He going into it, and as to our sins, helping against them, is immense comfort. I get all the sympathies of Christ in this way.

In Psa. 16 Christ is the link between Jehovah and the remnant. He is passing through this world so as to be able to speak a word in season to the remnant in the last day. He could not go and associate Himself with them in that way without the atonement being made. We have the figure in Aaron going into the holy place on the day of atonement. We are associated with Him within. In Isa. 53 “We hid as it were our faces from him” is the expression of the Jews in the latter day, linking themselves with those who rejected Christ when He was here the first time.

In this first book of the Psalms the godly remnant are not driven out of Jerusalem. It applies to Christ personally. He was on this side Jordan, with the poor of the flock, He was walking with them-His path in life. There is more personal association of Christ with the remnant in the latter day. There is more appeal to Jehovah in this book than to God, which characterizes the second book. Jehovah is the title God has especially connected with the people of Israel, the seed of Abraham; and their relationship with Him in the land is thus acknowledged. It is better to read Jehovah instead of Lord, which we have very vague and undefined in our minds generally, though it is a most blessed title.

There is not a step of the path of life that Christ has not trod, Jehovah showing Him the path of life up to blessing. “Thou wilt show me the path of life.” There was enough in Christ, and He did draw out the affections of the Father as a Man down here (of course as the Eternal Son also) in this path of life. How dependent for everything! He does not say, “I will rise up,” but “Thou wilt show me.” He passes through death in dependence on His Father: there was the blessed perfectness of a Man with God; and at the close of His career, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came from God and went to God, &c. He could go back unsullied to the throne of God, and take man back with Him into the glory out of which He came: there is manhood now in the presence of God.

Matt. 3 gives John's baptism. They came to Him confessing their sins-” fruits meet for repentance.” The beginning of all excellence is to confess we have none; “fruit” was confessing they brought forth none. The instant the Spirit of God is working, Jesus goes to be baptized with them (not having any sin to confess, of course, but) doing His Father's will. He takes His place with them. He

had come for that, and the consequence is that after death and resurrection He takes His place to praise in the midst of the congregation.

“Thou wilt show me the path of life.” It is most blessed to hear Christ saying this. It is the path of holy death in verse 10: how did he find that of life? Adam found the path of death in his folly and his self-will, but back from it never! The tree of life was never to be touched in the garden of Eden; he had taken the other path. These two trees set forth that which men are always puzzling themselves about-responsibility, and the gift of God which is life. All that man does ends in death, but it is too late to warn of this now, for he is “dead in trespasses and sins.” But Christ came, bringing life into a world that drove Him away, where Satan, the prince of it, reigned, and everything was bearing the stamp of his guilty dominion. In this place of death Christ makes out a path for us. He is shown by His Father “the path of life.” He was “the Life;” but then the path of life had to be tracked through the place of death, where no one thing testifies of God-one wide waste, where there is no way. Christ has gone there before us Himself. It is for the Christian I am speaking now; the gospel shows He gives it to those who believe. He had to make out the path of life, through a world of sin and wretchedness, in obedience, up to God. It must be through death, if for us, because we are sinners. Now He says, “If any man serve me, let him follow me.” We must take up the cross. The cross to Him was atonement; this was the path. As He came for us, it must be by the cross. He has gone through it perfectly and absolutely.

What is the consequence? The blessed end is, “in thy presence is fullness of joy.” He would rather die than disobey. Notice, death is gone to us, the end is gained: we have to tread this very same path that He trod, up to God's presence, where there is “fullness of joy.” Why all this? It was for His Father's glory, doubtless, but it was for these “excellent of the earth.” His identifying Himself with them involved this. Jehovah was His portion, but His delight was in them.

Psa. 17 next shows the results of-His thus taking His place with them. It brings out the controversy with man in the path; “Let my sentence come forth from thy presence;” and the end is, “I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.”

Psalms 16, 17 give us two great principles of divine life-trust and righteousness, or integrity; and we find them running all through the Psalms, and any godly person's life, as well as that of the Jew: but this does not give the foundation fully on which we stand according to the New Testament. You do not find in Psa. 17 the foundation of God's righteousness at this time. Souls in the condition of having divine life, but not knowing their standing in divine righteousness, find the suitability of the Psalms to express their experience. It applies to Christ, but not exclusively like Psa. 16.

Chapter 139

Psalm 1-41: 16-22

In Psa. 16 it is divine life in dependence, obedience, and communion. The first characteristic of divine life is trust-Christ putting His trust in Jehovah. As a man He does it. We see Him praying, the true expression of dependence; and in Luke's Gospel this is especially brought out. Then another principle of divine life is the consciousness of integrity, there may be both these-trust in God and consciousness of integrity, without peace with God. Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;” and he pleaded his own righteousness against God. “Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.” He had the consciousness of sin and the sense of righteousness, integrity in himself, at the same time. The soul cannot be at peace in this state. Job was wrong in making a righteousness of his integrity.

This second principle of divine life we have in Psa. 17 It is the kind of righteousness the Jews will have in the latter day-the same which they had of old. God stays up the souls that trust in Him until they see Christ. Having a promise, they trust, but cannot say, “I have the righteousness of God.” Christ having taken up their condition, and borne it, they have the consciousness of integrity through Him; and it is the stay of their souls, but not peace. They will find such utterances as this, “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee,” suit their own experience; they will be comforted by finding the word of God giving expression to their thoughts and feelings; it will be a prop and stay to them in the midst of their exercises, but they will not get peace in it. This Psa. 17 applies to the remnant surrounded by their enemies-ours are spiritual enemies. Here is the reality of enemies pressing round Christ. The remnant will find every imperfectly formed feeling of their hearts has been perfectly gone through and expressed by Him, He having put Himself in their place. In trusting, and in the consciousness of integrity, He has been before them.

In the Psalm mercy for man goes before righteous. ness, and they never meet till Christ appears at the end to the remnant. It cannot be said, “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other” until the perfectness of redemption is known. I may get. hope, but I cannot get peace until I get righteousness. It maybe said, “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other” for the Jew. When Christ comes again, a Jew under law would put righteousness before mercy-that is the law—and Israel stood on that ground. They had made the golden calf before the law was given to them; then God retires into His own sovereignty, and, to spare any, mercy comes in. It was the resource of God when wickedness came in. They have been going about to establish their own righteousness, they would not have Christ who is the end of the law for righteousness, &c., and when they come back, it will be on the ground of mercy and hope.

We, on our proper ground, are not like those who refine to believe until they see Him; we have the end of our faith now, even the salvation of our souls. We know that righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Christ has gone into the holy place, as the Holy Ghost has come out to us, the proof of it, and we are certain Christ is received within, the full accomplishment of divine righteousness. Rom. 3:20: “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh,” &c. But it is said, “In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” It is not “shall” to us, but “being

(that is, having been) justified by faith," Sec. God had been forbearing in mercy with the Old Testament saints, because He knew what He was going to bring in. Now it is declared. It was not declared then.

"Not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things," &c. "To declare at this time his righteousness." They could, say, "being fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform." I do not simply believe that He is able, but that He has raised up His Son from the dead. I may trust He will help, but not be conscious of being helped yet; that was the patriarchs' portion. Yet I do not expect Him to do it, but know that He has done it; it is the ministration of righteousness. I have the knowledge of accomplished righteousness; righteousness is declared to faith. I am not merely hoping for mercy, trusting, and having consciousness of integrity. They could not judge sin in the same way when they had not righteousness as a settled question, which it now is forever for those who believe. The Spirit of God now demonstrates righteousness to the world by setting Christ at God's right hand. Christ said, "I have glorified thee on the earth," &c.; God says to Him, "Sit thou at my right hand until I make," &c.

As regards the believer now, righteousness is on the right hand of God for him. The affections ought to be more lively now that there is the certainty of accomplished righteousness.

There is another thing connected with righteousness here; righteousness is appealed to on the ground of promises, as well as that mercy goes before it. In their state there must be alternation of feeling, in the sense of hope in His mercy-trusting in God; in the consciousness of sin-down in the depths. Yet they will find One has gone down into the depths for them. The Spirit of God in Christ going through all these things shows that not one place, from the dust of death to the highest place in glory, but He has been in-sins and all having been gone under.

The weakest saint now knows more than the apostles could when Christ was on earth. They trembled and fled at the cross. We feed on that which frightened them—a dead Christ. When once founded on righteousness, our position is so different. It is sad to see a saint crouching down on the other side of divine righteousness, instead of having on the "helmet of salvation," having communion with Him in the efficacy of His death.

There is another thing to mark in these Psalms-the character of hope running all through them. Christ looked onward to being in the presence of God, where is fullness of joy; this was the reward He looked for as the end of trusting in God's love. (Psa. 16)

The reward of righteousness-glory: "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Christ looked to return into the same glory He had left for the path of humiliation down here; the reward for it would be glory as a crown. The reward of walking with God in communion is joy in His presence (end of Psa. 16); the reward of faithful walk, the place in glory (end of Psa. 17), It is the same difference for us. Paul looked for the crown of righteousness, but his highest hope was to win Christ.

Christ will come to set everything to rights in power; judgment will return to righteousness, and all the meek of the earth shall see. This has never been known yet. When Christ comes in power, judgment and righteousness will go together. Power will be given to the Judge, who will act in righteousness. The great hindrance to our understanding the Old Testament scriptures is our putting ourselves into them. God's faithfulness, of course, is always true; but when the Spirit of

prophecy speaks of the people, and state of the people (e.g., God biding His face from them), we know it does not apply to us literally. He cannot hide His face from us. His face is shining on us in Christ. Does He hide His face from Christ?

Psa. 18 Here are Christ's sufferings even unto death. The death of Christ is the ground of all Christ's dealing with the people from Egypt to glory.

Psa. 19 is the witness of creation and witness of the law (7). Whatever man touches he defiles; but the heavens maintain the glory of God-they are what man cannot reach. Law is broken. Man cannot change it, but he has broken it.

The Psalms that follow, namely, Psa. 20; 21; 22, are all connected, and show the result of the position Christ takes in Psa. 16, where He stands in the place of caring for “the excellent of the earth,” &c.; as though saying, The old world, the people in the flesh, I have done with, and now all My delight is with the excellent. These are they who have received Him. The connection of that, as we have seen, is that He must go through death. He must be the resurrection Man. There must be atonement. Peter was reproved for desiring this to be avoided. Flesh cannot go there; Christ must go there. “Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now.” The moment He has to do with us, it must be Hades or death. He cannot bless man with union with Himself in the flesh. In the millennium He will; and we are blest now, but it is all in virtue of this-He has died and risen; therefore we are told to reckon ourselves dead. The life has come into the world that had power to go through death; the life has gone through death, and risen out of it.

Psa. 20 The remnant sympathize; and, looking on Him in His trouble, pray for Him.

In Psa. 21 the excellent of the earth come to this terrible conclusion-that they must give their Messiah up as to the flesh. They never could understand how it was to be. In the history we know the result of this when He was on earth; they all forsook Him, and fled. Then, mark, we have the character of His sufferings brought out-sufferings from man. They hated Him. “Their soul abhorred me,” as Zechariah says. The history of the Gospels is that they would not have Him. They sent a message after Him, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” All this was from the hand and heart of man. One betrayed Him, another denied Him in the hour of trial, even of His disciples. Then look at the priests: what heartless indifference and unrighteousness in Pilate, who was afraid of the Jews, and washed his hands to be clean of His death! Christ looks round for companions, but finds none, for righteousness, none! for sympathy, none for intercession, none Mary at Bethany was a single exception; a gleam of light was there in the midst of the darkness. She, spending her heart on Him, was an appropriate witness to the Son of man-the Son of God All except that was darkness. The more perfect His feelings, the more He suffered. It was a deep mire in which He was standing. He had to prove the wickedness of the human heart, that it is open and complete enmity to what is good.

Such is flesh. Christ experienced what it is on His own person. The result of all that suffering from the hand of man is judgment on man. (See Psa. 21) “Thou hast given him what he asked of thee.” (See Heb. 5 also: “Heard for his piety.") “Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies.”

There are two very distinct characters in Christ's sufferings. There was His suffering in the world, and especially in connection with Israel; and there was this other-He came to give His life a ransom. “This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for many:” that is outside all dispensation.

“We are by nature children of wrath;” ALL are one as to that condition. There was a ministration “of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises,” &c., and the Gentiles, the objects of mercy; but through Christ's coming into the world there was the end of promise. There are blessed promises made good to us as Christians, and God will fulfill all He has said for earth, but this will be in the world to come. Christ came as the vessel of promise. He came into the world, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Then there was a third party; “As many as received him,” &c. The world knew Him not; His own received Him not. But some did receive Him; these were born of God. It was a new thing, not from the first Adam. Every Christian knows we are born anew. It is no modification of the first Adam, but a new life. “The Life was manifested, and we have seen it,” &c.; and in chapter 2 of that epistle it is said, “which thing is true in him, and in you.” In chapter 1 of the Gospel He had said, “the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” John the Baptist drew attention to the “Light;” the Light comes into the world, and the world knows Him not. Then, again, He comes among the Jews with everything to attract; but they saw nothing in Him to desire Him. This gives a double character to Christ's coming into the world. He was connected with all who came of Adam, being born into the world. He was the Life and the Light of men. He did not receive life-He was it. He was the Life from heaven. God has given to us life, and that life is in His Son; not life in ourselves. This divine person comes into the world, “God manifest in the flesh.” This is the first thing-He tries human nature, that is, the world and the Jews. He was a minister of the circumcision, bound to come because of the promises.

Christ's coming as God manifested in the flesh tests man. Then, secondly, He became the Second Adam (I am not now speaking of Him as Head of His body, the church, but as risen man), the Head of everything, the First-born from the dead. In the Second Adam-Christ-we have the Man of God's counsels; as Zechariah has it, “the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.” This is a different thing from His merely testing the old thing, which even in Him, ends in death. True, He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Even then He could speak of resurrection, and in that resurrection He becomes the Head of a new thing, and He will be this forever. This new position He never took on the earth. It was in resurrection. We could not have had it with Him without death-” Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone,” &c. Such is the essence and center of all our relationships with God. If man could have had connection with God in the flesh, on this side death, it would prove flesh good for something. It is the best thing it could be if it could delight in God; but all testimony shows us this is impossible.

Christ was here in perfect graciousness, speaking as never man spake, bringing out all His resources to meet the need of men; but the result of all this is entire and utter rejection. The history gives us Him presenting divine grace and graciousness, but His rejection in consequence. Not only has man broken God's law-that he had done already, made a calf, &c.-but now the question was raised between the display of God's heart and man's heart. He says, For my love I have hatred” they hated me without a cause.” That is the whole history of the flesh-God was reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. It is this gives the true character to the world now. Christ has been here, and has been rejected. The people were prepared by prophecy, promise, &c. Messiah came in by the door, was feeding the hungry with bread, doing all things well, as some were constrained to acknowledge; but they would not have Him.

John begins with His rejection; there is no genealogy given by him. The other Gospels give us the history of His rejection, but in these three verses of John 1 we have the results of what is told in the rest. The Jews are treated as a reprobate people; Christ is taken up as the rejected One. This is the starting-point with John, but grace is brought out. The result of man's treatment of Christ will result in judgment on man.

The result of His atoning work is exactly the opposite. Why did He suffer from man? It was for righteousness. When He suffers from God, is it for righteousness? Just the opposite. He suffers for sin under the wrath of God. He was made sin! Aye, and He suffers for sin. The moment He was made sin, He had to do with God about it. He was absolutely alone in this; there were none to look on, man could not contemplate. We have not such an expression as that we have in Psa. 20, “Jehovah hear thee,” in this Psa. 22. The disciples were even as the world-they could not go there. The ark must stand in the midst of Jordan until the people are over. There was Satan's power, God's wages against sin. When He appeals to God for deliverance, He is not heard (on the cross). He tasted death for every man. He must drink the cup of wrath-it is between God and Himself. If He had had the least comfort from God, He would not have drunk the cup. Man had nothing to do with it. If man had been there, it would have been damnation; He must be alone when suffering from God. In the thought of this suffering from sin He prayed against it. Could He say of that, “My meat is to do the will"? &c. No! not on the cross. This was the power of death, and in prospect of it, in the garden of Gethsemane, He said to His disciples,” Tarry ye here and watch;” and to God, “If it be possible, let this cup pass,” &c. Then He takes the cup from His Father's bands. When on the cross He cries, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He is forsaken of God. His soul drinks the cup of wrath due to Him when He is made sin. We have His thoughts and feelings expressed where the facts are going on. In the Psalms we have the privilege thus of knowing how He felt when under them-Psa. 22 gives “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” His feelings-the fact was atonement.

All that was closed in the death of Christ, and now it is another and a new thing. He comes out free, discharged, clear of all He bore on the cross, and is the resurrection Chief, the heavenly Man according to the counsels of God. It is into union with Him we are brought by faith: a place of unmingled and perfect grace is the result. Verse 19 shows what was the peculiar character of Christ's sufferings through the place He took in this world, and then the place before God which results in this full blessing to us.

“Save me from the lion's mouth for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.” He was transfixed, not saved from it, so as not to be on it; when on the horns of the unicorns (a figure expressing the awful suffering of that moment), He was heard. “Thou hast heard me from the horns,” &c. “He hath appeared once in the end of the age to put away sin,” &c. All is judged, and this new resurrection Man is now in the presence of God, instead of the sinful man cast out of the presence of God; the risen Man heard from such a death.

Then He is seen coming to give testimony of the place into which we are brought as delivered. Angels had never seen such a thing as this! God has now a new character as Savior-the Savior-God. Christ had thus manifestly revealed it. It is not now responsible man; which has been gone through and settled in the death of Christ. Man would not have Him: then there must be judgment on enemies (not only wicked people); this is the result. Now God says, “I am going to do

something in the Second Adam." "What is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead," &c. "And you who were dead in trespasses and sins" hath he quickened, &c. "Not of works," &c. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." There is the responsibility of Christians.

This new name of Savior God, so often mentioned in Timothy, is made known by that Man who is set at His right hand by divine power, giving new life. God came down in the person of Christ, who went into death and rose again. He is the Savior. What is the first thing He does after His resurrection? He comes and tells His brethren of the full deliverance He has wrought. He comes to tell them, You are saved-you are brought before God-by virtue of this that I have done. Then He says to Mary Magdalene, Touch me not; I am not here among you as a King, but "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father." He puts them into the same relationship as Himself. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." When He has told them of the blessedness of being saved, the full joy of the deliverance, He is not going to let them praise alone. The first thing is to reveal the new relationship, and then to praise in the midst of them. What is the character of His praise? Can a single note jar in His praise? If He praises, it must be in the power of a full redemption, a finished complete deliverance; and everything not founded on this does not answer to His note of praise.

Speaking of our answering to God on the ground of this redemption, what position are we to take? We can take none but what He has taken. He comes and declares His name to His brethren, and He leads the praise Himself, so that we must in worship acknowledge the full blessing into which He has brought us. We have to follow Him in His praise in this new relationship, not in flesh but in risen life. People say, But I must be humble! Nothing is so humble as following Christ, and He has left sin behind-death behind; and, blessed be God for it, there is no other position for us, "Ye that fear Jehovah, praise him." This goes on to the end of verse 24.

But we come in verse 25 and the following verses to millennial time-" in the great congregation," when all Israel shall be satisfied. Not only they are meek, but they praise Him. They shall praise the Lord that seek him." People now are often sorrowful and, unhappy in seeking, but not then.

Verse 27. All Israel is not enough, but "all the ends of the world shall remember, and turn to the Lord."

Verse 31. "They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness, &c., that he hath done this" (borne their sins).

All this latter part (vers. 25-31) as we have seen refers to millennial blessing on earth; but we know our position is spoken of as "sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." He has suffered from God, and there is not a word of judgment afterward; He has suffered for sin, and exhausted it. He is the exalted Man, and as such He will execute judgment as the result of His being rejected of man. As to the saints" the excellent"-His connection with them is the key to all the blessing for us. Two things are connected with this: first, unbounded grace; and, secondly, the place we are practically set in-a new footing. We have new life from God, we are not of the world, and should be nothing in the spirit of grace, because not of the world.

Psalm 1-41: 23-41

Psa. 23 Jehovah is the Shepherd, going before the sheep in the path. We cannot say Christ was a sheep; He is Jehovah; but He emptied Himself-went before them-passed through every difficulty and trial, yet more than the sheep.

Psa. 24 The consequence is that He is found to be the very Jehovah; the One who in humiliation was trusting is received on high.

Psa. 25 Here another point comes in. Up to this there is no mention of sin; they are a tried remnant, but there are no sins confessed till now. This is what makes the great difference for any soul. They are sinners, is a farther part of the history. But atonement and grace come out in Psa. 22. The remnant, before they trust in Christ, cry to Jehovah There is not integrity lost, but sins are confessed Christ has combined the expression of confession and trust together. They can look for mercy, expect mercy, and confess their sins. They will be trusting, and yet not knowing how they can trust. The soul is brought into the thorough and deep consciousness of what God is-despairing and hoping (we are the same when under law) alternately. The state of the Jews will be this-not having the application in the conscience of what the cross reaches. All needed is brought out in the cross; but what the cross has done in bringing out to light righteousness and love is not seen all at once. With us it is often by little and little that the blessed picture seen in Christ makes its way into the soul. Then it is all light; but darkness may come in afterward. At first there is only reckoning on the blessedness of Christ. When that reaches the conscience, it brings bitterness: what at first attracted the heart did not reach the elements of good and evil. When it reaches these, it does not minister peace, because the man has not learned the thing to which it applies in his own soul. It is a wonderful thing to see Christ coming, and saying, “My sins.” Christ identified Himself with me, taking all my debts upon Him—my Surety! He has gone down into the depths. “My iniquities;” any one of the remnant might say that. There is the remnant's voice in it, but there is Christ's first. He has taken them. They suffer from them, never for them-it would be eternal condemnation if they did. “He was wounded for our transgressions,” &c.”

In this psalm there is confession of sin, and sense of integrity. (Ver. 5.) “On thee do I wait all the day,” &c. Integrity, coming back with the consciousness of sins, but confidence of pardon: “Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.” God brings in the question of living righteousness, and therefore gives the consciousness of sins: “For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.” This is strange reasoning, according to man's thought: men say it is a little sin, but when taught of God we see how great it is.

Another thing is, truth is in the man, because he feels the sin great; he has given up any thought of justifying himself, “My iniquity is great.” If God does not forgive me for His own glory's sake, He cannot do it at all; and not one spot of sin will He leave for the comfort of my own heart, or the glory of His name. So we see for Israel by-and-by in Isa. 44:22, &c. They are made to rest in absolute mercy, in sovereign grace. Grace is perfect in getting rid of the sins.

The psalms following Psa. 25 give details of these experiences, as they are going through this time of trial. Psa. 26 gives the other side of the repentant soul, not confidence, in grace, but integrity. In Psa. 27 Jehovah is the desire and refuge, as He had bid them seek. In Psa. 28 evil is felt, judgment looked for, and in separation of heart to the Lord. In Psa. 29 the mighty are reminded of the Mightiest. In Psa. 30 trust in prosperity is contrasted with Jehovah, who is above the power of death. From Psa. 31 Christ could quote the words of departing confidence in His Father (not Jehovah only), though it be about the godly and redeemed remnant. Psa. 32 is the answer to Psa. 25: “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” “Covered” is an allusion to the mercy-seat covering. Sins are put away, no more to be remembered. This is held out before them as hope. They will have the consciousness of forgiveness when they see Him. “In whose spirit there is no guile;” in known forgiveness the guile is all gone.

Psa. 33 follows this up with the joy of full deliverance by Jehovah's intervention, and Psa. 34 shows the soul praising at all times because of the unchanging God who governs all. Psa. 35 appeals to His judgment against cruel crafty persecutors, as Psa. 36 sees good and evil in His light, followed up by Psa. 37, which exhorts the godly to wait on Jehovah in meekness, undisturbed by the passing prosperity of the wicked. Psa. 38; 39 own Jehovah's chastening because of their sins; but they are open before Himself and silent with man, but cry for His help-the latter going farther, and more deeply than the former, the vanity of man being realized rather than the personal feelings.

Then we have the introduction of One who changes all in Psa. 40 “I waited patiently,” &c. Here is the reason why the remnant should trust Jehovah. He has been delivered from the horrible pit and the miry clay (showing resurrection).

There are some special psalms connected with Christ round which others seem clustered; this is one of them. Here is Christ's actual connection with the people on earth, not only in their sorrows, but bearing their sins, so that all who looked to Him might be blessed with Him. “I, poor and needy, the Lord thinketh upon me.” “Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee.” Christ did not take one step to save Himself. He might have had twelve legions of angels, but He was waiting upon God.

He appeals to God as Jehovah, not Father, because that relationship had not been brought out as now it is. The Jew did not know the Father as He is now revealed, end Christ was taking the place of a godly Jew among them; therefore He takes up the relationship known to them. One or two verses often bring out the subject of the psalm, and the rest are the development of that. What He did in the position He was in is the great point here-what He went through-what He felt. The grand principle is that He waited on Jehovah. He is undertaking the cause of the poor remnant, goes through all their sorrows, and bears their sin. In the last it is for them, not with them; and He gives them the comfort of being taken up to the same position of praising with Himself. “Many shalt see it, and fear, and shall trust in Jehovah.”

Then there is the great central truth: “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire:” “Mine ears hast thou digged!” “He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.” Christ came to do God's will. Everything centers in Christ. All blessing is connected with relationship to Christ, whether outcast reprobates (Gentiles), or God's people who had broken the covenant. All is set aside; and

Christ, who says, “Lo, I come to do thy will,” becomes everything.

“Mine ears hast thou digged” is not the same thing as is spoken of in Isa. 50, “He wakeneth mine ear.” It has a peculiar character. He is offering Himself before He came. In Phil. 2 we read, He becomes a man, taking the form of a servant, having ears, doing nothing but what He was told, listening to every word that came out of God's month. “By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live.” He had ears to receive it. Christ had no desire to do anything different from God's will. God's will was His motive. Never to stir but as another will guide you in perfectness as a man. Christ waited for the expression of His Father's will before doing anything. Christ on earth was in the form of a servant. How did He get there? By putting off all the glory of having a will-offering Himself before He came. It was His will to come: His love brought Him. “Lo, I come to do thy will.” That was will, but it was the Father's will. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. He told His disciples, in going forth, to say, “Peace; and if the Son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall turn to you again.” So it was with Him. He was obedient, because He offered Himself to obey. There was nothing but obedience (power, of course, in Him); He is in the place of perfect obedience. The first word is not from God, “Do you go,” but from Christ, “Lo, I come.” In the counsels of God it was written in the book. This gives us a knowledge of Christ, His intercourse with God before He came. Here is Christ, the divine person, the source of all the blessing, taking the place of obedience. He is the Servant now! What is He doing for us? Bringing out God to us, to our eye; yea, He has brought God right down to our heart.

“I have preached righteousness in the great congregation.” He made perfectly good God's character in the world, and that cost Him His life. He went out to all the people—declared God's faithfulness—was not hindered—did not hide, got into “miry clay” in consequence, under all that could press a man down. Christ has not failed to bring all that God is to us. How we want it in a world that has got away as far as it can from God, with its artifices, &c., like Cain! Others talked about the thing, but Christ was the thing. In every word and act they might have seen the Father, if they had had eyes to see. Christ can say, I know the world, what it is! I have gone through it all, like Noah's dove, and never found an echo: now you come to me! I will give you rest. There is never any rest for a human soul but in Him. One then learns of Him in the meekness and submission of His soul.

Psa. 41 closes the book with the blessedness of him who considers the poor not the proud, but poor of the flock as having God's mind. This Christ fully understood, and, as He was it perfectly, availed Himself of a sentence in it about one who was as far from this mind as could be. But as the wicked do not triumph in the end, so Jehovah favors, even upon the earth, the despised for whom plots are laid, upholds them in integrity, and sets them before his face forever.

Chapter 141

Thoughts on Psalm 16

As Psa. 15 gives the character of those who will have their portion with Christ in His kingdom, when God sets Him as King in Zion, so in Psa. 16 Christ Himself seems to say, I have come down from that place God Himself had assigned me, and taken my place in the pathway of faith—the very same that you are in—the place of rejection, of sorrow, of suffering, the place that the godly remnant find themselves in. Therefore is His cry to God. He used not His own divine power to escape any suffering; and, remember, it was not suffering for sin, not chastening, but the path of faith—as He says, “Thou wilt show me the path of life.” Therefore had He His ear opened morning by morning. He fully entered into the sorrows of the wilderness. There is not a sorrow comes upon a saint, not a trial of faith in which we can find ourselves, but Christ can fully sympathize with us in it. If we only set our foot in the narrow way (it is with the new nature He sympathizes), then we find this blessed One has been before us. It is astonishing how much we are sustained by circumstances, how we lean upon the circumstances that the Lord had never in His path. Much of our joy is derived from a thousand things that Christ never had joy in, that never gave Him a moment's sustainment. We may find ourselves losing, or in danger of losing, some of these things by faithfulness. What then! We shall only be brought nearer to the Lord Himself. If the path becomes rougher than it ever was before, surely we shall find only the more of the sympathy of Him who has trodden it in all its roughness. Therefore can He be called “the Author and Finisher of faith,” because He has run the whole course of faith. He has suffered every kind of suffering and trial that besets the path. We may each one of us have this or that peculiar trial or sorrow. Ours is but a taste of that which He drank to the dregs—like a shade of that which in its real depth of grief He knew. The contradiction of sinners beset Him on every side.

We may know somewhat of it in any little measure of faithfulness we show. We may be called to give up father and mother, or, as the Lord says, “hate father and mother,” &c. But what had He to comfort Him from any such sources? Everything like a prop here was gone, yet could He say in the face of all that, “The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage. Thou wilt show me the path of life.”

Suppose death comes, Jesus could say, “My flesh also shall rest in hope.” Hezekiah knew and said in his trial, By all these things men live, and in all these things is the life of the Spirit.

There is chastening, and the like, needed by us; but Christ never sought to do anything but to please God. His sufferings therefore proceeded only from His walking in the path of life. All that could try faith came upon Him, while He was without anything that we have so fully that could sustain nature. Still, we find Him in death trusting in God. “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither,” &c. The path of life was perfectly opened out to us in Christ. There is a deep joy in entering in spirit into Christ's paths. The remnant enter into it in Psa. 20. The thorough realizing of what Christ was as a man down here. There is nothing lays hold on the heart, nothing feeds it, like that. Every sorrow that the heart of any can go through, as walking in the path of righteousness, Jesus knew in His path. This renders His sympathy so peculiarly sweet. Any exaggeration would

be dangerous on this subject, thus taking away our portion. It is true fellowship with Christ's sufferings that gives the energy of hope.

That is drawn out by the glory being unfolded to us by His sufferings. I am more and more struck, in reading the Psalms thus, as connected with the Jews.

When I look at the church, I can only say it is nothing but sovereign grace that picks up wretched sinners, and links them with Jesus, giving them the same place, the same portion, “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” I can only gaze with wonder, and adore. It was the counsel of God from everlasting—His sovereign grace! I cannot then talk of God's government, or His dealings with us, since no principles of government could make us members of Christ's body, &c. It was all sovereign grace! The church is the fullness, the body, of Christ. Once lay hold of that, and what is the consequence? It draws out wonder, admiration, worship! But that is not all; there is another thing.

What mercy to know that my salvation is secure! But now as set free from anxiety about myself I am to be occupied with Him by whom all this wondrous work was wrought. I find there is not a sorrow or difficulty in the pathway of life which He is not interested in. This is other knowledge than the knowledge of salvation. It draws out trust, and confidence, and love, as Job says, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” We find Christ Himself going through it all—not suffering for sin indeed, but for righteousness. Only on the cross did He know what it was to suffer for sin—our sins. There indeed He knew the forsaking of God. If I suffer as a saint, I find the full sympathy of Jesus. If for sin, the Lord has no sympathy with sin, though He Himself needed to suffer for us, and thus to become known to us as the Bread that came down from heaven, and giving His flesh for the life of the world. (John 6) Do you thus feed upon Him? Do you know Him as thus made the food for your souls, that which turns into the substance of life? Then feed on Him. This is what the knowledge of Him leads to. It is another ling from the energy of hope. The effect of being occupied with the glory, where Christ now is, is to enable us to overcome the difficulties that obstruct our way, to reach forward; as occupation with His walk as a man shows us the path of godliness. We tee Him taking it in His baptism. When those whose eyes were opened to see the principles of the kingdom (conscious that they were bearing anything but the good fruit) took the place of confession, Jesus was there. The One who had so fully taken the place as man as to say to God, “Thou art my Lord,” says also of the saints, “In them is all my delight.” We find this in Heb. 2— “He is not ashamed to call them brethren, for both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one.”

“Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself,” &c. His state was not having a will to do something or other that must be stopped; no, He could say, “Lo, I come to do thy will.” Such is Christian obedience, and true liberty, not to require checking in our wills, but to have the same kind of obedience as Christ's. He stands alone in His sufferings in our stead. Nothing equals the glory that He will have as the Savior of sinners. Other glory we share with Him, but in that He is alone. In His walk He set us an example. In His trust in God, &c., He never takes a single step to get the reward of obedience, but asks of His Father, as in John 17, “Father, glorify thou me,” &c.; and here, in the simplest confidence, “Thou wilt not leave my soul,” &c. Patience with Him had its perfect work. He never stirs even when they told Him, “He whom thou lovest is sick.” He waited patiently till the right time; and now His desire for His people is that they might have His joy fulfilled

in themselves—that joy which He knew when He said, “My meat is to do the will,” &c. He trod the path of sorrow and rejection here, but He had joy in that very path, as He says, “The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places.”

In Psa. 22 we get the cry of the Lord at the cross. No suffering for sin till then, but the great principle of the communion of Christ with the sorrows of the new nature in the saints was true before them.

In the measure in which we enter into the path, we get communion with Christ. The affections of Christ more known to us, we become better acquainted, as it were, with the heart of Christ. This is not a question of safety, but of growing up unto Him.

The heavens were opened over Him when He took the place publicly of identifying Himself with those who were in reality the godly.

When we get into that place, the Spirit of God can lead us into the understanding of these things—taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us. But if we say, I am not there, cannot we delight in tracing Christ in it? Even if we are not walking in the place as we should be, it is most blessed to trace His walk in it. It is our privilege to walk in it, our highest privilege here; and so only shall we be fully able to enjoy our proper portion, Christ, as led and taught of the Spirit.

Psalm 22:17

That there are difficulties of interpretation or readings in Hebrew, no one doubts. Christianity is in no way concerned in this phrase. It is not quoted in the New Testament. The reason for reading it as it is in the English translation is, that the ancient Jews insist it is so in the old Hebrew. It is no question of rationalism. The most high-church orthodox writers take it as meaning “a lion.” The form is peculiar. There is the same in Isaiah, where it is translated, “as a lion;” but the ancient Jewish writers insist that it is not to be read so here. The LXX (a century and a half, say, before our Lord) translates it, “they pierced my hands and my feet; so the Vulgate; so the Syriac in Walton; Montanus, De Wette, Hengstenberg, and many, “as a lion.” Of the ancients, the Chaldee Targum only has, “as a lion;” and, according to De Rossi-the best authority is of small authority, and founded on bad manuscripts. He insists on the manuscripts of the very learned critic of the Jews, Ben Chaiim, and the Masora, that “they pierced” is right; Rosenmuller prefers, “they bound.” It is a question of reading. Cahari is, “as a lion;” most probably, though not certainly, caharu is, “they pierced;” and the difference in Hebrew is very slight: éøàë, åøàë, Caharu is, “they bound.” Now, as all the ancient translations give, “they pierced,” the Masora confirms, and one of the most critical Jewish doctors approves, pleading his own good Jewish manuscripts. The use of the text by the fathers may have induced the Jews to tamper with the text by a change hardly perceptible; and as the pointing is uncertain, there is nothing so sure in the matter. I avow that I am disposed to think “pierced” is right.

What is the meaning of “the assembly of the wicked surrounded me, as a lion my hands and my feet"? I do not see much sense in it. What is most against “pierced,” though it proves nothing, is, that it is never referred to in the New Testament, whereas other parts of the Psalms are. However, my own conviction is that “they pierced” is right. The difficulties and labor of those who take “as a lion” as the true reading, to make any sense of it, show that it is no natural reading. Its place in the psalm makes it inappropriate. It is not “the strength of bulls and lions” that is here spoken of—that is an earlier stage of the speaker's sorrow—but the “shamelessness of dogs.” It is an interpretation of what is ascribed to the dogs. They “compass” him—so the wicked: then to jump to a lion, who does not compass people at all, is out of place. Next, how “compass his hands and feet?” What does that mean? We have had the lion, but then it was only “gaping with the mouth,” and in place; here he is going on with personal details. All tends, I think, to show the ancient interpreters were right, had they cahari for caharee, or caharu. Venema reads “as a lion,” but connects “my hands and my feet” with, “I can count” —an additional proof of the difficulties of those who reject the ancient versions. That it is the most ancient Hebrew reading is anything but proved; that it is the common modern one is true. The versions have so far more authority in the Old Testament, that no Hebrew manuscript is so old by many centuries as the oldest of the New. In any case, though the apostles have quoted the psalm as a prophecy of Christ, the rationalist is sure they are wrong. “The staring monsters are intended by whom Israel is surrounded and torn.”

Only read the psalm through— “the declaring God's name to his brethren,” and “in the midst of the church will I praise thee;” compare this with John 20, and you will see how impossible it is to apply

it to Israel. But the greatness of the scope of divine thought, the moment Christ and redemption are the center, these men seem incapable of. I will give you a little sketch of the Psalms preceding chapter 22, which will lead us to see how specially it applies to Messiah. That the whole book of Psalms is in methodical order I cannot doubt, though we cannot enter on it now. Psa. 1 gives the righteous Jew, the remnant, contrasted with the wicked; Psa. 2, Christ as King in Zion, according to the decree of God, and owned Son; the nations and rulers raging against Him, but warned; then, Christ being rejected of men, the righteous are in trial, instead of the government of God securing their present blessing, as in Psa. 1. But in Psa. 8 Christ has a wider character than in Psa. 2 He is Son of man, not Son of David, and all things are put under Him, and Jehovah's name is excellent in all the earth. Thus the ways of God with earth are shown. Psa. 9; 10 enter into the details of Israel's condition in the land in the last days, and their deliverance. Psa. 11-15 go through this, and the feelings it produces, in various ways; hence they become a comfort in any trial. In Psa. 16 Christ first takes, in the most exquisite and deeply instructive way, His place among the excellent of the earth; shows the path of life through death; and as His trust was in Jehovah, Jehovah's presence was His joy as man. Psa. 17 treats the subject not of confidence, but of righteousness; and here we get glory, and what I may call reward, more than joy.

Psa. 18, I have no doubt, looks at the suffering of Christ as the center of all God's ways, from Egypt to Messiah's kingdom. I now come to the psalms I had immediately in mind. In Psa. 19 we have two testimonies of God—the creation (the heavens) and the law. In Psa. 20 the true and faithful Witness is prophetically viewed as rejected by men, and in sorrows. In Psa. 21, which directly answers to it, having cried for life, He is exalted as man to everlasting glory, and His hand finds out His enemies. This was outward government and dealing. He had suffered from man imagining devices against Him; and when they took the character of enemies, they were judged. But (Psa. 22) Christ did not suffer from man only—bulls did close Him in; heartless, shameless, dogs then surrounded Him, and He looked, not only to man to have compassion on Him, and there was none, not one that could watch one hour; He looked to God, and was forsaken there. But suffering from God was avenging, not to be avenged; hence, when this is passed, all is grace, widening out in blessing. He declares His name to His brethren, as He did in John 20, there first distinctly calling them brethren, and leads the praises of the church He has gathered; He then brings in Israel; then all the ends of the world remember themselves, and turn to Jehovah; and then the seed born in this time of blessing learn the great truth, to chant it with others, that He hath done this.

It is evident to me there is progress in the bulls and the dogs: the first refers to mere violence, leading Him to the cross; the other, to men's conduct when He was there. But the witness of creation, law, and Messiah, rejected of men, and He glorified and judging; and then His being forsaken of God—the result of which was not judgment (for it was bearing it), but grace, unmingled grace—makes the true import of the psalm most clear. Could we dwell upon it, and study the grace of Christ in it, the place He gives us in it—what the declaring the Father's name was (see John 20), and the full import of this consequent on redemption, and the place He then takes in our midst, when redemption is accomplished, to lead our praises as being in, and having placed us in, the same perfect joy—it would show the extraordinary beauty of this psalm as applied to Christ. We may take the words of His lips upon the cross to show us He was not a stranger to it. Now, I can only use the series as marking the place Christ has in it, when God, after all, did not despise

nor abhor the affliction of the afflicted, and when atonement was made for sin.

Psalm 25

There is something to touch in seeing a soul open out to God without yet enjoying deliverance. It knows well that he who waits on God shall not be confounded; but peace is not there though seen from afar. We must remark the manner in which God receives this opening of heart. He takes cognizance of all that passes in the soul: fear, hope, sins, deliverance. God would have us understand that He occupies Himself with it all.

The Psalms, because of their prophetic character, are the expression of the Holy Spirit's operation in the soul before it finds peace. They do not give the definitive answer of the love of God. There is in our hearts a depth of hardness, of insensibility, of levity such that it is needful God should take; sins with them to fix them and bring them down to the feeling of their incapacity. God fixes the soul by the sense of its wants. We are so miserable that the only means of giving us the ides of God's love is by fixing the heart through its wants on the contemplation of what God is; so that where the sense of want fails the love of God is totally unknown, as if it did not exist.

In verses 7-11 there is a deep principle. It is only when we are thoroughly convinced that our iniquity is “great” that we feel the need we have of God and of His pardon. One might think of a little iniquity, that one had just to remedy oneself, or that God might pass it over. The heart of man upsets everything. He puts the uprightness of Jehovah before His grace, His truth before His mercy, and thinks that, if a man walk as he ought, God will be good toward him. That is just the contrary of what is said here. “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord. Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.” (Vers. 7-11.) Jehovah who is “upright” loves uprightness; but before all He would have the wretched sinner know Him as “good.” The ill-enlightened soul that knows its faults up to a certain point desires to arrive at enjoying the goodness of God by its own uprightness. It is the proof of a state of heart which knows not God and which hardens itself against all the history He has given of man's heart, as well as of Himself, in the word. Hardness of boast rises against the grace of God, and nothing more hinders grace from acting than the thought that, if one is Upright, God will be good; and this, because the heart is neither lowly nor softened, and pride is not, yet destroyed therein.

Man wishes that one should not speak to him of his sins. The action of the Holy Spirit on the contrary makes one own and confess sin in detail. We can speak of sin in general, or yet more of the sins of which we are not guilty, but otherwise a man does not speak of his own sins. Did not Peter say to the Jews, “Ye denied the Holy One and the Just,” although he had done so himself in a manner still more shameful? Why did he speak of that sin without blushing? The Holy Spirit alone could give him to do so through Him who came by water and blood. Paul when converted and in peace speaks freely to the Lord Jesus of the sins he had done against His name and saints.

An unconverted man can speak of evil or of other sins than his own, having no confidence in God's grace for eternal life or remission. A thief may blame a drunkard; but no one naturally speaks of his Own sins, because the conscience avoids being upright before God. Men would hide their sins and show their good qualities; they would pass as honest good sort of people, and get rid of God. In that case one has no need of the goodness of God. People will try to meet the goodness of God by a certain uprightness; but there is no true confidence in God, and every hope of rendering worship to God in this state of things is a fraud. God begins with what we are; He takes us such as we are; and man will not have it so.

God presents to us in the Bible the most extraordinary things. He lays out all His counsels and all His resources on the evil state in which man is found. We see then all the efforts and the pains God has taken to put Himself in relation with the heart of Matt. It is the greatest hardness of heart to see, without being thereby touched, all that which God has done, and the action of His Spirit in those who are saved. One sees hearts with God's goodness out before them, yet abiding far from Him, such as they are. The hard heart sees all that and goes its own way. The heart that is thus has not yet received the least seed of life.

But one may also be convinced of sin and seek to recover before God the place one has lost. This soul believes that there is some means other than pure pardon. It has not yet true relations with God. It cannot any longer seek the world; it observes the Lord's day; attends meetings, and rests on the like. But then the soul is not convinced that God is love, any more than it is in the presence of God with a true knowledge of itself. Not being humbled, it chooses itself a way to arrive at God, and cannot say, “I wait on thee,” as in verses 5, 21. It is when we are convinced that it is no question of getting to God, but that we are in His presence and lost, that we can say, “For thy name's sake, O Jehovah, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.” There is no more thought of bettering the conduct in order to get to God; there is no more a way to pave. We no longer desire then to avoid God, but we see ourselves before Him such as we are. If God is revealed, we have to understand that which He is Himself, and then comes the knowledge of His grace. It is a question of knowing what God is in respect to the sinner who is always in His presence. God is always” good,” and He will not sanction the wickedness of man in leaving him quiet though hardened. Instead of reproaching with the sin, God brings to the conviction of sin in making felt that He has seen the sin, that He has thought of it, and that He has found a means of pardoning and of teaching sinners the way they should follow.

“For thy goodness' sake,” “for thy name's sake:” there is ground on which the soul founds its confidence. Impossible that God should fail His own name. (John 17:6.) He is “good and upright.” What does the goodness of God to a trembling and miserable sinner? It does not cast up to him his misery, but takes cognizance of it to inspire him with full confidence and give him courage. God would deny Himself if He failed in His goodness in this case. God cannot do otherwise; He sees to His own name, His glory, His truth, His grace, in a word to all that He is, as we see in the father of the prodigal son. (Luke 15:20-25.)

Psalm 25

God makes us understand that He occupies Himself with our sins long before we ourselves were occupied with them. If the goodness of God is occupied with them, it must be that He is so to get rid of them altogether, and He has given Jesus for this purpose. To blot out our sins

completely—there is what God's goodness would and must do. But if one would arrive at pardon by progress in holiness, it is to choose the road for oneself. God puts the sinner at his case in His presence by showing him his sins on the head of Jesus. His glory would not be complete if the believer were not justified. It is a salvation accomplished forever that God presents to us, and the soul is in peace. All this is for His name's sake.

If the soul is assured of the goodness of God, would it love to keep some sins? No; the conscience set free from the thick layer of old sins becomes more delicate. If we are truly quickened, what we find in ourselves after our conversion is much more painful to us than the sins were before conversion. But Jesus is dead, knowing what we were and because of what we are. Such as I am, God loves me; His name is here in question, and His name in goodness. God has condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3.), in that Christ, having become man, was made sin for us. (2 Cor. 5:19-21.) He has been sacrificed for us. (Heb. 9) The name of God who is love is thus revealed by everything that God has done for us in Jesus.

God is upright also, and He teaches the sinner and leads him. This comes after pardon. The first is He is good; then comes truth, though man's heart thinks the inverse. if we are in relation with a God of goodness, how will that appear? Up to what point should He be manifested to us? Up to showing to the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:7.) God has before Him the most wretched of sinners (take the robber on the cross); and what will He do to display to the angels, &c., in heaven the riches of His goodness; He will take us, once wretched, and set us in the same glory as Christ Himself.

It is in us God shows what He is. You, who say you are most feeble and miserable, it is you God would choose, if he would show the immense riches of His grace. He cannot stop in this goodness; and it is not humility to put limits to His goodness by saying we are too little and unworthy. He forgives for the sake of His own name. (1 John 2:12.) He restores and leads for His own name's sake. He begins, continues, and finishes up to heaven itself and always for the sake of His name. (Phil. 1) There is the only thing which makes the soul upright, sincere, and open before God, because there remains no subject of fear with regard to sin, and there is never uprightness in the heart till our consciences have seen and felt what we are before God as sinners pardoned. The moment that the soul says, “For thy name's sake, O Jehovah, pardon mine in iniquity; for it is great,” it cannot but be that God manifests Himself. One then makes progress in Him, and one finds the sweet assurance that God is ever good and upright for the sinner.

Psalm 4

David, the instrument that God employed to give us the Psalms, as also the other Psalmists, passed through the circumstances of which they speak. Hence there are found in them more experiences than prophecies. They are all prophetic no doubt, but at the same time they characteristically give us experiences. It is the Spirit of Christ which by means of the prophet thinks and speaks of these experiences. The prophet meets with like circumstances, and the Holy Spirit gives him to express his feelings. One knows the circumstances which occasioned several of the psalms; but the Spirit of God as an object to which the circumstances correspond. The first verses of the psalm contain ordinarily the summary.

David, seeing his glory defamed, figures the Messiah here. The circumstances are like those of Jesus before Herod. David is in a strait. The proofs of the power of God with respect to Israel fail him; he was also according to man in despair. All the authorities were against him. He had lost all with those who followed him. The Amalekites had swept everything away. David had nothing left but the Eternal. The soul and the church find themselves in like circumstances.

The latter half of verse 6 is the answer to the demand, “Who will show us any good? Jehovah, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” When the soul rests entirely on the Eternal and has nothing but God, it enters into peace and joy. It is easy to bless God when the circumstances are as we wish. But if God leaves us there, He leaves us far from Him, preoccupied with the things that perish. Eden is now impossible. If man is content with what he finds here below, he is content with death, with that which passes away. The soul is ever pushed to the point of saying, “Who will show us any good?” There is nothing that abides the stay of the soul. One finds oneself outside Eden; God seems not for us; Satan is against us. One must be driven there to understand that all around is far from God, without seeing any good in self or any resource outside it.

If God reveals Himself to the soul, it feels its condition, and that instead of escaping from God, it must find Him. Outside Him is no rest. It is then the soul can say, “Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” If the soul withdraws from God, it occupies itself with things here below as its object. God exercises discipline to recall from such a state. Faith finds in Him the same answer. When the soul gets back to God, it has no more other resources or other desires. It says, LORD, lift thou up, &c. It is entirely satisfied with being in the light of God's countenance. When in the midst of hankerings and difficult circumstances the soul turns to God, a great work is already done in the heart. Sin is come into the world, and there is nothing that is not infected with it. God can find nothing in the world to enrich us with, nothing that does not fill the hand of death which seizes all. He gives and makes known Christ, and thus sets apart the godly for Himself with the confidence that He hears us. (Ver. 8.) Thus by Him we learn the truth as to all.

The moment Christ is thus recognized by virtue of the Holy Spirit, the heart attaches itself to Him, and finds its treasure in Him, seeing that there is nothing good, in itself. The more one sees in man the ignorance of spiritual things, the more also one feels the necessity of knowing what we are. This discovery of the state of our souls makes us understand that all is vanity by the revelation of

that which fixes and attaches us to God in His unchanging goodness. For as Christ has been judged for all that was evil and vain in us, so God discovers to us all that He is in our favor. We have always the assurance founded on Christ that God will lift on us the light of His countenance. There is in Him no variableness nor shadow of turning; and we know that He has before Him the Beloved and chosen us in Him, and cannot seek peace in vanity.

After creating all God rested from His work; but sin has spoiled it all and turned it into vanity, so that God cannot any longer rest there. There is one only man, Jesus, in whom He finds His good pleasure. He does not change the world, but chooses the Beloved before His face. There is the rock of our assurance—Christ and His work on our behalf. Faith finds its rest and peace in God, whatever be the difficulties. To enjoy the favor of God and the light of His countenance is our sole good. This goes deep into the heart—whether we are content with all if God lifts upon us the light of His face. There is what gives uprightness.

If I look to the countenance of God, the opinions of men do not shake me. If we think there is any good thing in us, we are still in rebellion against God. The world is content to receive good things from God, but the moment they cease, the heart's rebellion and ingratitude are manifest. It is in Christ alone that God has all His complacency, because the world is all alienated from Him. He is also our Beloved, for He has reconciled us to God. The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me. The Beloved of God is my Beloved.

Am I content whatever the circumstances provided that God lifts upon me the light of His face? If we are not, there is still in us something which the Holy Spirit condemns. If the heart acts on the circumstances, happiness is lost when they change, and one cannot say, LORD, lift Thou upon me the light of Thy countenance. When the heart is attached to Christ, we find in Him all that can be conceived, yea, all that God can reveal of blessedness. A Christian ought not day by day to desire any other thing than Christ. Then we enjoy the light of God's countenance shining on us and reject all that is inconsistent with Him and His glory.

Chapter 145

Thoughts on Psalm 91 and 102

The thing we have to learn is Christ. We may learn a good deal in ourselves, but all that is for blessing will be in Christ. This is what the apostle means (Heb. 6:1) when he speaks of going on to perfection. It is vain to learn the first principles over and over again; if we have learned that, let us go on to learn Christ—learn Him in all His characters, or in all our exercises. To know Christ is to know Him in all His various characters. At one time we have to look on Him as Jehovah—at another, as a suffering Man.

Here comes a testimony concerning the Most High. We have in this verse 1 a general truth: the person that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Verse 2. The words of Jesus are brought out: I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him will I trust. The apostle, in Heb. 2:13, refers to this and other parts in the Psalm as the words of Christ. The apostle declares, I will put my trust in Him, as our Lord's expression whilst walking in the midst of trial on the earth. Then (vers. 3-13) we come to the testimony of the Spirit concerning Jesus. Verse 9. This was true in its perfectness only in Jesus; it is true in all its extent only in Him. In verse 14 we get the declaration of the Father, “because he hath set his love upon me.” This was true, and true only of Jesus. He was the only One who set His love on God. We love Him because He first loved us. In our Lord's sufferings we learn the principle and fullness of love.

“The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me, but that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.” He was showing this principle of love to the Father. There is deep blessing in seeing our Lord thus. “Wherefore God hath highly exalted him.” (Phil. 2:9.)

He knew His name. God's greatness is shown by despising nothing. His love is so great that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without His knowledge. Christ always trusted Him. (Psa. 20; 21) In the case of Jesus is the practical exhibition of this truth—He dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High; in us in measure, being one with Christ, we are able to appropriate this to ourselves. All His actings on earth came from the perfectness of communion with the Father. The promise was, He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I do always those things that please the Father, and abide in His love. (Ver. 2.) What He calls for is complete recognition of Himself, then come all the promises. The one thing we have to do is to own God in all His fullness. Imperfectly, but in principle, we dwell in the secret of the Most High. Why we are often in trial, &c., is because we are not dwelling in the secret of the Most High. Verse 4. “He shall cover thee with his feathers,” &c. As His power covers and shelters us, so His truth is our shield and buckler. God's truth always comes to us in Jesus. Just so far as we are in the secret of the Most High, we are under the shadow of the Almighty. If we are going our own way, we shall have chastening and trial, and in mercy too. What we have to seek is to make the Lord our habitation. He leadeth us forth in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

This psalm (102) is one of peculiar strength and blessedness to the believer, as it brings, in one point of view) the identity of Christ in spirit with His suffering people; and, on the other side, His identity with Jehovah, His being Jehovah the basis of all hopes that belong to the Jews, and to the saints consequently. Our Lord's sufferings become the earnest of glory to those that are His. The triumph of Christ comes to be the pledge of deliverance and blessing to them. This makes the testimony of His deliverance, when suffering for us, so blessed, because the earnest of ours. “In the day when I call, answer me speedily.” The craving of the godly soul in trouble is the Lord's hearing him; this is their anxiety, for otherwise there would be wrath in the case. Of this the resurrection of Jesus was the great witness.

In this psalm our Lord enters into every protracted suffering of His people. In all His sufferings, as a righteous man on earth, He could say, “I know that thou hearest me always.” I watch, &c.—the very opposite of ease. Verses 9, 10: I never find the deepest sorrow of our Lord spoken of exclusive of indignation. “Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.” The lifting up here spoken of was true of Jesus with the Jews. For what nation is so great? who hath God so nigh unto them? &c. Jesus is looked at as the Messiah, as coming in the flesh, most exalted, as Head of the people, yet had to be “cast down” for the indignation that was come upon this people. He never took the headship, but took the casting down. The spirit of Christ in us always takes portion with sorrow. “My days are like a shadow that declineth.” Then comes the assertion of strength, of all comfort, the perpetuity of Jehovah: “Thou, O Lord, shalt endure; thou shalt arise, and have mercy on Zion,” &c. Here is contrasted the way in which Messiah was cast down in the lowest degree of suffering, and, in the midst of it, the certainty of Jehovah's taking mercy on His people.

If you set up Zion, all the nations who disbelieved that it would be set up “shall fear thy name.” Then comes another positive declaration: He shall appear in His glory. How Jehovah is to appear brings out the identity of the suffering Messiah with Jehovah: The people which shall be created, &c.—they shall be new creatures then. Messiah's prayer (ver. 17) will be then regarded, and fully answered; it was not apparently regarded during His sufferings on earth. The great statements in this psalm are, Messiah cast down, but Jehovah faithful, and will build up Zion. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will look down from heaven on what takes place on earth. Then comes in the repetition of the sufferings of Messiah, then His glory, not merely taken in consequence of suffering, but in virtue of His glorious person. The secret of all our strength is this unfathomable mystery—Christ's being Jehovah, and His identity with the sufferings of His people. It is just the portion of the church to know the glory is His, that He is the Jehovah-God who founded heaven and earth, and to understand how He was on that earth cast down, was bruised, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and to rest in the happy consciousness of the perfect sympathy of Christ in all our trials, in all that in which wrath may appear to us. In all our sorrows and troubles we must find, whilst under them, wrath, although we know it is chastening in love; it produces in us, not merely the sorrow of the world, but sense of the displeasure of the Lord under them, and we shall be looking out for His hearing our cry, just as a child grieves to see the frown of a tender parent, because of his displeasure shown in it.

Thus should we, not only on account of the trouble it brings us into—then we are thinking of ourselves instead of God. The great comfort of the believer is, that the Lord Jesus having passed through all this trial, is itself a witness to us of the love of God in them; and thus we are more than conquerors, not in carelessness, knowing that nothing shall separate us from the love of God. We

may ourselves be the occasion of chastisement—then must there be humbling, but love in it surely. One learns in Christ, having gone through all, the faithfulness of God in all the exercises we may have to pass through. We (believers) must take everything as coming from God: otherwise we do not give sufficient value to our sufferings, but give value to ourselves in them. When wicked men cut our Lord down, He took it all as coming from God: “Thou hast cast me down,” &c. Faith always looks to the great source, and not to casual instruments.

Chapter 146

The Threshing-Floor of Ornan the Jebusite: Part 1

1 Chronicles 21

It is an affecting and solemn truth presented to us by scripture, to which we desire that our thoughts may ever be fully subject, that our God has, through our transgression, been separated from His due place, as over the work of His own hands; that this world which is all His handy-work has acknowledged another god and prince. (John 14:30; 1 Cor. 4:4.) Since the day when the Lord God walked with Adam in paradise, He has had no abiding place among us. He has visited the earth in divers manners, to bring mercies to His chosen in the midst of it; but when His errand of love has been finished, He has, as is said, “gone his way” again. (Gen. 18:33.) He would, it is true, have found a place among His chosen Israel, but He was, even by them, too speedily disowned, and His tarrying there proved to be but as that of a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night. (Jer. 14:8.) “The ox knoweth his owner,” said the God of Israel by His prophet, “and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” (Isa. 1:3.)

But the Lord's title to the earth, of course, stands unimpeachable; “the cattle on a thousand hills” are His, “the earth, and the fullness thereof;” and accordingly, in one way or another, He has been making continual claim to it in the face of the usurper, so as to express His purpose of finally taking it into full possession again. This indeed was so clearly intimated by the first promise, that the whole creation is represented as hoping and waiting for it. (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 8:19-21.) And so in the day of the kingdom of our God these hopes of the creation shall not be ashamed; for the “heavens shall then rejoice, and the earth be glad, the sea and the fullness thereof; the field shall then be joyful, and all that is therein: the floods, and the hills, and the trees of the wood shall rejoice before Jehovah.”

By tracing for a while the dealings of the Lord with this world of ours, we may discern the ways in which He has been pleased since the day when man sold himself and his inheritance into the hand of a strange lord thus to claim the earth as His. When the giants of old had finished the antediluvian apostasy, corrupting the earth and filling it with violence, doing with it as if it were their own, the Lord asserted His right by judging that generation as oppressors and wrong-doers. (Gen. 6:1-13.)

Then in the new world He witnessed His title to the earth by making man the tenant of it under Himself, delivering it into the hand of Noah, under express condition imposed according to His own good pleasure. (Gen. 9:1-7.) And again, when these children of men, doing the deeds of their fathers, affected independency of God, their rightful Lord, as they did in the matter of Babel, He again asserted His right in the way of judgment, scattering the confederates over the face of the earth. (Gen. 11:1-9.)

But the Lord, in His fruitful sovereign wisdom, had now another mode of continuing His claim to the earth. This scattering of the nations from Babel He so orders as to have respect to His setting up one of them as the future witness of His name and rights. (Deut. 32:8, 9.) And in the meantime He

separates the father of this nation to Himself (Gen. 12:1), making him also personally the witness of the same truth—that, let the people imagine what vain things they might, Jehovah, and He alone, was “possessor of heaven and earth.” (Gen. 14:18-22.)

Accordingly, then, when in due course of providence Abraham's nation was manifested, the Lord, who had chosen them to be His witnesses, puts them into possession of a portion of the earth, to hold it under Him, their Lord; thus showing that He who took what portion He pleased had title to the whole; as He says, “Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine.” (Ex. 19:5.) And Israel, thus established as God's people, should have continued in the midst of, but separated formally from, the nations, reflecting the light of God's glory as King of all the earth. But again and again they revolted, and rejected Jehovah-Christ from being king over them. The nation first (1 Sam. 8:7), then the house of David (Isa. 8:13; Jer. 21:12), give up their testimony to God; and at length the wicked husbandmen cast “the heir” himself out of the vineyard, and slew him. (Matt. 21:39.)

Abraham's seed thus refused to do the works of Abraham, and then Abraham's God abandoned their land, leaving the boar out of the wood to waste it, and the wild beast of the field to devour it. But the Lord has had pity for His holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, and has called forth another witness to the glory of it. By the voice of heralds He is publishing “Jesus and the resurrection,” opening the kingdom of heaven and the Father's house to all believers, and letting all men know that the kingdoms of the world are become His, and that all things are to be put under His feet again. (Heb. 2:8; Rev. 11:15.)

But how is the kingdom of the world to become the Lord's? And how is His presence to be preserved among us? We can prepare Him no habitation or dominion, for we have been found unable even to retain that which in His love He once committed to us. The Lord, then, must, and so He will, prepare Himself a place over and among the children of men, so as to secure His presence and authority (O blessed expectation!) from ever being clouded or denied again.

When the Lord took Israel of old, as we have seen, to be His peculiar people, of course He prepared Himself a place among them—the tabernacle first, and then the temple. The tabernacle was but a moveable pavilion; there Jehovah dwelt as between curtains, and walked as in a tent, refusing, with infinite grace, to enter into His rest while His Israel sojourned from one nation to another people. (2 Sam. 7:5-8.) But the temple was fixed; for when Israel was brought into the land of their covenant, and all their enemies had been reduced, then the Lord would enter into rest among them. In their affliction having been afflicted, He would now rejoice in their joy (Isa. 63:9); and He whom the heaven cannot contain seated Himself in the midst of His chosen nation.

But where was the honored spot? Who of us that clings with all desire (as, if we be saints, we at least should) to the hope of God's restored presence and kingdom in this world, that would not but know something of it? I speak not of what travelers have told us of it, but how the oracles of God mark it out. And from them we learn this simple story of it: that it had been the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite, and was the place where the angel of God stayed his destructive course through the city of Jerusalem, whither he had been summoned by the sin of the king and the people. It was this spot which became the place of the temple, and most fitly so, as we shall see, if we can a little more narrowly survey the ground as it is spread out before us by the Spirit of God in 1 Chron. 21.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 147

The Threshing-Floor of Ornan the Jebusite: Part 2

1 Chronicles 21

Verses 1-6. “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. And David said unto Joab and the elders of the people, Go number Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it. And Joab answered, The Lord make this people an hundred times so many more than they be; but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why, then, doth my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel? Nevertheless the king's hand prevailed against Joab. Wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. And Joab gave the sum of the number unto David; and all they of Israel were a thousand thousand, and an hundred thousand men that drew sword; and Judah was four hundred threescore, and ten thousand men that drew sword. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them, for the king's word was abominable to Joab.”

At the time when this scene opens, the sword of David and of Israel had been victorious over all their enemies. The Philistines had been subdued—Moab had brought gifts—garrisons were put in Damascus, and the Syrians, as also the Edomites, had become David's servants. With all promised blessings the house of God's servant had been blest, and naught of the goodness of which the Lord had spoken to him had failed. “The fame of David went out into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations.”

But Satan, we read, too soon serves himself of all this; and Israel proves again that man utterly without strength is unable even to hold a blessing. The gifts with which their gracious Lord had thus endowed Israel, and which had been ordained for their comfort and His praise, became, through the craft and subtlety of the devil, an occasion to them of self-congratulation and pride, as to Adam of old. (Gen. 3:1-8.) For David's heart in all this was moved by the old lie— “ye shall be as gods.” Anything for poor fallen man but the living God! “. Nay, but we will have a king to reign over us,” said Israel to Samuel of old, rejecting Jehovah-Christ, “that we also may be like all the nations.” (1 Sam. 8:19, 20.) But the Lord will not give His glory to another—none have ever forsaken Him, and prospered—as it is written, “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord.” (Isa. 31:1.) “The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose.” (Isa. 30:7.) David here, like Hezekiah afterward, in the pride of his heart, would exhibit his magnificence, and, like a child of this world, in the unbelief of self-confidence, would survey his resources.

The infatuation in which David was sunk is marked by the fact of Joab expostulating with him; for though a man of blood, and eminently one of the children of this world, as all his policy bespeaks him, yet wiser far in his generation, looking not to the ungodliness so much as to the impolicy of this purposed wickedness of the king, Joab at once discovers that which his master refuses to see.

The whole system of Israel, by this national transgression, was now defiled and tainted, and ripe for severity or judgment; this pride was the giving up of God, and God would have been dealing righteously had He at once laid Israel aside, as He did Adam, in such a case— “dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Verses 7-14. “And God was displeased with this thing; therefore be smote Israel. And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away, the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done foolishly. And the Lord spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, choose thee either three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee; or else three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence in the land, and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait; let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man. So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel, and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men.”

For nine long months the pride of the king's heart deceived him (2 Sam. 24:8); as, alas! lust had before dimmed his eye for the same time. He had too long walked in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes; but after his hardness and impenitency was but treasuring up unto himself wrath against the day of the righteous judgment of God, now about to be revealed. Sinners should be stopped in their course by the remembrance that God, though He suffers long, “hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.”

But David, as a child of God, might be tempted, overtaken in a fault, and thus brought to shame and grief, but could not be left impenitent. (Luke 22:8k.) And so Israel, as God's nation, could not be consumed, because God's gifts and calling are without repentance (Born. xi. 29), because His compassion towards them could not fail. (Lau]. iii. 22.) Their transgressions were to be visited with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes, but the divine loving-kindness was not to be utterly taken from David and his nation. (Psa. 89:33.) Correction is ever in covenant love. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth, and therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” (Amos 3:2.) To walk comfortably, and without interruption, as in an even path, we must walk watchfully as with the Lord. Had David walked still in his integrity, and humbly with his God, he would have been spared this discipline; but now “he must bear the rod.” And he is required to choose the rod; by this much grace might be exercised in his soul; he would by this be brought to consider well the fruit of his transgressions, and thus be more humbled and broken in spirit, and he would also have occasion to encourage himself afresh in the Lord who was slaying him, as we find he did.

But corrected he must be, and that too just in the place of his transgression; having boasted of his thousands, his thousands must be diminished. God would now number to the sword whom David had numbered to his pride. And so the day of the Lord is to be upon every one that is proud and lifted up. (Isa. 2:12.)

Verse 15. “And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it; and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld; and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.”

In this verse we have the threshing-floor of Ornan first brought within view, a mean spot in itself, but destined of the Lord to be the joy of the whole earth, the place of the glory, the rest of God and His Israel. It presents itself to us at once as the witness of that blessed precious truth, which is the sure ground of all our hopes, that with our God “mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” (James 2:13.) The whole system of Israel had, as we have observed, exposed itself to the severity or displacing judgment of the Lord; He might have broken it at once as a vessel wherein was no pleasure, He might have taken away His vineyard from His unthankful and wicked husbandmen; but “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” in the bosom of their God: He repents Him of the evil with which His people, “because of their transgressions and because of their iniquity, were now afflicted,” and He commands the destroying angel to stay his hand by this threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Here the same mercy displays itself as that which shone out on rained condemned Adam in the garden. He had there no plea to plead with the Lord, all that remained for him was to fly and be concealed, if that were possible; when in the bosom of the Lord mercy rises over judgment, and He decrees that “the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.” (Gen. 3:15.) Often do the scriptures, as here, present our covenant God and Father, opening, as it were, His own heart, and showing His thoughts to His people how kind they are; as He says within Himself concerning the husbandmen of His vineyard, “What shall I do? I will send my beloved Son.” (See also Jer. 3:19.) O that we may drink, at this fountain of Israel, the love of the Father—the spring-head of all the healing waters that visit us.

Verses 16,17. “And David lifted up his eyes, and sew the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces; and David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me and on my father's house, but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.”

David as yet was not given to read the secrets of his God and Savior; the grace that was rejoicing in the bosom of his covenant God over him was not as yet opened to him; all that he saw was the fearful agent of death and ruin hanging over his city and people. And oh how often an afflicted soul is thus reduced, how often does the eye fix itself on the cloud that darkens all around, without a single glimpse of the bright and peaceful heavens that lie beyond it, not knowing, or refusing to know,

“The clouds they so much dread,

Are big with mercy, and shall break

In blessings on their head.”

Verse 18. “Then the angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite.”

“If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9.) The relief for David in this dark hour is announced by the angel of destruction: the eater himself yields meat, the strong man sweetness. The law itself prophesied of Jesus, who was to displace it, as here the altar was to displace the angel who directed it.

An altar needs a priest, or an accepted worshipper; the Lord would not have directed the one, if He had not provided the other. “The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering.” (Gen. 4:4.) His person was first accepted, and then his sacrifice; and here the Lord's readiness to receive an offering at the hand of David was the pledge that David himself, through mercy rejoicing against judgment, had been received, and his iniquity put away. “If the Lord had been pleased to kill him, he would not have received a burnt-offering or a meat-offering at his hand.” (Judg. 13:23.)

Verses 19-26. “And David went up at the saying of Gad which he spake in the name of the Lord. And Oman turned back and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Oman was threshing wheat, and as David came to Oman, Oman looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing-floor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. Then David said to Oman, Grant me the place of this threshing-floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the Lord; thou shalt grant it me for the full price, that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Oman said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes. Lo, I give thee the oxen for burnt-offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat-offering—I give it all. And king David said to Oman, Nay, but I will verily buy it for the full price; for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt-offerings without cost. So David gave to Oman for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight: and David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and called upon the Lord; and be answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt-offerings.”

These verses present to us David's thankful believing acceptance of the mercy revealed to him. He received not the grace of God in vain. He at once went up at the saying of the prophet, while Oman and his sons hid themselves from the angel. Here we may observe, that while no flesh can stand naked, as in its own resources, before the Lord, yet that sinners may come fully up to His heavenly presence in the power of simply believing in His grace. Oman and David here illustrate this; Oman had not the grace of the Lord revealed to him, he knew nothing of the altar that was to be set up in his threshing-floor, and therefore as nakedly a creature in the sight of God-like Adam before in such a case—he hid himself. But David knew the remedy which mercy rejoicing against judgment had provided, and therefore he dares to stand, though shamed and humbled; without distraction he fulfills his appointed service, he purchases the threshing-floor, prepares the altar, offers his offering, and calls upon the Lord. The sword, still unsheathed, has no alarms for him now; believing, he is not ashamed or confounded; he stands to see God's salvation; his soul is brought simply to be a receiver of grace which God Himself brings nigh to him. Hence we see in all his action no disturbance or motion of the flesh, but all is the assurance and quietness of faith resting in the word of the Lord. And the Lord gives him his answer before he calls, and hears him while he is yet speaking. (Isa. 65:24.)

Verse 27. “And the Lord commanded the angel, and he put hp his sword again into the sheath thereof.”

The reconciliation was complete; being justified by faith, there was peace for David with God. As the accusings of the adversary, the demands of the law, the complaints and howlings of conscience, are all and forever to be silenced by the voice of the blood of sprinkling, which tells us that with our God “mercy rejoiceth against judgment;” so, as soon as David had trusted in this grace, as soon as he had built his altar in the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite, where mercy

had thus rejoiced, the angel of destruction puts up his sword again into the sheath thereof, at the commandment of the Lord.

Verses 28-30. “At that time, when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing-floor of Oman the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. For the tabernacle of the Lord which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt-offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God; for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the Lord.”

David was given grace to interpret the writing on the Jebusite's floor. That mystic sacred plan had brightly reflected the glory of forgiving love; there he had seen that with his God “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” —the oft repeated, but ever sweet and blessed truth. Close, therefore, by this floor he keeps. The corn which his faith had trodden out there was the finest wheat, the very fat of the kidneys of wheat; and having tasted it, he dared not to forsake his own mercy; having fed at an altar whereon had been spread for him the dainties of a father's love, he could not return to serve the tabernacle. (Heb. 13:10.) He had not feared to prepare his altar in the angel's presence, but he does fear now to return by the way of the angel's sword. “This is the house of the Lord God,” said he of Oman's floor, “and this is the altar of the burnt-offering of Israel.” (1 Chron. 22:1.) His heart, by the Spirit who ever witnesses to grace, was knit to this spot; and he proceeds at once to make preparation to link the name of the God of Israel inseparably with it also. What Moses had given them should be no more remembered or sought unto: in grace the system should be set and confirmed, and Israel and their God should meet forever where mercy had rejoiced against judgment.

Here, with David, we also meditate for awhile, and trace our interest in all this precious truth. Our souls, if we are saints of God, will breathe,” If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand but there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared” —or worshipped. (Psa. 130:3.) All service of the name of our God comes of this; and our thankful acceptance of forgiveness, sealed as it is to all who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, is our entrance into His temple, our assumption of that character in which alone we can do service in the heavenly temple, that is, of sinners pardoned. We are to know no affection at variance with such a character. None else gives full glory to God. We stand in presence of a mercy-seat, before a throne of largest richest grace, and yet of brightest untainted righteousness, because blood in which God smells a savor of rest is upon it, through which He can be just, and yet let mercy rejoice against judgment. (Gen. 8:21; Rom. 3:26; Eph. 5:2.) “The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb” are the temple in our heavens; “salvation to our God" is the burthen of our worship there, “blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”

And as mercy through the Lord our righteousness has thus “raised us up, and made us sit in heavenly places” (Eph. 2:6), so in the day when “all Israel shall be saved,” mercy shall in like manner rejoice in the lower parts of the earth. As the church is now set in grace, so will the people then be. That covenant, and that alone, which takes away sin through the Deliverer, shall establish them as it now establishes the saints; “for all are included in unbelief, that God may have mercy upon all.” (Rom. 11:26-32.) Ex. 32; 34 exhibits this truth, and most interestingly presents Israel as drawn-forth from their standing under Mount Sinai, to take their stand in the last days in and under

Christ. And their last tenure of the land by grace will be the accomplishment of the promises made of old to their father Abraham; for the land and its accompanying blessings were given to him and to his seed, not as through the works of the law, but by promise, or grace. The closing scene of that lovely portion of the divine word gives us the same truth in mystery. Moses veiled typified Israel as they now are, and the flesh under law, or in blindness of heart. (Isa. 6:10.) Moses unveiled typifies Israel as they shall be, in the Spirit under Christ, or in the light of liberty of the new covenant (Rom. 11:27; 2 Cor. 3: 26); and when the heart of the Jewish people shall thus “turn to the Lord,” and the “veil shall be taken away,” this turning of Israel to Jesus shall be followed by the unveiling of—the nations, or the life of the world. (Isa. 25:6; Rom. 11:15.)

Thus in the end shall all be established alike by grace, not only the children of the resurrection in the Father's house in the heavens, but Israel and the nations “from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same” on earth.

“Mercy shall be built up forever.” (Psa. 89:2.) “With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee (Zion), saith the Lord thy Redeemer;” and then shall Zion's children be many, and her seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and the Redeemer of Israel shall be called the God of the whole earth. (Isa. 54:1-8.) The Gentiles shall be embraced in the same mercy, for, as it is written, “In thee shall all nations be blessed;” as it is written again, “Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.” (Rom. 15:10.) Thus shall the whole earth be the extended floor of Oman the Jebusite, and be the altar and dwelling place of Him with whom mercy has rejoiced against judgment. Thus shall our God show the rich fullness of His wisdom, providing a way whereby He can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus—whereby He can preserve the righteousness of His throne in all its brightest glory, and yet allow mercy to rejoice against judgment, seat Himself again in the earth as His temple and kingdom. Mercy with righteousness, peace with truth, shall rear that temple, and uphold the kingdom. His shall all things then be, not only by title, by creation, but by purchase—His “peculiar treasure,” His “purchased possession.” Thus will the Lord fully repossess Himself of the kingdom of this world, and walk again among the children of men; the saints who have acknowledged Him while absent shall, be acknowledged in His glory; “the righteous shall see it, and rejoice, and all iniquity shall stop her month.” (Psa. 107:42.) J. G. B.

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Chapter 149

A Purged Conscience

A purged conscience makes all simple. I do not discuss with a bad conscience; I can principles with my reason. With a bad conscience I want cleansing; and, because I have offended a loving Father and God, forgiveness too; and, thank God, I have it in Christ. There is no personal having to do with God without this. I may theorize, and honestly enjoy my ideas; but theorizing is not the knowledge of God. A truly upright soul, a divinely taught soul, has a moral need that the love of God, the favor which is its light and its joy, should be a righteous favor (as scripture speaks, grace reigns through righteousness)—hence, that God should righteously not see sin upon it: it has need, therefore, that the conscience should be purged. And this it has through the truth that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin. Without it, God's love would be an unholy love—would not be God or love at all. We walk in the light, as God is in the light; and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. Hence comes that bright and blessed testimony, though there in outward figures, “He hath not seen iniquity in Jacob, nor beheld perverseness in Israel.”

Chapter 150

Rationalism Contrasted to 1 John 5

1 John 5 is exactly the opposite view to rationalism on every point. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” There is obedience to a commandment, the proof of love; “and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” There is a new nature, and the world not educated, but overcome. “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” There is faith on a perfect external revealed object, the only means of obtaining the victory. At the end of 1 John 3 you will find, as in Rom. 8, the Spirit, the Holy Ghost given, carefully distinguished from the spirit or conscience within. Christianity is a deliverance sent by God to form the spirit according to a new life on an object supremely blessed without, so as to take out of self, and fix the heart on that supreme object of blessedness. The rationalist's system is a rejection of it for the spirit or fallen nature of man to form itself by heathenism and Christianity as pretty nearly on a par; the latter being reduced by him to within a shade of the level of the former.

Chapter 151

Thoughts on Revelation 2:8-17

Last time we were speaking of the character of judgment running through this Book of Revelation. We see the Lord in these epistles judging the churches, and then the world; we see Him taking notice of everything: “I will judge every one of you according to his works.”

It is well to see the difference between the church as seen in Christ, and as on earth representing Christ. She partakes of His glory, as united to Him; and as a vessel contains His glory, and represents it on earth—the “epistle of Christ, known and read of all men.” Responsibility down here does not touch salvation in any wise. He had promised, in His faithfulness, to carry them on towards the fullness of His glory, and He judges them for failure in the use of the responsibility He laid upon them. God's own people are profited by it, but the” simple pass on, and are punished,” and at length, as a body, they are “spued out of his mouth.”

All chastening is intended to turn to profit for the church. In the address to each church there is a particular revelation of Christ corresponding to the peculiar judgment, and there are special promises to each. It is not here the supply of grace from the Head for the body, as in Ephesians, but the responsibility of individuals in their walk. Another thing we have to remember is, that the object of these addresses is not to show the power of the Holy Ghost actively at work. If it is judgment, it clearly is not this. Christ cannot be said to judge the work of the Holy Ghost. It is power in grace if the Holy Ghost works, but Christ's judgment is His estimate of the practical use made of the privileges given. The Lord looks at the church as responsible for all the love of which it is the object. The candlestick is to be taken away when there is no profit. It is not individuals judged here, but churches—what “the Spirit saith to the churches,” and there is no return found; therefore it is to be taken out of its place.

Then the address is to “him that hath an ear, let him hear.” There is individual energy to overcome, and it is overcoming in the condition in which they were—it is overcoming things within, not overcoming the world. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith” —there was that as well, of course; but here it is overcoming evil in the church. We must remember that the church has fallen from its first love when Smyrna is addressed; and the church ceases to be a place of security to the saint, the moment the Spirit so addresses the church as failing; therefore individuals are singled out. I get myself as an individual singled out, but the church addressed. I have to make good my certainty by the word. The church may be right in this or that; but I have to discern by the word what I can follow, and what I cannot. This is a principle of great importance. It is not that there were no blessings for these churches—they were highly commended in many things. But the churches were being judged by Christ's word.

Development is a common word in use now, but it has in it the principle of infidelity. There is nothing in God to be developed. The word is a revelation of God in Christ. In 1 John 1 we find it said, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which our hands have handled of the word of life: for the life was manifested,” &c. It is clear there can be no development of that which has been manifested. Unless we can get something

beyond “God is light,” there can be no development.

There is much to be learned about Him; but it is a Person here presented, not a doctrine. If it were a doctrine, we might get something added; but it is not a question of doctrine, but a living Person that has been revealed, and in the address to this first church we find they had left their first love—they have left something; there is no development in that. God cannot set up anything but what is perfect, nothing contrary to His mind, or inferior to His mind. Look at man. We see him brought out perfect, but he could not keep his first estate. Then there was a perfect priesthood established, but there was failure in Nadab and Abihu. He “planted wholly a right seed.” What comes from God must be perfect, and cannot by any other operation. There may be decline, and there is decline. This is a very simple truth, but it cuts up by the roots a whole system of thoughts and feelings and judgments.

Then we find another grand principle brought out here. He exercises the heart by bringing in the hostile power of the world to hinder decay, and to separate from the evil around—and this is tribulation. Take Christ Himself, see His perfectness as the Servant of God: “He learned obedience by the things that he suffered.” Much brought out through trial, opposition, slighting; His path led, darker and darker, down to the cross. He met Satan's power, and even the wrath of God. He overcame all, and is set down with the Father on His throne, and in it all, it only brought out the growing manifestation of the perfection in Him.

There is another thing with regard to us. Persecution and trial are used to hinder our departure from God. There is the constant tendency in the heart to take rest in prosperous circumstances, the flesh turns to what is agreeable in the world; but it will not do. God says, “Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest.” Persecution is the natural portion of the children of God. When the church was taking rest at the beginning, persecution soon came in.

In Matthew the principles and character of the kingdom were brought out in the sermon on the mount: “Blessed” — “Blessed” — “Blessed,” &c. Blessing is the character, and then the grace of Christ was just beginning to be manifested; the miracles had begun to be performed, &c., and God was now showing them what was “blessed” in His sight. Towards the end of the Gospel, instead of blessing, it is, “Woe” — “Woe” — “Woe;” “your house is left unto you desolate;” because the opposition was fully brought out by the perfect manifestation of what was in Him.

God sends us tribulation, opposition from without, to bring out grace, and to binder decay. With Christ it was always and only the former. But take the case of Job: God uses Satan as an instrument of blessing to him, as He does with the church. About Job God begins the conversation, “Hast thou considered my servant Job?” &c.; and God uses the trial to bring out to him what Job had never known before.

Then, again, take the case of Paul. He had to be taken up into the third heaven, to get such a sight of the glory as to fit him for the peculiar service to the church to which he was called. Then what use would the flesh make of this? It would puff up. Then a messenger of Satan is sent to buffet him, and he prays that it may be removed. But he is not to be rid of the thorn in the flesh, but gets the assurance, “My grace is sufficient,” &c. This it was that strengthened him for after service, not the being in the third heaven and the sight of the glory, in one sense, for it was to be God's strength, not Paul's.

Take another case in Peter. He wanted to be sifted, because of the self-confidence in him: therefore the Lord allows Satan to sift him, but He prayed for him. When confidence in self was pulled down, then he could be used to help others.

It seems astonishing that God should use Satan as the instrument to try the saints here; but it is so, and He says, “the devil shall cast some of you into prison,” &c.

In this church we find the state is decaying (they have lost their first love), and God has to put her into the furnace. She gets into the place where Satan persecuted before; she gets where Satan's seat is. “I know thy works, and tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich") God knew that they were rich, they were multiplied in the world, and then there was a tendency to rest in the circumstances put into, instead of in the Lord Himself. The Lord would not suffer this. He must put them into trouble, because He would make them lean on Him. He would cast the church on her own proper position altogether. He will give them to find the hostility of the world, in order that they may be brought back to know their own privileges in their own real position. How strange that the church should need persecution, not only that Christ should suffer them to be cast into prison, but also that they were to be faithful even to death! And the promise to them is “the crown of life.” They may be martyrs, but there is positive blessing and honor for them. Christians are seeking what the world does. If the Lord turns the current, He puts them through the fire. If the church has the world in any sense down here, it must give up a heavenly, a crucified, Christ. You cannot associate the world and religion, but it was the object of Judaism to connect them. It set about to mingle the tastes and feelings of nature with God, and whenever the world is connected with religion, there must be priesthood let in, because the moment you get man as he is, he cannot stand before God. But now Christians are priests—no need of an order of priests between God and you; you are a heavenly, not an earthly, people. “He suffered without the gate,” wherefore let us also go out to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. The moment the blood is carried into the heavenly places, we are associated with Him, and we are taken outside the world altogether, and connected with the heavenly places. Judaism connected the two.

Our place is outside the camp, and inside the veil, with Him. Carnal ordinances connected man with God under Judaism; but when Christ is rejected on earth, the place is in heaven, and there cannot longer he the mixture of the two. We are raised together with Him in the heavenly places. We have no middle thing if Christ is our portion. The moment we lose the sense of this, God must let loose the power of Satan to keep us in a straight path. The character in which He addresses this church is as the First and the Last, One dead and alive. Looked at as man, He is dead to this world, cast out and rejected. We now must, like Mary Magdalene, get an empty tomb, or a living Christ. If your heart is upon Christ, all that you can find in this world is an empty tomb with nothing in it. Then you have nothing to do with the world, for all heavenly blessing is yours. The constant tendency is to slip away from this, because, if we do not cleave to the world, it cleaves to us. This was the case of the churches here. They needed to be put through the fire to separate them from the world. Judaism had crept in; then development (Gnostics, &c.), “intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds.” Then persecution comes, and blows upon all this. The history of these times shows that the living power in the church was not in its doctrines, but in its martyrs.

Verse 13. “Satan's throne.” Here is another and more subtle character of evil. The Lord gives them all the credit He can. It has passed through tribulation, sent on account of worldly corruption from without, but here there is doctrinal corruption within. It is in the world where Satan's seat is, and it has been living there ever since. (It is not a question here of individual conduct, but of the corporate position of the church.)

It was at the cross of Christ that the world emphatically became the seat of Satan, not that, as some say, his power was then defeated. The world had been first put under man, tried on the ground of responsibility; then it had been under trial in the exercise of power in Nebuchadnezzar. Satan risked everything upon getting rid of Christ, but then it was his own power was really broken—he just destroyed himself; but he has ever since led the world (as the universal instrument of Satan) to reject Christ; from that moment he is the prince of this world—until that rejection be could not be said to be so. It was when Christ was on the cross he led the mind of the world. The church has been taken out of the world, to be associated with the true Prince; but alas! it has taken an earthly character. But if it is taken up, and rejected with Christ, then what has it to do with the world? “Why, as though living in the world are ye subject to ordinances?” &c. There is no possibility of escaping it in any other way but as being dead with Christ. Ordinances are not Christ. They have been nailed to the cross of Christ. If we are dead with Christ, we are dead to ordinances. Man in the flesh most have something between him and the Head. If united to the Head, there is nothing wanted to bring near.

“But I have a few things against thee. Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.” He had taught them the evil of this corrupting association through a persecuting world; but Christ could never say, “There is Balaam’s teaching for you.” He could never talk of the moral acquiescence in evil as the proper trial of the saints—not like the tribulation before. You have got Balaam then, not Jezebel yet. Balaam would associate them with the world, but Christ says, I have passed through death for you, and now you must for Me. He would not step in to hinder the consequences of the position into which they had brought themselves, but He could own their faithfulness.

Balaam could not succeed in enchantment against Israel. The question was whether Israel might pass into Canaan, and Balaam (a frightful character) was employed to hinder them if he could. The effort was to get Jehovah to curse His people, but he could not, and he was forced only to bless. There is no possibility of using Satan's power against the people of God. God held the lips of Balsam, and obliged him to bless in spite of himself. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” He has no power as an adversary. It is as a tempter he has power. When the enemy could not succeed in bringing a curse upon the people, he sought to seduce them into wickedness, and then how could God bring them in (Num. 25) In this church we find he has come in as a seducing Satan, instead of being without as a persecuting Satan.

Then they were exhorted to fear none of those things which should come upon them, &c. Weakness is in fear. When we look into the persecution we tremble. Out of it we look out to Christ, where there is faith. Thus the faithful one is separated from the world by that persecution, and made to feel what his own proper portion is. But when the church is on Satan's territory, he says, You shall have as much as you like—as much as ever I can give you—for I will seduce you into it. In enriching them with earthly things, he seduces them from God. Balsam was a prophet, but a

false prophet, just as the evil servant who hid his lord's money was a servant, though an evil one; and we find him coming in within the church (ver. 14), and if he can, make it all ease in the world, comfortable in the world, his end is gained. Then they might go and eat in, the idols' temples: doctrine of the Nicolaitanes follows—internal corruption. In Nicolaitanism we see the flesh acting in the church; through Balsam the world had come in. It is very sad to see how the church declined after the tribulation had brightened it up for God, and our hearts ought to bear the burden. By being thus associated with the world, by being content to dwell where Satan's seat is, they had got the door open for evil doctrines,—Antinomianism, a fleshly religion of demons. Satan did not want to persecute when he could corrupt. Here it is only teaching false doctrine, in the next church we see there are children born. The promise to the faithful here is a very sweet and peculiar one.

The word is that by which Christ draws the church to Himself. He comes out with a “sharp sword with two edges.” The word of God is the resource of the faithful, and the promise is more individual. In the sorrow and pain of seeing those belonging to God not departing from iniquity, there is bound up in the heart this link of secret fidelity to God which associates them with a suffering Christ. They shall have to eat of the hidden manna. It was hidden faithfulness which was to be rewarded with this hidden manna; the fruits, indeed, would be manifest to all around, but it was a secret between God and the heart, an inward link with that which never changes in its character. What is this hidden manna? We find manna spoken of as the bread which cometh down from heaven: “This is the true bread,” &c. The manna for the Israelites was spread about the camp, not hidden. Christ is the provision for daily walk. But besides this they were to take a pot, and lay it up before Jehovah. When they had got into the land, they were to have the memorial of what they had enjoyed in the wilderness. So we in heaven shall have God's eternal delight in what Christ has been down here as the suffering Christ. The memory of what Christ has been in the wilderness is God's eternal delight. With us, he that has been faithful with Christ in rejection from this world will have the everlasting joy of fellowship with God in the delight in Christ as the suffering Man, which He had and has and will have forever. It will be the same kind of delight, though of course always in different measure. If we are walking faithfully with a rejected Christ, instead of letting Balsam into our hearts, we shall enjoy Christ down here now; but we cannot enjoy Him while we are going on with the world. If we so pretend, it becomes Nicolaitanism or Antinomianism. Even in the Gospels what enjoyment can we have if walking in the spirit of the world? The imagination may be fed, but the soul is not satisfied. God has not given His Son to be played with, but to be fed upon.

There are public joys in heaven, thousands of voices echoing the song, but there are secret ones also. Joys with Christ we all share in common, but He must have our individual affections as well as our common affections— “a white stone, and in the stone a new name written,” &c. That name has no meaning for any one else but him to whom it is given. Christ reveals Himself to the soul, “and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy.” Christ has joys for us as individuals, and my joy you cannot have, and yours I cannot have. This joy of communion will never be interrupted, and individual communion will not hinder the universal joy. This promise specially relates to the future, but it is the source of joy and strength now. The Spirit of God makes it anticipative of that day. We may have now this “white stone” from Christ, this secret expression of His grace and love to my heart. Others cannot have it for me. How it makes this white stone more precious than anything else, though all the world may think I am wrong! Of course, I must judge of all by the word. The

world may talk about things, but Christ has talked to me, and He will own in that day all He has said to me.

What a sorrowful thing that Balaam should be teaching the saints! But, never mind: there is no trouble whatever in the church that does not bring the soul into deeper communion with Christ than anything else could. Then is the opportunity afforded for overcoming the evil within.

Chapter 152

Thoughts on Revelation 3-4

The contrast between the addresses to the church at Sardis and Philadelphia is similar to what is found in 1 Thessalonians where to the world the coming of Christ is spoken of as a thief in the night, but not so to the saints in the world. “Of the times and seasons I have no need,” &c. The professing church at Sardis will have the character of Christ's coming in judgment.

Verse 2. “I have not found thy works perfect.” No decay of spiritual life ever lowers God's standard of holiness in the church. The church at Ephesus is reproved for losing first love—here it is” works.” (Ver. 1.) All resources of spiritual government and power are perfect in Christ. “These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.” Christ has the perfectness of seven spirits and seven stars.

Whatever we have to do in this world—common occupation, business, anything—the great object is to represent Christ. If my soul is knit to Him (“my soul followeth hard after thee"), we shall measure all our path as to how far we can do justice to Christ. “If thine eye be single,” &c. There may be a hundred wrong ways, but I must take care to get into the right one. Whether I have made much or little progress as a Christian, I must have Christ as my object, and my end; Christ will be reflected all down the path, then every step onward will be brighter and brighter. It is not going fast on the road that is the great point, but going always in it (the faster the better too), “forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, I press towards,” &c. We must have our hearts set upon Christ, though, in one sense, not nearer Christ at the end than at the beginning; in another, we are a great deal nearer. The fact of our resurrection is not nearer, but we are nearer in the moral effect of the expectation. Of the church it is said, “that he might cleanse it by the washing of water.” In one sense it is perfectly clean, but in another it is getting cleaner through the application, by the Spirit, of the word to the individual members of the church, and so producing in the whole moral likeness to the image of Christ. So the outward fact of resurrection is always the same, but it is the power of the fact of resurrection wrought in his heart that Paul desired.

There are some in Sardis of whom it is said, “they shall walk with me in white,” but the Philadelphian state is one of far more blessing. There is energy in the midst of Sardis encouraged, but there is approbation given to Philadelphia— “kept my word.” The great exercise of faith will be keeping the “word of Christ's patience,” for the days are come in which it is said, “Where is the promise of his coming?” The heart kept on Christ Himself gets such a sense of His blessedness, that it is kept fresh in the hope of seeing Him. “When we shall see him as he is,” it is said, not shall be. We shall see Him as He is now, the glorified Man, and we should so realize Him now, and so realizing Him, I have so tasted what He is, that I want Him to come. In one sense He cannot come, but is waiting in patience till His word be fulfilled. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me,” &c. He waits, He has not got it yet; and I must wait. My heart has got such a connection with what Christ is, is so knit up with Him, that it can find no satisfaction in anything else. My patience; “He shall see of the travail of his soul,” &c. The Father's will is that He shall lose nothing.

The character of the promise to him that overcometh corresponds with that which they were exercised in. What is the promise? He shall be a pillar in the temple of my God—not said, the temple of God. Mark the number of times “my” comes in in this verse. You have been associated with my patience, and now you shall have the same association with God that I have. “Thou hast a little strength.” See what little strength comes to—a crown then! Great strength now, mixed with carnal things, will be weakness then. “I will keep thee from the hour of temptation.” Mark that word “from.” Does the Lord delight in trying His people? No, He would rather keep them from it, but He must try us for our good. Still, we may well use that petition, “Lead us not into temptation,” for it is a sad thing if God is obliged, as in Job's case, to try us by throwing us into Satan's hands for the destruction of the flesh. There will be trial come upon all the world; as long as there is a grain of wheat in it, He will sift, sift, sift it, till every grain is separated; but He will not have us to be so separated. “Keep thee from,” &c. If the saint goes on in the consciousness of little strength, keeping the word of Christ's patience, in fellowship with God's long-suffering, he will be kept from it.

In passing through the wilderness God gives us two things as means of blessing down here—the word of God and the priesthood of Christ.

There is the promise of entering into His rest, and everything that comes in between our apprehension of that rest and us, the word of God comes as a two-edged sword to. “The word of God is sharper than,” &c. What tends to unbelief? Every thought and intent, every little root that strikes into this world, everything not from God, everything that separates from our desire to see Jesus and be with Him.

We are in the wilderness, but every heart rests either in Egypt or Canaan: it is Canaan in hope, or Egypt in heart. Whatever does not bear the thought of God separates from Him, as the word shows us.

Sorrow, affliction is not wrong, but if the will does not submit, it is rebellion, and that is wrong. All open sin is cut up by the word, the two-edged sword. All our weakness and infirmity are borne by Him who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, &c. We must be going on with Christ, and in the consciousness of going on. “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

“My new name:” He will stamp it on those who overcome as associated with Him in the temple of His God.

The inscription to the epistle to the church of the Laodiceans (or in Laodicea, as in the margin) differs from those to the other churches, inasmuch as here it is the character of Christ in Himself, apart from the body, instead of His relationship with the church. Christ remains the same, although the church is gone to ruin. God could put His Amen on Him if the church fail ever so, and He is available for every opened ear. The titles belonging to the Lord are applied to each, answering to the condition of the church; and here there is the positive declaration that He will spue them out. There is nothing owned—all good shut up in Christ—but there is rebuke and chastening. He is outside, standing at the door, and if any one hath ears, &c.

There is the entire definite and final rejection of the professing church pictured, no hope held out, but judgment, positive and definite, prophesied of—nauseous to Christ, as lukewarm water.

There is, however, love at work still, as with Israel in Jer. 2. Repentance is called for, but, of course, God knew that the body would not repent. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” These words of invitation to those who hear are of a different character from those in Canticles: “The voice of my beloved that knocketh; open to me,” &c.; where is awakening the heart afresh of the Jewish people, who had been asleep a long time, stirring up the stupid, sleepy thing, by appealing to the affections. Here it is at the close of the testimony Christ is seeking to gather up any lingering desire after Him; but the promise to those who overcome, though most blessed, is of a lower and more general character than that given to the other churches. To sit with Him on the throne—this is what all will have who reign with Him a thousand years. All who are raised reign with Him. To the other churches there is something more special promised—this is only trenching on the kingdom. But Christ Himself will come in to him, and sup with him, “and he with Me.” He says, Christ will come, and give you to enjoy with Him at His table, not come down with you to your things.

Verse 17. “The wretched one” is more literal. If a person says, I have got Christ, and so is careless about his walk, thinking he has got all he wants, it might come up to this state of things. But the whole description seems to apply more to those who have not Christ at all. They had got all that could make a fair show in the flesh—numbers, learning, prosperity—like Babylon, which says, “I sit as a queen, and have need of nothing.”

Verse 18. “Gold.” Divine righteousness is what the soul wants in order to be with God. “White raiment” shows the purity of the righteousness of Christ. The wisdom spoken of in Proverbs is a spirit of value for these things.

It is a dreadful thing to be associated with a form of things, when the spirit and life are wanting. The fig-tree was, as regards Israel, an exhibition of this state. The thing to be overcome in such a state of things is lukewarmness, and to be able to overcome lukewarmness. You must be hot yourself. “Moab had not been emptied from vessel to vessel.”

Affection to Christ in hidden ones, as individuals, may be found, but faith is not so much brought out in the assembly—a strong manifestation of the declension in the corporate state of these Christians and of the fact that man spoils everything God sets up amongst men.

Verse 19. “Rebuke and chasten” —convicting the conscience. Nothing is healed until that is done; it is not only an expression of His displeasure, but bringing it home to the soul—it is to” as many as I love.” Whatever amount of exercise of conscience there may be, it is a proof of God's love; this is comfort to many a troubled soul.

Men often speak of judgments as if they were from man, not God, but man's heart rebels more against God than against man. Job complained of God more than of the Sabeans. It is because God touches the conscience. It is a sorrowful thing when God's voice is not heard in the chastening. There are more pains taken with this Christian than with any. It is a different thing from Paul in 2 Cor. 12, where he says, “Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved;” as if he said, I shall not cease to love you, though the way I take to show it you makes you love me less. Here the meaning is, although they did not love Him, but were sunk amongst the rest, He would not give them up.

“He that hath an ear,” &c. Christ is a Son over His own house. “He that overcometh” — “As I overcame,” &c. Christ had to go through all this, and to overcome. Blessed grace! He has made us

heirs and joint-heirs.

Let us take a lesson from Saul as to overcoming. He overcame the Ammonites; but the Philistines, whom he was specially raised up to conquer, he never overcame. If people do not do the thing they are sent to do, it does not matter how much they do.

Notice that this address to the Laodiceans is a threat—(it is not said, Except ye repent)—not the fact of its accomplishment. Their moral condition; they will be totally done with morally, but the Philadelphian state of the true Christian may run into it—only we must remember the “spueing out” will be after the remnant are gathered out of it, after the church is taken away. The outward state may go on to Antichrist, and then be given up.

Chapter 4.

There are two points I desire to notice in this chapter in connection with the perfect peace of the soul which belongs to the redeemed, and the consequent spirit and character of their worship. The subject matter of this book consists of judgment, for, with the exception of the church in bliss, the character of all is judgment. God is sitting on a throne, and His throne is not in the character of, grace, but in that of Sinai. Not that the throne will be on the earth, but that the judgments, the lightnings and thunderings, which are coming on the earth, will issue from this throne. In this introductory chapter (which it is as to the earth) we have God in the character of Lord God Almighty, and not in the character of Father; but the names given in the Old Testament—Jehovah, Lord God Almighty—are in connection with His power which will be put forth in the coming judgments.

Now what shows out the perfect peace to which we as believers are brought, is seeing the twenty-four elders sitting on thrones round about the throne, whence those judgments are issuing, in perfect peace. They are close to the throne, round about the throne from whence all flow, and yet they are not at all alarmed—no disturbance, no trembling—because associated with the very throne from which all the judgments come. Then mark another thing. They are sitting, not even here seen standing, but sitting in perfect peace, like David, who went in and sat before the Lord. They worship, it is true, and fall down, which is a much higher thing than sitting; but how thoroughly this scene shows into what a place of perfect peace we are brought, that, when the judgments break forth, there is nothing, in them to alarm us! They were seen sitting in perfect peace, and this is our place; so that, however we may be tried down here in the world, when we come before God we can and ought to sit in peace, and rest there!

Then there is another thing. When the character of God is opened out in the threefold ascriptions of “Holy, Holy, Holy,” does this disturb them? No. So with us, when the full character of God's holiness is seen in His justice, making good His holiness. If in the presence of this holiness I thought there was a spot on me, I could not be at peace before Him. What a blessing to have our home and place of rest where the thrice holy God is.

When they hear, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,” their affections move them, and they fall down immediately in worship. While the judgments move them not the least, their affections take them off their thrones in their falling down to worship. It is the effect of being in perfect undisturbed peace that their affections find utterance in praise. They lay their crowns at His feet, attributing all to Him. They fall on their faces; this is a deeper thing than even sitting in peace before Him.

“Thou art worthy... for, &c.” This is intelligent worship; they know why He is worthy—they know it for themselves (as in chap. 5.), for He bought them to God by His blood.

There was no terror awakened in them when the thunderings and lightnings were going on; no, nor when the character of a thrice holy God is opened out: but when the glory is spoken of they worship. If there is fear, there can be no worship. “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness.” But grace has set us in the place of worship by the power of the Holy Ghost: being made kings and priests unto God and His Father, we can worship Him.

We are not in the glory yet, but may we grow in the sense of what He is, and worship Him who is worthy to be glorified.

This is God's claim as Creator; chapter 5 is the Lamb's title in redemption, leading to worship. The kings and priests in chapter 5 include more than the church. They have a royal, a priestly, character, being more than the bride. The bride, restrictively, does not come in until chapter 19. The subject of the whole book of Revelation is the throne preparing the world for the kingdom; but the kingdom is not ready without the bride, and therefore she is mentioned before the close of the book.

Verse 4. Four-and-twenty thrones, not “seats.” Our translators were afraid to go so far as to say “thrones,” but the word is the same as in the first clause of the verse. Here we see the happy place the church is brought into They are sitting in, dignity and peace, while all the circumstances of judgment are proceeding from the throne. They are unmoved by the lightnings and thunders, &c. But mark the difference when the living creatures say, Holy, holy, holy, and give thanks. Instead of trembling at the holiness of God—which as sinners they would have done—they fall down to worship; and it is intelligent worship, for they say, “for thou hast created all things,” &c.

Thoughts on Revelation 17

“Judgment” does not merely mean the execution of punishment, but the sentence pronounced or accusation. There are here things with which Babylon is charged; and it is said of Christ that Pilate put up His “accusation” —the thing for which He was sentenced. Babylon here has the character of the church, and yet it is the most wicked system in the world. John, having part in the poor despised Christ's church—was banished to the Isle of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus, and yet he saw that which was called “the church” governing this Roman empire which had put him in prison, a constituted system controlling kings, peoples, &c. No wonder that he marveled: it must have been astonishing to him. The expression means, he wondered with a great wonder, somewhat as we should say, dying the death.

Verse 8. “They that dwell on the earth” —in their moral character dwellers upon earth in general. The place to be looked to as the scene of it is the Roman empire. The special character of the whore is seductive influence of the masses, and alliance with the leading powers. The kings commit fornication with her, and the masses are made thoroughly stupefied—drunk with new wine—not like those who were accused of being so in Acts, but in truth filled with the Spirit. In their sober senses they would have seen the corruption, but they are made drunk. It can only be understood “in the wilderness,” where it is seen there is not one green blade for the soul. Upon her forehead was a name written, “Mystery,” &c. If a person is drunk, you may write on his forehead anything, things that were never heard of. She would not have taken such names as Mother of Harlots, &c., if her eyes had been open. The character of it is very plain, except to the besotted mind.

John was in the Spirit led into the wilderness, and therefore he could understand it. A “mystery” can only be discerned by revelation and the power of God. It is simple to him who understands, but great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh, &c., is a riddle to those who have no spiritual understanding.

This false thing, which has the name of “mystery” to those who are used to it, is as rotten as possible. The priest, with all his mummery, genuflexions, &c., can laugh at it; but the simple man who is ensnared by it thinks it all piety, and he s deluded by it: Absolution is thought to be a very wonderful thing—it quiets his conscience, and then he begins sinning again. Men call it a “mystery,” and so it may be, because it is the devil's work. There is only one thing to keep a man out of popery, and that is the knowledge of divine righteousness. If one has got that, he will never want to try putting a cross on the ground, and then licking the dust. Divine righteousness can never be made a whit better by any works of self-crucifixion, mortification, &c., and therefore the man who knows he has this will not be trying works of his own to add to it.

Popery not only wants to add works, but it wants a priesthood. In Christendom, wherever there is a pretension to priesthood, there is the devil. There is something that separates between me and God—there may be ever so little a germ of it, but still it is there. Priesthood in any shape is a denial of Christianity, though there may be a great deal that modifies the case. It brings a veil between

me and God, as though Christ had not accomplished the work. Priesthood and clericalism, as set up by man, are both against God and Christ's priesthood interfering with the work of redemption as though this wanted something to be added to it. A man organized ministry, or clergy? denies liberty to God's love; and virtually says, If you do not let me cut the channel, the gospel shall not go forth. I believe in ministry, but that is the very reason I will not admit clericalism; just for the same reason that, if I support royalty, I shall not admit a usurper.

If I am not spiritual enough to get to God myself, I naturally enough get some one else to go for me; that is why priesthood and the clergy are set up.

There is another thing that characterizes Babylon—idolatry; like Balsam, who set a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, &c. When priesthood comes in, there is always more or less of idolatry also. If I know how to come to God, I do not want a priest any more than an idol; but if not, I want both.

“Abominations” (vers. 4, 5) simply means idols. The word abomination constantly occurs in the Old Testament, meaning an idol.

It is connected with all that is degraded; and the moment man gives up belief in the true God, he is sure to degrade himself. If man does not look to something above himself, he will sink to that which is below him, as we see in Rom. 1.

The attributes of God Himself were made to be symbolized in the cherubim the Ninevites, &c., used to worship. They stopped short at the symbol, instead of going beyond to Him who was symbolized, and this was idolatry. In Israel they made pillars of God's throne.

What men had formerly about the Creator, they have now about the Intercessor. The truth of God is thrown into a channel that suits nature, but it is opposed to the Holy Ghost. Then the next thing is murder. Satan is a liar, and the “father of lies;” and he is also a “murderer from the beginning.” So, in the working of Satan, we find there is first idolatry, and then it leads to murder. The “woman is drunken with the blood of saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” This is the time of prosperity to her. She is drunken. There are two characteristics given of those with whose blood she is drunken. It is not said any Christians, but they who “will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” “I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them.” The terms, saints and martyrs of Jesus, witnesses for Him, are given to characterize them. They are not characterized as those who are settling down here upon earth. “The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her.” This, in a hidden way, we may find going on now. The departure of the pope from Rome was the beginning of it. The kings of the earth are allying with the pope, in order to keep down radicalism, which is an enemy to them.

Verse 8. The woman sits upon a scarlet-colored beast (ver. 4), and the beast must carry her, but she governs the beast. “The beast that was, and is not,” &c., means the Roman empire—an expression that is intended to characterize it, not date. It shall be present; that is, it is the resurrection of the Roman empire in a devilish way—the perfection of power in a diabolical energy. If there are seven heads ten horns; neither spiritual nor human perfection.

Second beast, or hovering power, subsequent to the first.

Popery is denying not so much truth as the application of truth. They allow there is efficacy in Christ's blood-shedding, but how am I to get it is the question? Oh! said Luther, get it by faith. Here is the application of it.

Verse 14. “They that are with him are called and faithful, and chosen.” This is the bride individualized. When Christ is spoken of as Bridegroom, she is spoken of as bride, and that is in the Father's house; but when the throne or the Lamb is spoken of, they are individualized who are connected with them.

Verse 15. Not only dwellers on the Roman earth here, but China and all over the world. Wherever Christ goes, she, the mother of abominations, thinks she has a right to go.

Kings mean kings as such; horns mean kingdoms. The whole power, such as France, where there may be no king reigning.

The beast was the vessel of Satan's power against the vessel of God's power—Christ. There is the holiness of the one city—the heavenly Jerusalem; and the scenes of corruption God judges in the other; and it is well to notice that what is after the flesh is always successful at the first, in order to put the faithful to the test. That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is carnal. Cain and his doings are first narrated, before we bear of the true seed; Ishmael, the apparent heir, was long before the birth of Isaac; Esau remained in the promised land, while Jacob was a fugitive. Saul was king before David, and, to all appearance, Saul possessed the title to God's power for a long time, while David did not resist him.

We may see it in Jesus Himself, when He said, “I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught;” while others said, Aha I aha I so would we have it.” Yes, and Jesus said to His disciples, “Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice.” It is God's way, in His rule of government, to allow it to go on for a time. He will put to the test whether the heart will go through the trial of being put down, that when God takes His power He will have it otherwise; but, until then, the Lord Himself says, “I waited patiently.” (Psa. 40) Take no rescue till He comes. When did Jesus ever save Himself from all that came upon Him?

The whore sits upon “many waters.” The wicked may have children at their desire, and have substance; but the saint says, When God fills all things, I shall then be satisfied, and I shall awake up in His likeness. We have a description of Babylon before the heavenly Jerusalem—the whore in chapters 17, 18 and the bride in chapter 21:9.

Man is a religious animal, and though the infidel may go on for a season without God, he will in the end sink into vice, which becomes his god, and it comes in when the corruption is connected with idolatrous worship, and you ever find that to be lower than even the natural conscience, for infidelity will not do very long for man; he must have something to worship with. The Colossians wanted to join many things together: and bring in something between themselves and the Head; “Touch not, taste not,” &c.— “worshipping of angels,” &c. They wanted to join all, that the conscience and God might not come together; and when Satan had got religion to help them in their lusts, there is no fear of the conscience being troubled. It is Satan's aim to corrupt the mediatorial system, in order to get a priest between the soul and God, saying, You cannot go to God yourself. But if you want priests between your souls and God, you have not the conscience that sin is judged. “By the one offering” there is “no more conscience of sins” to the believer, the

soul is at peace in the presence of God; but the object of this corrupt system is to keep us from God, the conscience not judged, and God not loved, being the result.

There is imperial glory in Babylon also—all that could attract—purple, scarlet, and precious stones; but John saw by the Spirit the true character of it all—the beauty which attracts man, but disgusts God, and He will never be mocked. He will have us walk by faith, and though He shows us the woman riding the beast, and the beast carrying the woman, He holds the bridle till the church is gathered.

Babylon the great! This is the character of it, and in this way it is the world, it is the source and spring of all the idolatry, the rival of the Jerusalem of God; and she is not the only one, but the mother of all, and in her was found the blood of saints and martyrs. As Babylon she had corrupted all the nations, and here she is drunken with blood. You always find the great opponent of truth is the corrupter. See it in the chief priests, who gave up Christ; they were more guilty than the soldiers. After paganism we have corruption from what bore the name of Christianity; and not only so, but oppression; in her the blood is found, that which called itself the holy city.

In verse 8 the beast was, and is not. The Roman empire ascends, for there is a connection between the two—the seven heads and ten horns. The Roman empire was, and is not, but comes back again, and comes under the influence of Satan, for it ascends out of the bottomless pit. Christ came out from God's throne, and the beast out of the depths of the pit—an antagonistic power; one out of the light, the other out of darkness, and they wonder who are not guarded by God's electing grace. The shadows are coming over the renewed Roman earth, the principles are at work; but verse 9 is a distinct character, the woman is on the seven hills, not on the beast—Rome, and marked to show not merely a beast, but Babylonish power; the whole power so concentrated in the last head, that it becomes the beast. Christ wields the power of heavenly things, and in the same way (ver. 8) for a season no kingdom yet, but the ten horns receive power for one hour with the beast. They are contemporaneous—did not supplant the beast, but received power with him. We have seen, in a sense, they have power with the woman, but here it is a person in whom the power is concentrated, and I get in the ten horns the federacy, associated with the beast, they give themselves.

Western Europe will present it, they will have one kind of general unity, not, individuality of the nations but unity, and they cannot go on without a head; so they are content to give power to the beast, and they say, “Who is like to the beast?” And they make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb overcomes them, and we have the church with Him. Angels are not called to this; no, they are upheld by grace, but not “called.”

In verse 16 the ten horns hate the whore, for, after all, the woman will be in the way; they will not bear to be priest-ridden, and they will destroy her. All that is ripening up will be destroyed by the people in an ignominious way; for though this corruption is trying to keep down the people, it will not succeed.

This is the latter day scene, and, in closing, I would say, it is a solemn scene; but what can we expect from sinful man? and, I must say again, there is no corruption so terrible as the corruption of the mediation of Christ. The heart that is brought to Him is astonished to see how people are attracted by the external, which has not one trace of Christ in it. But the soul that is brought to God

has got divine righteousness, and if one comes to me to offer pardon of my sins, I say, I have got it. And if I receive from you, I must get it again and again, but through Christ's blood my sin is remembered no more. The thing offered is not Christianity, for the Christian has got his place; And you have got Babylon on your forehead, and if you cannot see, you have not got a spiritual eye. The Lord help us, for all are in danger who are not on simple ground. I have no thought that man's wisdom will do anything, but He will keep the feet of His saints. If the woman is destroyed, the horns give power to the beast; if corruption ceases, these make war with the Lamb, but the soul that is brought into peace, and holding the head, shall be hid secretly; near to Jesus is a hiding-place, and there we shall be spared from all that is around. The Lord keep us from the spirit of the world, and guard us from the corruption of the mediatorial work of Christ,

Chapter 154

Thoughts on Revelation 18-19

Chapter 18.

Verse 1. The other angel is not the Lord.

Verse 2. Babylon is fallen, or morally sunk into the lowest state of degradation. The actual fall is narrated in chapter 19:2. The consummation is openly diabolical, because Satan is cast out of heaven.

Verse 4 is a cry to the people of the Lord to come out, &c. The mixture of Judaism and Christianity will be such as never was known before. Judaism, which is really heathenism, as in Gal. 4, where Paul calls observing days and years a turning back to the beggarly elements, being circumcised to keep the law, &c. It is the religion of the flesh. Up to the cross of Christ God was dealing with all this; but when Judaism is grafted on Christianity, it is hateful to Him. What are prayed to as Saint Peter and Saint Paul are demons. As they used to introduce false gods, so now they introduce false mediators.

Puseyism is heathenism. The shapes of evil, counterfeiting God, are Judaism, demonism, and heathenism. Infidel latitudinarianism is the character of evil in England, different from what it is in India.

Popery slurs over sin; no matter how they sin, an indulgence will atone for it.

Verse 4. It is a shame for His people to be there, but still He remembers them. People who are in the ark cannot be touched, but an apostate protection He will judge thoroughly.

Verses 12, 13. Everything not heavenly is mixed up with her.

“Souls of men.” “Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.”

There are three cities specially mentioned in this book: the heavenly Jerusalem, Babylon, and the earthly Jerusalem. The two are contracted together.

There is a time to hate, and a time to love, and there are certain things which if a person does not hate, he has no right estimate of God. Some things ought to be hated—not the persons of course. “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” We must not confound natural kindness with grace; but it is easy to do it, and to be indifferent to God's honor. If my father is insulted, I cannot be indifferent about it; though I should not flog the man who did it, but I should wish him out of the house. The popish hierarchy has been guilty of shedding all the blood that has been shed upon earth. It is the centralization of all the wickedness that has been done on the earth from the time of Abel downwards, and Rome will be judged for it.

Chapters 17, 18 are a parenthesis in the history, which is continued from chapter 16 to 19. Chapters 17, 18 are descriptive, not historical.

In chapter 21:9 you get a description of the heavenly city after the Lamb is come, just as we get this description, in chapter 18, of this other city, the object of God's wrath; first that which is carnal; and afterward that which is spiritual. There is the false and the true, and it is after the false is set aside that the true is put in its place. The corrupt pretended to be the heavenly thing, but the Lord will take His bride, and produce her before the world in glory. (Chap. 19.)

Babylon is the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. The whole character of it is idolatry and hostility to God. The Lamb does not execute judgment upon her, but the one true God executes the judgment upon that which had come in between Himself and the souls of men.

Mediatorship had been rejected, not the unity of the Godhead. When the calf was made, Israel held to the name of Jehovah, for they said, “To-morrow is a feast unto Jehovah.” So now it is not the name cast off, but the introduction of that which hides the truth. For “God is light,” and “God is love;” and Satan's aim is, by putting another object between, to hinder the love from reaching the heart, and the light from making manifest Him who alone can give peace to the conscience.

Chapter 19.

Protestantism is what Sardis characterizes, and it comes to nothingism—a name to live, but dead, &c.

In Thyatira it is positive, active corruption. Jezebel is a religions character or Babylon, the world-church system. Jezebel is popery, producing papists. Babylon is popery governing the world. Her final condemnation we have in chapter 19:2. The rule of God and the marriage of the Lamb are kept back until this great system is judged. No wonder there is the voice of much people heard, saying, Alleluia, &c. The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped. (Vers. 6, 7.) Verse 8 explains verse 7.

Verses 6, 7 are the song; the following verses are the history. It is necessary to see the distinction. The bride hath made herself ready by being faithful in what God had given her. The righteousness of Christ wrought in the individual saints that compose the bride—the righteousness of Christ that developed Christ risen, and the saints are one with Him. They were given to have resurrection-life with Him. What is produced is the saints, and seen before God in resurrection character; the display in glory of responsibility as to service done in the Holy ghost by us down here. The fine linen shows it is grace, after all.

The Lord is pleased to own the work wrought in us, and by us, in the Holy Ghost down here. In virtue of life in my Head I stand before God—in virtue of what He has done in me, the manifestation of that life, I stand before the saints—before man.

“These are the true sayings of God.” “Sayings” have a very large meaning. Christ is the Word of God, and His are the sayings of God.

The parable at the beginning of Matt. 25 is not Jewish, though the hidden bride is the earthly Jerusalem. The wise virgins are true Christians, and those profess who have only the name in this dispensation, going out to meet the Bridegroom. The Jewish remnant does not “go out,” but Christ comes to it. The figure of virgins characterizes them as individual saints, not in their corporate character as the church, though they are of the church (that is, the true and faithful virgins).

In the Gospels, when the bride is alluded to at all, it is usually in this way, (namely as individual saints). The difference between the wise and the foolish virgins is not in their watching, for they all go to sleep, but it rather consists in the reality of what they have got. If they were caring for Christ, they would be thinking of the light He would want to see, and would look to the oil; but if they only cared about the company of the other virgins, they would be thinking about their dress, and many other things, rather than the light.

In Matt. 24 Christ was giving instruction to those who inquired of Him about Jewish things, down to verse 44. Next, from verse 45 down to verse 31 of chapter 25, He applies to His disciples while He is away. Then, to the end, He takes up earthly things which will be known in reference to the Gentiles.

The bride in Rev. 19; 21, is the church. The symbol, of the “city,” in chapter 21, shows the glorious character of the saints. The heavenly people have more enjoyment than the earthly, in the same way that I get more happiness than the poor family I go to visit. They may enjoy the thing, but I enjoy something quite different. The heavenly people will be a medium of communicating blessing to the earthly.

Verse 10. The fellow-servant, is an angel. All that John is here is as a prophet, a servant, not as one of the church, indwelt by the Holy Ghost.

Verse 9. The marriage supper introduces the millennium.

Verses 11, 12. There is a difference between warlike and sessional judgment. This is, of course, the first.

Two words are used in Revelation generally, “diadems,” and “crowns.” Here it is “diadems.” If they gain a victory, they put on a crown; if one signify royal power and authority, it is a diadem.

Verse 14 is character, not action; verse 18 is the reverse.

“The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.” This is distinct from the gospel—His prophetic testimony, and the people are named “servants” rather than sons.

Verse 11. The Lord is coming out to execute judgment on the beast, who took the character of the false prophet, and was cast alive into a lake of fire, whilst Babylon was burnt with fire.

“Heaven opened.” This expression occurs four times in scripture connected with the person of the Lord: first, in Matt. 3, the Holy Ghost descends, and bears record that God's object of delight being on earth, heaven is open upon Him. The Spirit, as a dove, rests upon Him, and bears witness to Him as the Son of God.

Secondly, in the end of John 1, the Lord says to Nathanael, “Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” It is not the Holy Ghost here, but the angels, and if those around had had their eyes opened, they might perhaps have seen them, for after His temptation angels came and ministered unto Him, and in the garden of Gethsemane one “strengthened” Him.

The third time there is a difference, for the Son of man is gone up—God has taken to Himself the Object of His delight. Then the Holy Ghost fills the saint on earth. He looks up, seeing the heaven

opened and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. The link is broken with earth, and the heart of the saint is taken up to heaven. The testimony of this is corrupted and lost, and we have now a great tree instead.

Then here, for the fourth time, heaven is opened again, and Christ comes forth in judgment against hostile power; and, when thus opened, it is for us as well as for Himself, for we belong to Him, and come with Him.

“The armies in heaven follow.” The white horse is the symbol of triumph, and He who sits upon him is called “Faithful and True,” the same character in which He is presented to the church of Laodicea, though there He is the “Witness” and the “Amen.” Here it is not as a “Witness,” but as a Judge, and as executing judgment in the character of God, and He is always the “Amen” to that. His eyes are as a flaming fire, showing how piercing the judgment is; and then “many crowns” —or royal glories.

His name none knew but Himself. This is Christ's consciousness of what He is. So, in Matt. 11, He says, “No man knoweth the Son but the Father.” And why? Because no man can fathom incarnate God; and the way He maintains it is by going down and down and down, for “He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death,” &c. But He is exalted, and “His name is called the Word of God,” the Revealer of God. He appears in a “vesture dipped in blood,” significant of His coming forth as a warrior.

Isa. 63 is the same scene. There He is described as treading the “winepress of Almighty God” —executing judgment indeed as Son of man, but He could not tread the winepress of God if He were not God. In His lowest services He was still God. None could have put his hand upon the leper but He, without being defiled. The priest was only able to look, not to touch the leper; but here is One who could touch. It is sweet to know how near He is to us; and yet how great—His name is publicly written; “on his vesture, and on his thigh he hath a name written, King of kings,” &c.

How Paul to Timothy rests upon the glory of His person, when he says, “the only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords,” &c., “the same yesterday,” &c.

And Christ comes forth here to judge quick and dead. The subjects of His judgments are not the nations which are connected with the throne, or sessional judgment: but here it is the horse. This is judgment on hostile power, the place where light has been—the Gentile and the Jewish power, given to them by Satan—the Roman emperor, and the false or pretended Christ.

God sends His Son to get men out of heathenism, idolatry, &c., and they turn that into idolatry. There may well be joy in heaven when there is an end to it; for Christ now sets it all aside—judgment on the earth—but as come down from heaven. The kings and their armies gather together; but all ministers to the setting up of the Lord Jesus Christ as Prince of Peace, and we have our position with Him, and come out with Him.

Beloved friends, it is very important to see the solemnity of the judgment about to be executed on Babylon. The effect will be to separate our hearts from all around, and keep us looking for that glorious hope and appearing, &c., keeping our garments white. It will be a struggle; but now are we the sons of God, and “when he shall appear, we shall be like him” —He will come out with us.

May we seek to realize it even here, keeping ourselves distinct from everything that is to be judged; and our heart's desire be to see His face with joy, to be with Him who has given Himself for our portion now and to all eternity!

Chapter 155

Thoughts on Revelation 19

There is a great break in the book here, Christ coming forth as Man—King of kings, and Lord of lords.

There is equivocal connection of believers with Christ, During the judgments going on in the earth we have not seen the saints; but here, when Christ comes forth, the saints come with Him. It is that which characterizes the position of saints here identified with Him.

During the preparatory ordering for the great day, providential judgments, &c., we have nothing of the saints composing the church. The saints are in heaven; but the moment you get Christ on the scene, the saints are with Him. If it is blessing or judgment, it is with Him: they are arrayed in fine linen, white and clean, on high or on horses symbolically.

Verse 1. It is not said the Lamb had judged the whore, but God Almighty. He might use any agency of old, for example, Cyrus to destroy Babylon.

On the other hand you never have the bride, as such, in Revelation till this chapter. “Much people,” Verse 1, are not only the church. Verse 7. But is this not the earthly bride; for she is connected with the Lamb, not the King.

The corrupt thing is removed before the holy bride has her consummation of joy.

What is the difference between the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures? Elders refer to the twenty-four courses of priests in David's time—they were worshipping kings and priests. Living creatures are the four heads of creation—judicial government executed by them. They are nearer God, like the cherubim or judicial powers of the throne of God; so when it is a question of judicial dealing, not of grace and intelligence, which the elders represent: cherubim in the garden of Eden, and in the temple. So here, when He comes to judge, we find them in His throne. He may use the church for that, as well as others; but it is not as the church that they have this character: when we reign, it will be in a definite character. The living creatures represent God's acting according to the counsel of His own will.

All life is individual; we shall be raised individually, not as a body. Then, when all the individual work in raising, &c., has its place, Babylon is put out of the way—the marriage of the Lamb takes place. There is the manifestation of the position Christ has taken her for on high.

Verse 7 is spoken of as the bride's own act—she “made herself ready;” and so all through the book, because it is a book of judgment, not of grace.

Verse 11 is Christ triumphant, or victorious; the beast is to be destroyed: Babylon had fallen, but the power that governed is not destroyed till now.

Verse 15. The nations at first and all through. There is the winepress, and not the beast only, but Gog in the land of Magog. (Ezek. 38; 39)

There is not one thing that Christ as a glorified Man has, that we have not. Gift produces responsibility from, but it is different responsibility. Anything that gives credit to self man likes: he may be the vilest thief in the country; but he is satisfied if he is only the greatest.

Verses 12, 18, are connected with the divinity of Christ's person. He is the word of God in judgment as in grace.

Chapter 156

Thoughts on Revelation 22:16-17

The Morning Star is the place Christ has taken so as to have the church with Him in that character.

Christ is the subject of prophecy as regards the earth, and then disappearing and going up—never the subject of prophecy as hid in God.

Chap. 1: 5. Earthly association with Him is spoken of first. The church has her own proper place, and says, “To him who doth love us, and hath washed,” &c., and then turns round to speak of His manifestation on earth. His earthly work for me was when He washed me from my sins. He is not only the “Faithful Witness” for me, but the faithful worker. In every sense He was a faithful witness for God. But we begin not with that, but, “He doth love us, and hath washed,” &c.; we look back, too, and see He has all the rest. He has put us in the same official nearness with Himself to God—kings and priests, &c.

Chap. 4. See the church now in heaven. Judgment of the churches down here in chapters 2, 3; judgment of the world afterward; and then, at the close, a description of the heavenly city: “Behold, I come,” &c. All is closed: just as revealed at the beginning, so it is at the close. “I, Jesus, have sent,” &c.—a personal word after the book is closed. The beginning of the book opened with what He was, &c.

Chapter 22: 16, being in contrast with what had been said for the world, draws out the expression from the saints of verse 17; this shows our position till He comes. Root and Offspring of David is the Source of all, and the Heir of all—the Holder, or vessel, in which all the blessing is set. This does not draw out the peculiar feelings of the church; but when He says, “I am the Bright and Morning Star,” it calls out the expression from the church, showing her secret or private knowledge of His own personal value. In rejection while in the world, Christ was keeping up connection with it. Death comes in: the witness closed. Then redemption's history begins— “Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die,” &c. Moreover, when He is manifested to earth, we shall be manifested with Him. The Bright and Morning Star stands contrasted with the blessing the earth will get. Then comes the invitation of the Spirit and the church; it is Himself she wants, and, until then, she is the full vessel of the grace of God, and says, “Come.” Israel is not that. They do not know relationship and deliverance in consequence of that, but they wait for deliverance out of the sorrow—out of the depths. They groan for deliverance, that is, the coming in of power to set them free.

The hope of the church is by the power of the relationship. She is the bride, she has the Spirit, and does not wait for it. Israel says, “Thou to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself.” Does the bride say that? Does she call for vengeance? No; she is waiting for the Bridegroom. It was that which closed the relationship with the world, that began our relationship with Christ. His death was the ending of that in which God could have anything to say to man as man. As connected with Him in manifestation (not union—never that), all closed at His death. I can say, I am dead, crucified, my life is hid with Christ in God. The center and root, too, of all our relationship to God is Christ's

death. Sins are gone, not existing any more: the being is gone in which they were, that is, I. We begin by death, and we are never clear unless we see that. It is not by His death I am put into union with Him, but by the Holy Ghost coming down from heaven. They would not hear, killed Stephen, and the like; and then comes out this position—exclusively a heavenly Christ; and then we get the Morning Star. He is not only a Christ in heaven, but He has associated believers with Him while He does not come to the earth: His bloodshedding is the ground of it all.

The revelation to Paul after this is “I am Jesus whom,” &c. Paul got the teaching of the church, and said afterward, “I know no man after the flesh” —I know no such people as Israel on the earth—no such Head as the Messiah. My connection is with Christ risen and glorified on high.

John 14 says, “I will go and prepare a place,” &c. He does not say, I will prepare a place for Israel. We are going to the Father's house. We are connected with the Father and the Son by faith while waiting for Him, and we shall be with the Father and the Son by-and-by. Christ, the hope of the glory to be revealed, is the foundation of that, and therefore it is said, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” How can we tell that? Ye know it, for He shall be in you. The Holy Ghost is an unseen Spirit in the world, but He is linking you with an unseen Savior in heaven. This is our proper hope, as being of the bride through the Holy Ghost dwelling in her. What is the Morning Star? The revelation of Christ to the church when He is not seen by the world—the completion of present privilege.

In 2 Peter 1:19 Christ is the “day star.” The allusion in this passage is to the transfiguration, recorded in the three Gospels. The kingdom is earthly glory spoken of. The heavenly thing is the hidden part. “They feared as they entered the cloud.” It was not a common cloud, but significant of the presence of God—the Shekinah, where God dwelt in connection with Israel. They did not see from without what was within. The Shekinah frightened those in the wilderness. Moses and Elias went into the cloud—others did not see them then. The word of prophecy is confirmed by the glory revealed—a candle that shineth in a dark place. The Father was in the cloud. Moses and Elias went in, and the others cannot see in. Paul only knew afterward what was within.

There is to be something besides broad day. This is the night; but the Morning Star is to be seen by those watching through the night. Prophecy tells you of the day, but not of this Star. Prophecy could not tell you of the hidden Christ,'“ until the day dawn.” Those who are waiting for the day see the dawn, and watch for the day. They do not belong to the earth (as in the darkness of night), because the spared remnant on earth are that; but they belong to heaven as well as to the power of the day before the day comes. We get Christ Himself as He will never be seen in the day. Hence in Rev. 2:28 the address to Thyatira says, I will give him (the overcomer) not only the glory of the kingdom, as revealed to Peter, but that within the cloud not revealed to him.

Chapter 22. The bride responds to Him—the Morning Star. Now I shall have my proper place. He has washed me from my sins long ago, &c. The relationship is understood, and enjoyed—no need of explaining it. Did you ever hear a person explaining to a child what its mother is? The relationship is there. There is no explanation when He says, “I am the Bright and Morning Star.” Those who have got hold of the relationship say directly, “Come.” They know Him as the One who has loved them, and washed them from their sins, &c., and they are within the veil. The Spirit leads the chant, Come. The church has the consciousness in herself of the relationship, and the coming of Christ to receive the church could not be matter of indifference; it could not be

understood by a person who has not the living relationship. If I have the relationship, and He knocks, do I want an explanation of who He is before I open the door? Does the wife wait before she opens to her husband, when she knows his knock? “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Are all Christians saying, Come? No! Then what is to be done? The church is corrupt; there is the great house. But there are individual hearers; let them say, “Come.” The first desire is to have Christ, and to Him she says, “Come;” the next) that all who hear should have right affections towards Christ, and say, “Come:” You that hear, do you join, and say, “Come"?

You get the whole circle of right affections in this verse: first, that arising from the consciousness of being the bride; secondly, desire for all the saints. Why are you lingering outside Christ? Are you waiting for judgments on the earth? There is a desire that the saints should have no hindrance to the single eye, and readiness to say, “Come,” knowing the heart is not right if not saying, “Come.” Then is that all? No; there is a third thing—the gracious perception that there are thirsty souls wanting to be refreshed. She says to them, “I have the Spirit, I have been refreshed.” The church does not say, “Come to me” —the false church says that—but the church says, “Come.” I have not got the pure flowing of the river yet (Rev. 22), but you come. The next thing to the supply of our own need is the discernment of the wants of these thirsty ones. We can say, I have part in the Bridegroom—I have rivers of living water. We ought to be able to say, I have got the river. Any one can say, There are rivers; but we ought to be able to say, We have them. If our hearts are in the circle of these affections, we shall say to others, Come, and have them too. Is that all? No; there are yet others invited: “Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.” Thus the church is seen in its full bridal place and desire for Christ's coming without a question of judgment; and so in the individual that hears His voice. Then follow the invitations of grace.

Christ has many crowns—King of Jews, King of nations, &c. Angels never reign; they serve most blessedly, but never judge or rule. We reign, and the Old Testament saints also, though they are not the bride. There is this distinction between the church and the kingdom; all saints are in the kingdom, but not all in the church.

Righteous rule is in the millennium—sin not allowed, but instantly punished with death. Thus, though there may be sin breaking out and judged, there will not be evil allowed or successful.

The Holy Ghost now comes with a certain amount of blessing to us. If the flesh is not subdued up to the practical reception of the revelation, there is trial. Peter had the revelation about Christ (Matt. 16), but his flesh did not like the cross.

The moral condition of the soul may be such as not to carry the joy in our walk through the world. There is an individual link between Christ and the soul that he will not lose when he gets to heaven— “a name given that no man knoweth,” &c. When there is individual walk with God, which ministers to the common blessing of all, the Holy Ghost being ungrieved.

Community of joy is a little more exciting and intense. (Luke 24) It will fill heaven; there will be common joy and individual joy there. Wonderful! to be able to talk about it as ours.

Revelation 5

Redemption puts the government into the hands of the Lamb. This part of Revelation gives us the process (after the church is done with) of putting the inheritance into the hand of the Lamb, or rather the preparing by chastenings those who are to be in the inheritance.

It is a “Book written within, and on the backside,” quite full, so that both sides of the parchment were covered. “Christ came to do his Father's will” might be the heading of a roll, or volume— “In the volume of the book it is written of me.” The contents of it would show what that will was, but before it was opened He was ready to do it. “Thy law is within my heart.”

Verse 3. No one, none, not literally “no man.”

Verse 5. The elders are those who have intelligence in this revelation—they have “the mind of Christ.”

Christ, to take the inheritance, must take it by redemption, or else He would have had a polluted inheritance, and as God—man He could not do so. Therefore, although when He first appears to open the book the elders give Him His title as “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” this character, which was one connected with earth, gives way to that of the Lamb “slain.” (See ver. 6.) He is called the ROOT, and not the Offspring, of David here, because He is taking that of which He is the source. It is the puzzle the Lord put to the Pharisees when He asked, “What think ye of Christ? and they say, The Son of David. How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?” “Sit thou on my right hand,” &c., was the Lordship of the Son of man. And they could not understand the riddle. None could be the Root but God, and this was what He would have had them understand as to David's Lord.

There are three things connected with having the “mind of Christ;” and the Christian has all three. (See 1 Cor. 2:9-16.) First, communication by the Spirit, which is revelation; secondly, reception by the Spirit, which is inspiration; thirdly, discernment by the Spirit, which is spiritual understanding.

The Lamb is described as having seven horns, denoting power; and seven eyes, intelligence. We find the eyes of the Lord mentioned in other passages (2 Chron. 16.) as providential care of His people through the earth. (Zech. 4.) In chapter 3: 9 is a stone, on which are seven eyes; it is in view of the temple—seven eyes of God fixed on the stone laid in Jerusalem. Take Christ as the stone, Jerusalem is the center of His chosen people. Then chapter 4:10 shows us His government reaching out through the earth. That which is seen in Revelation v. is the commencement of the taking the government, the same which will be first in Jerusalem, and then over the whole earth—known now to faith; and if the elders and living creatures begin the song, the joy spreads anticipatively, so as to take in every creature.

In Zechariah 6 “The counsel of peace shall be between them both” —between Jehovah and the man. There had been no war between the offices, therefore no peace to be made. But this peace will take place after He has had to chasten the people. It was not peace, when He had to say, You are not going on right: I must send the Assyrian upon you. But now, instead of that, there is a Man

on the throne of God on behalf of His people; and He is competent to go and take the book without its being opened for action. When thus opened, it becomes a different thing—He has a new place. Not only is He the securer of His people's blessing, but through judgment the dispenser of blessing to the earth.

There is both worthiness and competency in Him to unfold the counsels of God. “Lo, I come to do thy will,” whatever it might be. The Lamb in the glory is the center of worship. Observe, they worship before the seals are opened.

Verse 8 is the priestly character of the worshippers. They have “harps,” symbolical of praise, Harps were brought in by David. Before that they had trumpets to call to war, &c., but instruments for praise were introduced by David. They are called instruments of God. (1 Chron. 16: 6.)

The “prayers” alluded to are those that go up from saints, on earth, after the church is taken. Vials are bowls, or censers. The saints in heaven are in intercession for the saints then to be on earth. This present is the day of atonement. The public manifestation of the acceptance of the sacrifice is not yet. We know it, because we have the Holy Ghost the proof of it, but the Priest will come forth in glory to the earth, as in Leviticus 9:23, the consecration of the priests (the same thing). Moses (king in Jeshurun), and Aaron the priest, typical of Christ as King and Priest, went into the tabernacle, and then came out to bless the people. This is yet to come; and the difference between what we have now by virtue of the Holy Ghost, and what will be in the future glory, is typified in the two different accounts in Kings and Chronicles, where in the one the glory in the house is spoken of, and in the other before all the people, Chronicles being throughout more relative to the inheritance than Kings.

The bells and pomegranates on the priests' garments are significant: the bells, which were heard when he went in and when he came out, of the gifts of the Holy Ghost; and the pomegranates, of fruit. These gifts were given when Christ went into the glory on the day of Pentecost, and will be when He comes out, when there will be a fresh outpouring of the Spirit (these are diffused through the church now, and known to faith).

John 14 gives us to see that the Holy Ghost was sent because Christ interceded, and gained that gift for them; He took as much interest there for them as when down here. The Father, too, was interested. He gave Christ, and He will not leave us without another Comforter, or Advocate, who abides in and with us forever. In chapter xv. Christ sends Him. The glorified Man has power to give the Holy Ghost. “He shall testify of me.” The distinctive truth in chapter xvi. is that the Holy Ghost as the One come, and what He was to do when come. (See ver. 8-14.)

Chapter 158

Revelation and Rationalism

After the law, the rule of God's government on earth, the prophets showed the coming Messiah, His sufferings and glories; but it was as seeing it afar off, and recalling to the law, not announcing the kingdom as then coming. The law and the prophets were not until John. By him the kingdom is preached. He goes before the face of Jehovah to prepare His ways. He receives from above his testimony and place; but his testimony was of the earth, repentance, judgment, the kingdom-Messiah coming amongst them. Then Christ comes, yet does not receive from heaven, but comes from heaven, and can tell directly what He has seen and has heard and knows. He is in the bosom of the Father, and can declare God; and He does so. “No man receiveth his testimony.” Man wills not what is heavenly.

But what an infinite blessing is this of which these rationalists would deprive us—the positive revelation of what is heavenly; the blessed communication of what is above! To talk here of life and religious life is all simply nonsense. Can religious life reveal what it has never seen, the blessedness in which it has never yet been? True religious Christian life is formed by this revelation: and think of reducing men to mere conscience, and rejecting the revelation even of what is heavenly to conscience! What a lowering thing it is! No; the Son speaks what He knows, and testifies what He has seen. It is the very essence of Christianity, and sole source of blessing. But, man being so evil as to reject it, God is not frustrated in His love: the need of it as above all is made manifest. Redemption is accomplished, and thereon man takes his seat on high on the throne of God, and the Holy Ghost is sent down the witness and proof of it, and testifies of the glory he (man) is in, his relationship with God his Father, all the wisdom and glory of the counsels and work by which he is brought there; the church's place with Christ, founding a perfected and purged conscience on the work of Christ, so that holiness is righteously connected with the entrance of a sinner into the glory he had come utterly short of. This links the heart to what is heavenly; while the testimony of the Holy Ghost is the sure foundation on which the soul can rest for the certainty of it as truthful, and thus a living enjoyment. God's will and counsel; Christ's accomplished work; the Holy Ghost's testimony (Heb. 10): such is what gives liberty and boldness to enter into the presence of God. The scriptures are the recorded testimony for all times. Ministry does not cease, but revelation does, when all is revealed. The word of God is completed.

Chapter 159

Remarks on the Revelation: Part 1

Before entering upon the consideration of this portion of the Rev. 1 would briefly revert to chapters 4, 5. The substance of the instruction I derive from them, in one little word, is this—that the Divine Power has taken another and a new position, in which and from which to exercise itself, separate and distinct from that in which it had revealed itself as connected, properly speaking, with the present dispensation. Such I conceive to be the instruction meant to be conveyed by the representation in chapter 4; while the purpose and object of this new throne seem taught by the circumstances revealed in connection with it, especially in chapter 5—even the bringing in, for Christ and the church in Him, of the day of glory; and this brought about by the exercise of the Almighty power which created and upholds all things, so over-ruling all things for Christ and the church from this throne,. This throne will be found to be the center, source, and regulator of all the vast machinery and means presented in the sum of the book, as well as the place whence the Lamb revealed to John, for the church, the history of these coming actions of the power of the God of creation and providence.

These two things are in themselves, and must be kept by us, very distinct: as connected with the active energy of the former, the Lamb never appears in the character of the Lamb upon the throne throughout the book; the latter being the only circumstances in which as the Lamb He acts from this throne; for He is on the throne, and has had this blessed honor and service assigned to Him there, thence to reveal to John, for the church, the history of the actions of the power of God as Creator and Sustainer, bringing in the day of His own glory as Redeemer. The doing of this, however, is the work of God, properly speaking, as Creator—unto whom, when in weakness, He (Jesus) “committed himself as unto one that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:23); concerning whom He has said, “I will put my trust in him” (Heb. 2:13); and on whose word to take the kingdom and glory He waits. While the Lamb takes no part, as upon the throne, in the actions subject to it, which are to prepare the way for His coming glory, it is He preeminently to whose intervention the church is indebted for the knowledge of these coming things. And this gives us as saints our confidence in studying what is thus presented to us—it is shown to us by the Lamb Himself. It enables us also (since He whose book it was intended it should be thus revealed by the Lamb from the throne to John) to understand the preparative character of all that precedes the opening of the seventh seal. Till He has opened the seventh seal, the Lamb is seen upon the throne, showing to John, for the saints, things which must shortly come to pass; but upon the opening of the seventh seal, we see no more of the Lamb upon the throne, but Himself in the new character of an angel by the altar, gives the signal for its tale of disaster to be told.

The object of the first seals is, I conceive, to prepare the saints' minds for the sum and substance of the seventh; for I cannot for a moment admit that the unity of the roll and the consecutive order of its seven parts, is to be set aside by supposing that the revelation, consequent upon the opening of any of the seals preceding the fast, leads down to the end, and that a subsequent seal recommences from the beginning. I know some have thought that the seals thus present three courses from the beginning of time to the end; but such an interpretation is to me incorrect, and

destructive of the internal perfectness and unity of the book. To proceed with the seals, which commence the portion proposed for inquiry. The four first are distinguished from the rest by the call severally, upon the breaking of the seal, of the living creatures, to “come and see;” these four present us with living agents going forth to the earth: the result of the fifth seal is different; John looks under the altar, and learns what is the present state and expectation of the souls of those slain for the word of God, &c., and that their number is still to be added to from the earth; during the doing of which they must still wait for the full enjoyment of the white robes then given to them, for the day of vengeance was not yet come.

The sixth introduces a great earthquake, and such as might take place any day, and the thoughts of men about it—thoughts very natural to man as a fallen being about such things at all times. Then comes a parenthesis: four angels come forward, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, but they are withholden from so doing till the servants of God on earth are sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel are then sealed on earth, and from them the eye of the apostle rises to the great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne and the Lamb. They are certified to him to be the heavenly family; and these from among the nations are thus seen at rest before the remnant of Israel gets into trouble. Then (chap. 8:1) the Lamb breaks the seventh seal, and the seven trumpet-angels of sorrow and woe take their place. Yet another parenthesis follows, for the first blast is not until upon a signal given by another angel, and He confessedly the Mediator. There, at the golden altar, with his golden censer and much incense, having offered up the prayers of all saints, he casts the censer, filled with fire from the altar, to the earth; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake, and the angels begin to sound of woe. There is something very gracious in these parentheses, the subject-matter of which gives so much repose, as showing how nothing can touch the disciple of Christ—even the messengers of God's sorrows to the wicked utter not their messages, save as at the command of Him who is Mediator to us.

The unity of the book will, I believe, be found to be to many the clue to much of the difficulty; in examining hereafter more closely the substance of the book as a whole, and the exact import of the revelation which follows the breaking of each seal, this will be, I believe, abundantly confirmed and established; at present I would only say, that so naturally and strongly does unity and consecutiveness of order in the seals suggest itself upon the first aspect of the matter, that very strong evidence ought to be required from those who would have the contrary received by us. The idea of consecutive order in the seals is more strongly suggested to the mind by the writing being upon a roll, than if in such a thing as a modern book. The order of breaking would be the reverse of that of making the seals. For when the whole was written on both sides, the first seal would be placed after rolling a little of that which, by further rolling for the second seal, would become the roller on which the winding afterward proceeded. The opening of the seal first made, of course, could not take place till the whole of the outer six seals had been broken. The object of the six first, and of the parenthesis which follows the sixth and precedes the seventh, I conceive to be simply preparative. This parenthesis also seems to be just a commentary on the fifth and sixth seal; as showing who these brethren and fellow-servants that were yet to be killed are, and why, when the earthquake came, there was only fear from the men of the world, and no joyful shout from the disciples, “Jesus is come!” for this parenthesis tells us a remnant of Jews upon earth were sealed, and the disciples out of the trouble and trial in the heavens—not, however, in the full enjoyment of

their glory, for their Bridegroom has not taken His own throne; but they rest before Him still sitting upon the throne of divine Providence. Thus I find the Lord sitting in rest at the right hand of power, and His sole action (as connected with this throne) the communication of the history of its actings to John; but directly the disciples are housed, and God's purposes as connected with the earth are alone in question, I find Him in action (as the emissary of this throne, however, still), till He takes His place definitely on Mount Zion with the one hundred and forty-four thousand redeemed from the earth unto God and Himself.

To examine now more closely the import of the revelation which follows the breaking of each seal, as was proposed.

The four first seals seem marked off, in some respects, from the rest by their having, in common to themselves alone, the introduction of the cry from the living creatures to “come and see,” and by the substance of each of them being a horse and a rider going forth in aggressive agency from the throne to the earth.

The living creatures, as I have said, find this throne the place of their support, “for they were in the midst of the throne and round about the throne” (chap.4:6), and are, if my interpretation of them is correct, the representative heads of those classes of creatures which needed and found refuge in the ark, in the deluge, and with whom the covenant to Noah was formed—the wild beast, the cattle, the fowls of the air, and may; parts of the fifth and sixth day's creation—they are representative heads of all the classes wherein was the breath of life; the rest of creation, as the fish and plants, &c., needed not a refuge from the deluge. From their connection with these four riders, and their works, I judge that there must be some natural and palpable connection between that which the living creatures represent, and that which the riders represent and do; and, more than that, a connection of deep interest to the living creatures, for no sooner do they discern the horses than they cry, “Come and see.” If creation, as connected with the Noahic covenant, is what the living creatures represent (as I believe it assuredly is), then creation, as connected with the Noahic covenant (the signs and marks of which are also pre-eminently stamped upon the throne which sustains these creatures, see chap. 4.), must, I believe, be deeply interested in the works of these riders.

As to the riders, what they are, I do not think any one can doubt who takes a review of the passages in which horses, and riders, and chariots of horses are representatively presented as connected with other things than those which literally they are the names of. Whether we turn to 2 Kings 2:12; 13:14, or to Zech. 1:8; 6:2, 3, 6, I find them uniformly to represent angelic agencies, never to be symbols of earthly things, as far as I remember. Any one, running in thought through the connection of Israel's history, in its various parts with God, may see at once the use our God makes of these angelic powers in His kingdom of providence; and the throne now before us is the throne of the Lord God Almighty, His names as Creator and Sustainer of all things. Of the distinctive character of each of these aggressive angelic agencies, thus going from the throne of providence, we shall see more hereafter. For besides these things possessed in common by the four first seals, each of them has its distinctive peculiarity, which we will now consider, and then their interpretation.

First Seal.—There seems much peculiar to the first seal as distinguishing it from the rest of the four first. For instance, “the voice of thunder” is not mentioned in any of the others; the color of the

horse is the same as that on which the King of kings and the Lord of lords, with His attendant bands (in chap. 19: 11-14) ride; the color, too, used as expressive of glory (Matt. 17:2; 28:3, &c.), of divine majesty (Rev. 1), of purity (chap. 7: 9-13, &c.). Again, the rider had neither the implement of his aggressive action, nor any commission given to him—neither indebted to, nor restrained by, a commission. He possessed a bow, was recognized as conqueror by the gift of the crown, and went forth, in the energy of his own might, unordered, conquering and to conquer. The bow also is the weapon of aggressive war from the distance.

Second Seal.—The whole seal is evidently very subordinate to the preceding. No voice of thunder heard, no emphatic “I saw and behold;” but simply, “there came forth another horse, red,” with a rider on its back: he has no power of his own, like the first; no implement of his own, like the first and third; nor any name, like the fourth. And though the action be more definite than the first, it is of narrower range, and in character lower than that of any of the rest. No commission is definitely given to him, but only liberty and authority to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; liberty and authority (the great sword), that is, to do that to which there is in fallen man the fullest propensity and readiness, just simply when left to himself. Who can remember the first scenes of man's history, after his exclusion from Eden, and not sigh at this likeness of fallen Adam stamped upon our Cainish race?

Third Seal.—Besides the announcement of the living creature, “Come and see,” and John's emphatic “I saw and behold,” there is a peculiar energy in this vision” there was a black horse, and its rider self-possessed of his implement;” his commission also is definitely given either by Him that sat upon the throne or the Lamb, for they only were in the midst of the four living creatures whence the voice came. The commission is very definite, but in nature it is very high; because, to an office not altogether above the range of man, but one most closely connected with the testimony God has been pleased to give of Himself even to the heathen, in fruitful seasons—to the regulation of famine. The corn and the barley, the oil and the wine, are all had in remembrance.

Fourth Seal.—The natural name and attendant of the fourth rider (whose horse was greenish-white), Death: his name and Hades his pursuivant, give him (as well as the language in which he is described) distinction. His service is not under a formally given commission, even as the second, yet more is implied here, I think, than there. There it is said, “it was given to him to take peace from the earth and a great sword;” but here, “power was given to them [both] to kill on the fourth part of the earth with sword, and famine, and death, and the beasts of the earth.” There the second rider set others to kill one another, here these two themselves are at the deadly work. Liberty and authority to stir up the bad passions of men seem to be less of commission than the communication of power to mow down a fourth of the earth, not only by the sword, which is in man's hand—in one sense at least—but also by famine, death, and the wild beasts, which are in God's. The pre-eminence of this rider also is seen in the power conceded to him to use those things over which the two preceding riders were set.

Chapter 160

Remarks on the Revelation: Part 2

I feel, prevented by ignorance from tracing out the distinctive connection between the respective parts of creation, as represented by the four living creatures, and the works and spheres of these riders. Each of the riders is announced by a living creature: and if the living creatures speak here according to the order. in which they are mentioned in chapter 4, then that order would be, first, the lion-faced creature; then, secondly, the calf-faced creature; thirdly, the man-faced; and fourthly, the eagle-faced creature. In this order they are mentioned in chapter 4: 7, but the word, the first, is there found as before, the lion-faced creature; while in chapter 4: 1 it is not said the first, but simply, I heard one; which, of course, might have been that which is called the fourth in chapter 4, and so the order of the rest of the series called the second, third, and fourth be quite deranged. I desire, therefore, here simply to plead, “If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant,” and to wait on the Lord for further light.

As to the interpretation of these riders, I would speak not with decision, but merely as suggesting to others, who have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things, who with me also are learning to prove all things, and hold fast that which is truth, what has struck my own mind in communion with the Lord as His mind about them. I do this with the more confidence, as believing it to be the will of our Father, and of His gracious ways of leading us all on, for us to have great liberty of speech one with the other as to what we believe to be the mind of our God, never putting forward either the notions we have learned from others, nor being backward to put forward in its proper place and season that which we believe we have learned in holy, blessed communion from our God. And sure I am that we should all be ready to say, “We seek not to establish, we love not our own opinions: if others can prove they savor not of both ‘grace and truth,' as in Him, let them pass as the morning cloud!” These four riders, then, seem to me the representation of the Lord God Almighty's recognition of what I may call “the ways and means” of providential rule. Those things which from the beginning were used by God to keep man's wickedness in a lapsed world so far in check, as to render it possible for His own people to abide in it, and His own purposes to be carried on, here seem recognized, as connected with this new throne and its objects. The throne, be it remembered, is a new throne; not the throne of God as the Father—not the throne of the Divine eternal glory, as seen in the light to which no man can approach—not the millennial throne either, for that is the Lord's in the character of Messiah, and not as this, which presents the Lord God Almighty overruling (for the Lamb, so as to bring in His name of Lordship) all in nature, creation, and providence.

None of the actions of the riders seem to me to be judgment, properly so called, so as for a disciple to be able to plead exemption from them. Any one, whose mind sweeps through the disastrous history of the earth with the eye of faith, will see how the very goodness of God has been aggressively acting upon the course of things below, even when there was no pillar and no cloud to sight, marking His near presence. It is just this which seems taken up here, as the first means to be used toward bringing in the Lordship of the Lamb that was slain. As to the first, we know, concerning the Son of God as God, that it is written, “by him all things consist.” (Col. 1:17.)

“Upholding all things by the word of his power.” (Heb. 1:3.) Now the thought which presses upon my mind is, that this first horseman is the Son as God, not as the Lamb, nor as the Lord, but as God, secretly and from the distance using the powers of providence in their natural course, as thus witnessing for God; using, not the delegated power which grace makes it his boast to wait for (see Phil. 2), but in the power and majesty of His own Godhead acting as He will. And while we worship and love the meek and lowly Jesus, we never surely should forget that even all through His course on earth, and while now as the Man He is waiting for His appointed inheritance, He has been, and is, and ever must be, as God, the Sustainer and Director of that which Himself created. The Lord pardon His servant if a dim eye, or a film upon it, has seen Him in that in which He is not! But I do feel very strongly the peculiar dignity of that first rider.

Secondly: the more immediate and natural connection, in a world of sin, between man and war, may account for the comparative insignificancy of the second as compared with the third and fourth seal; while the positive character of wickedness in war, not merely like sickness and affliction and trouble, proofs of sin, but fuller developments of it, may account for its commissioned agent; besides, as connected with the object of the throne, the needs be of its being guided and directed and its course.

Thirdly: the close connection between God as the Creator and God of providence, and His testimony of Himself as such, fully accounts, to my own mind, for the comparative importance of the third rider. His action is not aggressive to appearance: balances were in His hand when first He appeared, but nothing seemed his to do, till his commission comes forth that he should rule in the famine and necessity which not he had made, but the God who commissioned him. Reference might be made, as illustrative of the balances, to Ezek. 4:10-16.

Fourthly: this seems indeed to have a service of sadness and horror, but all, still (though faith would see God in it, as it does in everything), merely in the natural course of events apparently. His commission seems limited to a fourth of the earth. His name, Death; his follower, Hades; and the powers used by them, black famine, red warfare, death and the beasts.

When I look through the earth, I see sorrow, trouble, affliction, and trial of every kind natural to man as fallen. I see too not merely natural death, but warfare and all its attendant horrors; famine, and its wretchedness; and sometimes, as has strikingly been the case lately in India, all of these combined together, and not only so, but, ere combined, each so augmented in itself as to be fearful. How fearful is the account of the item of famines alone in India during the last thirty years! by one, three millions swept off in a few months, the atmosphere of districts putrid from unburied corpses, rivers choked with the bodies of the famished dead and of babes and children cast therein by their parents! These wild fruits of the fall are growing everywhere naturally and spontaneously, yet not now to us as disciples without our God. As upon the throne of the Lord God Almighty, He has commissioned agents over them all. The swelling and flowing of their course is all overruled, little as we may see it, for the bringing in of the Lordship of Jesus. As disciples also, we may be subject to them in whole or in part, for they are not, properly speaking, either judgments or chastenings: if in them, we should know not only that all things are of Him who hath reconciled us to Himself (the blessing we get from our adoption by Him), but more than this, that they are the precursors (His purpose in them who sits upon the throne) of the Lordship. They are the cover of the hand of God overruling even wickedness, so as to keep it in check, and give it

guidance, that it may, though unconsciously, work on toward the introduction of the glory of the Lord; and, while so doing, work together for good to them that love God even now. How wonderful are the ways of our God! If warfare or famine, or aught else, sprang up, the thought it surely should awaken in us is that of the preparation for Jesus' coming Lordship. And while I recognize that into judgment we cannot come, because accepted in the Beloved, I do not see that the saints are guaranteed against providential trials of any kind; nor do I see in these four horsemen any signs whatsoever, as for a particular season or period of time for which we must look as to precede the appearing of Jesus to us. The whole, for what I can tell, may have had its full accomplishment long since.

The gradual increase of the pressure from the first to the fourth seal assures me of the consecution of their order, though I fully believe that the actions of the preceding cease not necessarily with the introduction of the succeeding. I would merely remark, that while I state the very deep interest which is common to the living creatures collectively in all the works of these riders, whose services to the throne are in that which these living creatures represent, I incline to believe that fuller light will show a distinctive connection of some one of the living creatures with the works in particular of each several rider.

Hitherto, then, the Lord God Almighty had been acting simply in the common routine of his providential arrangements; those who knew and loved Him, who might be on earth, being partakers of the heavenly calling, and thus not only dissociated from the earth, but fully associated with the person of the Lamb wheresoever He might be: definite judgment, as a thing let loose to take its course through the earth, there had been none, for that would have been dishonor unto Jesus. As a Father He may in the church have both judged and chastened, but as the Lord God Almighty ruling in the world He had kept His children distinct in His mind from the world, and either spared it entirely for their sakes, or merely judged it in measure (as in seal 4) for their sakes—but distinct general judgment there had been none. Now, however, the time was nearly come when it should commence; but preparatorily to it we must have, first, the removal out of the way of those who had been partakers of the heavenly calling; and, then, the bringing in of another witness in connection with the earth.

Chapter 161

Remarks on the Revelation: Part 3

The Fifth Seal differs from what has preceded or will follow, as having all the action proper to it confined to heaven. The seal was opened by the Lamb upon the throne in heaven; there also was John. But in this he sees neither horses going forth to earth, nor, as in the sixth and seventh, scenes of things on earth. His vision is confined here to what is altogether in heaven: the souls of those that had been slain for the word of God, and the testimony they held, were seen beneath the altar; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” Who are these sufferers for the sake of God's word and testimony? If we trace backward, we find the only ones they can be are those whom John represents in chapter 1—the church; whose very standing and calling, in one aspect, is,” We are appointed as sheep for the slaughter, we are killed all day long.” And observe the light their word casts upon the character of the preceding seals. “How long till thou dost judge and avenge our blood,” &c. Had they then seen nothing of judgment or vengeance in what had preceded in the four first seals? Nothing; neither was there; for the answer from the throne confirms that which their demand thus suggests, and bids them wait still for His revenge.

But how came they now to be thus distinctly heard, and that as consciously enjoying full fellowship with all the righteous ways and purpose of Him who was on the throne? Why now are these, some of whom at least had lain there a long time, now seen? Why now heard with loud voice crying unto God for vengeance? Why now each put in white, though told to wait? Simply thus, because now there was about to be a new witness—new in some senses at least—brought forward—a witness which had signs and marks about it, as distinctly peculiar, as were the signs and marks which distinguished the apostleship of Paul from that of Peter, though not of the same kind. The character of these will appear hereafter; one, however, is marked in chapter vii. These who were hid beneath the altar had needed, had known, no seal such as we find given to the one hundred and forty-four thousand of the earth. Daring their whole time God was merely acting in providence; and directly He is about to step beyond it, their number is closed, and the one hundred and forty-four thousand from the earth sealed, not from death—for as fellow-servants and brethren they also were to be killed, as these were, but, as in Ezek. 19, from the judgments of the Lord. (See chap. 7: 1.) This alone would be a strong ground to my own soul in proof that the heavenly disciple is not to look for even a ripple of trouble to precede his seeing Jesus; and, besides this, I find these fully recognized, and white robed given them, though they are told they cannot take their place With the Lord as avenger yet for a little season, and a little season it will be until their fellow-servants and their brethren who should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

O the unbounded riches of the grace of God! Not only must the church be set up at Jerusalem first, as we see in Acts, but, such is His loving-kindness, there also must be found at last, as we see here; for these brethren and fellow-servants we find are (chap. 7.) Jews of every tribe twelve thousand. I might make here a remark, applicable also to Israel's return to the land, as connected with the appearing of the disciples in glory. To man's eye distant things often seem as one, which a nearer approach and more close examination prove to be divided into many parts. We are too

prone to overlook the steps of Israel's return from their present state of scattering among the nations, to their establishment in the land; and likewise of the stages by which the disciples will journey into the fullness of glory. Now I think it is plain that our Lord entered not at once out of suffering into the glory which was the recompense of His toils. (See Phil. 2) After His resurrection there was an interval until He had been to the Father, in which He could not present Himself to His disciples as the subject of their enjoyment. (John 19) There was then a longer period during which He was seen from time to time by them, but not as the object of their faith fixed within the veil; then, when ascending, He went up from earth to the cloud, and thence to His Father. Now it does seem to me evident that this fifth seal, the substance of chapter vii., from verse 9 to end; chapter 19: 1-10 and 11-21; and chapter 20, presents stages in the entrance of the disciples into the glory in themselves very distinct the one from the other; I leave this for the consideration of others. The title by which these beneath the altar address God (“Despot,” δεσπ■της), as well as the expectation they express toward Him of vengeance and judgment, both seem to me to mark the connection and subjection of the whole scene to the throne of chapters 4 and 5.

The action of the Sixth Seal is confined to earth. As a whole, it seems to me, like the opening of Zechariah's prophecy (chap. 1:7-11), to present a scene, the grand, if not sole, object of which is, to bring to light the state of the earth. In both cases the entire scene seems subservient to the inquiry, “What is the state of the earth?” Here it comes, however, in a connection different from what it does in Zechariah. That there is, in the general testimony of scripture, a shaking of the heavens as preceding, and as quite distinct from, the removal of the heavens, I think all are agreed; the former ushering in Jesus' return to Israel, the latter the prelude to Clod becoming all in all. That the scene here is the shaking, as distinguished from and preceding, by upwards of one thousand years, the removal of the heavens from before the face of the great white throne (Rev. 20:11) is what I believe. If it be objected (ver. 14), “the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together” does not comport with the shaking, but removal, I answer, first, the Spirit seems here speaking according not to what is to be in reality, but to what is as to appearances. And this is proved by verse 13: “And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.” The same sort of earthquake which would give to men on earth this appearance, as to the stars, would give likewise, as to the heavens, the appearance of departing as in the rolling up of a scroll. Secondly, both the shaking and the removing are upon the same principle as to God's ways, and the character of results (with regard to both His glory, in connection with man, and redeemed man's entrance into enjoyment in Him); and therefore the one is but a premonitor and precursor of the other.

It is thus in the close of chapter 5 we find the recognition which creation gives to Jesus, when He takes the book, expressing itself in terms such as fully suit only the time of the full manifestation of His Lordship; so may it be here. For this throughout scripture is the way of the Spirit; He sees in one thing which is little something infinitely larger, and so speaks: for in the lesser thing, the counsel, and plan, and mind of God, as bringing in the greater, is seen, and so the less becomes the pledge as well as the precursor of the greater. See David's song, 2 Sam. 22: “In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God; and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also and came down; and darkness

was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; and he was seen upon the wings of the wind. And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies," &c. &c. And, thirdly, I say that the language is not so strong as what is used in the Old Testament for the shaking, and shown to refer to it alone by the context. See, for instance, in Isa. 34, which is connected with the judgment of Idumea: "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment."

The whole attention of John in this seal seems as exclusively shut up to the appearance of what is seen from the earth, and to the effect upon man there, as in the preceding seal to heaven. The quaking of the earth first calls his attention as he rests above in heaven (chap. 4:1, 2); and then the appearances produced around the heavens, of the earth, and throughout its every part, by the earthquake. Then the universal panic which follows among all the inhabitants of earth is described. As in heaven, when the Lamb first took the book, the mind of heaven confessed Him, from one and all there, as worthy, so here the mind of earth is expressed, and high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, all on whom the light of love and grace had shined without effect, tell the deep secrets common to every soul, that God is not only hated and dreaded, but that ever, all through their light and mirthful career, guilty conscience had kept alive the suspicion that some day or other He would burst in upon them. The sudden shock and the fearful signs of the earthquake wring the secret from them, and, oh, how it tells of man's rebellious heart! Six thousand years of mercy and goodness has God been showing, and the only thought of man's heart in nature still is that He is an austere God. Six thousand years, too, man has been boasting in his own wisdom and sufficiency, and yet at a mere earthquake he will do what Adam did at first, try to hide himself from omnipresent Omniscience; yea, rather be crushed than endure the thought of meeting God face to face.

In this shaking not a trumpet is sounded, not a vial poured out; and I do not believe that God reveals Himself or the Lamb as in judgment in it, but that the cry "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" is just merely the expression of guilty man's hatred, and fear, and unwillingness to meet God. If it be said, Why should God care to elicit this? I would answer, as connected with the church thus removed, with Israel just about to be sealed, and with the world just about to be visited in judgment under the seventh seal, and with the character and ways of God involved in each of these three acts, purpose and object enough can surely be seen. It is remarkable that while we have here the first action of man in nature, when such disorder in his circumstances takes place as to make him think God has broken in upon him (an endeavor to escape from. Him by any effort, even self-destruction), when God and the Lord are present in the very act of wrath these dread, their action is quite different, and instead of endeavoring to escape, they gather together against both the one and the other. (Chap. 19:19.) I would add, that as the language of man under the sixth seal is not this language when the Lord does come in wrath, so neither could it be the language when the heavens and the earth have passed away, and the great white throne of judgment has been set up. I do not suppose that the words they utter must necessarily be upon their lips, though they may indeed. It is, however, a thing quite common to God the Holy Ghost, in presenting any

party with a view to its character being learned, to put into its mouth, not the words he might use, but the force and substance of these words as understood to God—and, believing the object of the Spirit here to be to draw attention simply to the state universal of the earth, I conceive thus it may be here. Nothing seems taken notice of here beyond those alive on the earth, after the church's removal, and at the time of the sealing of Israel; but the whole seems to run its course previous to the Lamb leaving the throne of chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 162

Remarks on the Revelation: Part 4

The character of the cry expressed upon the earth under the action of this seal, and the universality of it, is of special importance to us, as connected with the sealing of the remnant from among Israel; for, as the character of the four first seals, when taken in connection with the fifth, shows that no signs, as of God's interfering in open judgment of the world, will precede the rapture of the saints; so this shows that the manifestation of Israel as connected with God follows, and not precedes, our removal; a fact, I believe, of great importance. The cry had been universal from the earth, and therefore had included the nation of Israel; for had any of them been in conscious association with God, the cry would, so far forth, have not been universal. But however God might ere this have been dealing with Israel preparatively, none of them had been brought out into either conscious or recognized relationship with Him. This accordingly follows the sealing of a new witness (naturally more connected with the fortunes of the earth), as God's witness among the Gentiles when He comes in to judge them for their conduct during the proclamation of grace. As I said before, their being of Israel speaks volumes concerning the grace of God, and is a most blessed vindication of the power of His own truth and grace. The sealing of this new witness is evidently connected with the judgments which were coming.

To the panic and cry consequent upon it, God answers by sending four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, and they take their place on the four corners of the earth, to withhold the wind in its passage. They were, however, prohibited hurting anything by another angel, until he should have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads. Some have argued against these twelve tribes being literally of Israel, because Dan is omitted, and Levi inserted. As to the first objection, it does not seem valid, because Simeon is omitted in the blessing of Moses. (Deut. 33) That Dan has a place in the land is evident from Ezek. 48:1-32. I think any one tracing the mention of the twelve tribes will find, after the division of Joseph into two, that one is generally suppressed—I say this as the result of investigation, be it right or wrong, though I have not space to go into it now. I would add, that the reason for not mentioning Levi in portions of scripture which look at the land as dwelt in by the nation, obviously does not hold good here, where the question is not about the land, but about witness before the nations. These one hundred and forty-four thousand, I conceive, are those referred to in the fifth seal as “to be killed;” they seem to be the witnesses for God, onward to the close of the Book of Revelation, and, suffering with Him even unto death, get their portion in the resurrection-glory and marriage-supper of the Lamb. If any one has well considered the church, as set up under Peter at Jerusalem, with the features distinctive and peculiar to it then, and the church, as under Paul over the whole earth, with the distinctive peculiarities of this state, he will be well able, I think, to understand after God has vindicated His truth and power in a remnant from among the Gentiles, as He seems doing now, that He should do likewise as to the Jews, and this, from its connection with the coming Lordship of Jesus, as well as from the light it sheds backward, would be the important thing. And this remnant of Israel, from the sealing onward, becomes “the saints,” whenever they are spoken of as on earth.

From this company just sealed, the apostle's eye next turns to and rests upon an innumerable multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and people, standing before the very throne described in chapters 4 and 5. The notice of this I press as showing it is a scene altogether pre-millennial, for then they shall be upon the throne of Jesus, the bride with Him; and evidently it is not post-millennial, as some have said, for then this throne shall not be, but God be all in all, and they not in heaven, as John sees them, but the new heavens and the new earth their portion. Under the fifth seal white robes were given to them; here they appear habited in them, and, in addition, with palms in their hands. Their cry is now, “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb;” a cry very different from that of the elders, in chapter 5, or that under the fifth seal, and one which could not have been sung then, because there was no manifestation of judgment; but now three things have marked to their intelligent eyes the nearness, if not presence, of the day of vengeance—namely, the earthquake, the four hurtful angels, and the sealing of the remnant of Israel. But it was this last which especially marked to them the rising up of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and brought them into the position of witnessing the open display and exercise of the retributive power of God and the Lamb.

The response of the angels, identifying themselves herewith, as they worship God, is immediate, “Amen! Blessing,” &c. Their song, though addressed to God, and not to the Lamb, is in substance much the same as in chapter 5, but the order in the honors paid is inverted, and here they are ascriptions not only as there said to be due. The elders and beasts being present identify the throne with that of chapters 4 and 5—the former, however, now representing those on earth about to be killed from among Israel; for the number from among the Gentiles was closed, and, they were present. Peculiar emphasis and force is given to this scene by what follows: for, as if with the express purpose of sealing the truth home to the thoughts of John, one of the elders asks him who they are who, out of all nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues, are thus arrayed in white, and whence they come? John declines to answer, and then the elder explains; not, however, resting upon the things by which as on earth they had been known, for that had been noted, “they were of all nations, kindreds,” &c.; but noticing that by which they had been known to heaven, their much tribulation, and use of the blood of the Lamb for cleansing; and than he passes on, after just touching upon these things, to rest upon the fact of their present and complete exemption from all suffering, and realized association, even at that time, with God and the Lamb. And all this while the remnant from Israel is just sealed, and before one single trumpet, or vial of trouble, or sorrow, has been exhibited. The temple mentioned in this verse seems to me pre-millennial, for in the golden city there is no temple—and no sooner have the one thousand years commenced than the city becomes the dwelling-place of all that have suffered with Jesus. The dwelling in the temple of God, and serving Him there day and night, with the Lamb dwelling in the midst of them, I conceive to be the position they hold from the time of the sealing of the remnant of Israel till their next step in glory. As to the blessings common to this their position, and that afterward, as in chapter 21, I need not speak—nor, perhaps, need I say that I believe that the throne in chapters 4 and 5 is now, at this present time, the abode of the Lord.

The four first seals present heaven acting upon the earth in restraint and control: the fifth the state of things in heaven when such a state of things ceases to be: the sixth the state of the earth at the same epoch, first in itself, and then as to God's witness set in contrast with those in beaten. The seventh seals to which we now come, presents the actions of heaven over the earth in retributive

power. But ere any of the agents of this can take their place, there is a silence of half an hour in heaven. The seven trumpet-angels take their stand; and He who had been in heaven as the Mediator and High Priest of the heavenly calling appears. The action is, to my mind, simple and clear, for His laying aside of the insignia of priestly intercession in the heavens becomes the signal for the commencement of trial and woe in the place where henceforth His witness is, and whence also, because it is there, His own intercession must arise. The action was in the temple, I judge, as presented in Hebrews, and is the closing up of His services there of that kind. He appears at the altar in. the temple with His censer, receives sweet incense, with which He offers up the prayers of all saints (contrasted, perhaps, with those at the time saints on earth), upon their ascending before God. He fills the censer with coals from the heavenly altar, and casts it down to earth, and the trouble begins. And thus, if I be right, we have proof upon proof, through the whole of this portion, how there is no sign whatever for which we can look as preceding our removal from earth to the presence of the Lord.

(Continued from page 192.)

Chapter 163

Remarks on the Revelation: Part 5

It is remarkable that the temple in heaven is only thrice mentioned in the revelation to John previous to the opening of the seventh seal, which is the commencement of sorrow to the earth; the three references are (chap. 3: 12), “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out;” and (chap. 6: 9) under the fifth seal, “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were beheaded,” &c., and (chap 7:15) in his temple shall dwell the innumerable multitude. This seems remarkable, because during the sorrows and woes of the trumpets the temple holds so very prominent a place. Thus first, in chapter viii., immediately after the opening of the seventh seal, an angel stands at the altar which was before the throne with a censer; and, when his work is done, the seven angels begin to sound; secondly, chapter 9, on the sixth angel sounding a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God, saying, &c.; then thirdly, in chapter 11, we have the temple of God (ver. 1), and the temple of God was opened in heaven, &c. (ver. 19); again, fourthly, chapter xiv., as to the harvest and vintage of the earth, we have three angels coming forth severally out of the temple (ver. 15); out of the temple which is in heaven (ver. 17); from the altar (ver. 18); fifthly, chapter xv. 5, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened (ver. 6), another angel comes out of the temple with the plagues, and (ver. 8) the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power, and no man was able to enter into the temple; and, sixthly, from the same place, chapter 16, a great voice proclaims it is done. (Ver. 17.)

No one reading these contexts can doubt that one of the objects, in the prominent place given therein to the temple, is to identify the actions with the divine glory, and to show that they are more than the actions of God simply as Lord God Almighty upon the throne; though that throne is, in these passages, shown to be in the temple. They are the actions of God, as God, in the Divine glory, and showing Himself thus to be the object of worship, though still, through His emissaries, the Over-ruler of all things likewise. Till the close of chapter 7, the Lamb is upon the throne; and so far the throne, as the seat of the government of one whose glory was, through grace, then fully to be known, stands without mention of the temple, and He that is there is seen as the door of everything; but no sooner is the innumerable multitude from among all nations, &c., brought to be in the temple than the throne seems hidden in it, and the actions which follow are seen only in connection with the emissaries of the throne. And this is just as one would have supposed; for every member of the heavenly calling has full access to God, and they are the objects of the former portion; the 144,000 from Israel are the objects of divine regard during the latter parts, and their standing and privileges are different and lower, and God's dealings to them more intermediate, through angels; and the definite action not openly presented and distinctly described as to us, but set forth in figure and symbols and parables. On this account I think that it is likely that while up to chapter 12 all has been literal and no symbol used, henceforth, onward, till the partakers of the heavenly calling again become involved as the object of action, the description may run in symbol altogether.

In approaching now to the consideration of the trumpets, I would notice one or two general principles connected with the study of truth: our power of understanding scripture consists in the mind and Spirit of Christ, which we, as sons of God, have. The new creation in us has the mind of God, and to it the Spirit, searching all things, yea, the deep things of God, communicates, as He will. Nevertheless it is the written word wherein these deep things are found. This I believe to be of great importance, as showing the hindrance which knowledge (as men count it), gained by observation of present circumstances and experience, the study of history or works of man, may be—if not all tested by accordance with the written word. For instance, in approaching the subject of the seven trumpets, we come with heads full of notions about trumpets, derived partly from the modern every-day use of them, partly from the study of profane history, and it may be partly from books of the customs and manners of oriental nations. Now just so far as these thoughts are different from the thoughts which would be formed in the mind of any simple child of God by the Spirit, in passing through His own mention of trumpets in the written word, just so far, I say, should we come to the subject with a false medium of communication. I would it were more our habit than it is, to trace out with patience and humility the Holy Ghost's use of words and things ere pronouncing what we believe to be the mind of the Lord on any point. To my own mind, in nature there is nothing more in a trumpet than the idea of “a suitable means of drawing public attention in concourses of people,” —it might thus lead me in thought to warfare, or the field of battle, or the presence of an earthly monarch; but so habituated am I to the sound of it in mere daily life, that these things would be rather the results of thought upon the subject than first impressions; and certainly the highest to which thought in nature would lead me. Par otherwise are the thoughts awakened by “the trumpet” to the mind which comes fresh from the study of the word.

The first trumpet was divine, announcing the presence of divine Majesty. To the holy priesthood the trumpet was given in Israel as an ordinance of the Lord, and none, either in the camp or the court, blew it but the priests; for it was a call to God. The day of the blowing of trumpets ushered in that great feast of tabernacles, the type of better things yet to come; and when the blast was heard on the great day of atonement it was the immediate precursor of the jubilee of Israel and the land. Joshua and Gideon also can tell us terrible yet glorious things of the trumpet; and who knows David, or Solomon, the then tabernacle, or the temple, and not the trumpets?

Let us see this and so establish our general principle, once for all, by rapidly glancing at the scriptures which mention the trumpets.

The first place in scripture in which we meet with “the trumpet,” is in Ex. 19 It is here introduced to us as “The herald of the presence of the divine Majesty,” when Jehovah formally displayed His glory to the people whom He had chosen to Himself to be their king, upon the top of mount Sinai: (ver. 13) “when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come to the mount.” “And (ver. 16) there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.” “And (ver. 19) when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice,” “And (chap. 20: 18) all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” Here evidently the trumpet was God's.

Of the three great feasts annually kept by Israel, one only was ushered in with the blowing of trumpets (Lev. 23:24), “In the seventh month, in the first of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.” This (called by some “the feast of trumpets") was followed on the tenth day of the month by the great day of atonement (ver. 27), and on the fifteenth by the feast of tabernacles. (Ver. 34.) This first day of the seventh month is thus distinguished, Num. 29:1: “it is a day of blowing of trumpets to you.”

But besides this “day of blowing, of trumpets,” there was the trumpet of jubilee, and this upon the great day of atonement. After every forty and nine years (Lev. 25:9), “then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you.” A year of rest and joy was this to the land and to its inhabitants—when the alienation of property ended, and every man returned to his own possession.

In Num. 10:2-10, we have the more general orders about the trumpets. There were to be two silver trumpets, of a whole piece, for the calling of the assembly and the journeying of the camps.

When both were blown, the assembly was to meet Moses at the door of the congregation; when one only, then the princes, even the heads of the thousands of Israel.

If one alarm was blown, the camps eastward were to set forward.

If a second, then the camp southward.

The sons of Aaron—the priests—were to blow. And it was promised that on war in the land, God would, on the alarm being sounded, remember and save them from their enemies. “Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings, that they may not be to you a memorial before your God.” And in chapter 31:6 we find Moses sending Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpet to blow, in his hand.

The new trumpets and the wonderful purpose the Lord put them to, connected with the capture of Jericho, may well claim our attention next.—(Josh. 6) When Jericho was straitly shut up by the children of Israel, the Lord said to Joshua, “Compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about it once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout: and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up, every man straight before him.” And so it was, but, as if to impress this upon our souls, we have not only this detailed order given, but the whole repeated over again by Joshua to the people, and the account of how they carried it into execution, given in full detail, and the success that followed; just as if the Spirit had found peculiar pleasure in resting the minds of those He would teach upon the ways of that God with whom we have to do.

The next use of the trumpet we find by the judges through whom God delivered Israel from the enemies, whom their unbelief left to be lords in the land. Thus we have Ehud (Judg. 3:27), after nobly slaying with his own hand Eglon king of Moab who had oppressed Israel eighteen years, blowing a trumpet in mount Ephraim; and then they went down and slew ten thousand Moabites, and subdued Moab that day.

So again, chapter 6: 34, when Midian and Amalek came against Israel," the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and Abi-ezer was gathered after him." And the Lord chose three hundred men out of the thirty-two thousand who were gathered, and to these he gave the victory. For Gideon divided them into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. Now the Midianites and the Amalekites, and all the children of the east, lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number as the sand by the sea shore for multitude. And Gideon and the one hundred men that were with him came unto the outside of the camp; and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and the three companies blew the trumpets and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right bands to blow; and they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host. And there was victory. In 1 Sam. 13:3 we have Saul blowing the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. The rest of the chapter would lead one to suppose that this also was in self-will

And we have Joab blowing the trumpet, as in 2 Sam. 2:28, and then "all the people [of Judah] stood still, and pursued after Israel no more," neither fought they any more.

Again, chapter 18:16: and then "the people returned from pursuing after Israel."

And again, chapter 20: 22: and then "they retired from the city, every man to his tent." In these three cases, as in that of Sheba, chapter 20: 1—when every man of Israel went back up after David, and followed Sheba—it was the signal of retreat.

Under David, too, we read much about trumpets, for he and all Israel played before the Lord with all their might on trumpets and other instruments, when bringing up the ark, both from Kirjath-jearim and from the house of Obed-edom. (2 Sam. 6:15; 1 Chron. 13:8; 15:28.)

And the priests also, in the movement from the house of Obed-edom (1 Chron. 15:24), blew the trumpets; and (as we see, chap. 16: 6, 42) their use of the trumpet was in the arrangements of David for the ark fully recognized; as indeed yet more fully in the temple (as we see, 2 Chron. 5:12, 13; 7:6; 29:26, 27, 28, and in 13:12, 14): we have their place thus in the battle recognized.

It was thus also that Solomon was proclaimed, 1 Kings 1:39, for "Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon!"

Thus also (2 Kings 9:13) we have the officers recognizing Jehu as king, and (chap. 11: 14, and 2 Chron. 23:13) Joash proclaimed. And here, in the reformation under Joash, we have a simple proof of the value set by God upon the silver trumpets as first appointed—in that they are included among the things which it is said Jehoiada did not make for lack of means.

In the prophets generally the trumpet is used simply as connected with war, as Jeremiah expresses it (chap. 4: 18): “Thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.” Yet there are a few passages calculated to leave a very strong impression upon the mind, as (Isa. 27:13): “It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” Again (Zech. 9:14), “And the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.”

We may refer also to Matt. 24:31: “He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other.”

1 Cor. 15:52, “At the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” 1 Thess. 4:16, “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” And be it remembered that when the Lord appears to John in Rev. 1, His voice was as a trumpet (ver. 10); and the same voice as it were of a great trumpet called him up (chap. 4: 1) to heaven.” With these thoughts let us proceed.

Chapter viii. 7, First Angel.—Hail is the symbol of wrath (Ex. 9:18-33; 10:5-15; Psa. 78:47; 105:32; 148:8; Isa. 28:2, 17; Hag. 2:17), fire of “discernment” or judgment, blood of condemnation. Trees and grass are the more simple and natural means of life to man and beast: for the former see Gen. 1:29; 2:9; Deut. 20:19; for the latter, Gen. 1:11, 12; Deut. 11:15; Psa. 104:14 and 106: 20.

The presence of God having been announced by the trumpet, heaven-sent judgments follow. They are partly natural, as hail and fire, and partly above the course of nature, as blood. And they come, not on the unformed mass of nations (as the results of the next trumpet), but upon that which stands before God as “the earth,” —the place in which His testimony has been, perhaps; and there they destroy all the more simple and natural ways and means of support.

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Chapter 164

Remarks on the Revelation: Part 6

THE second trouble comes on the sea. The sea is the unformed mass of nations. (Jer. 51:42; Dan. 7:8.) A mountain is a kingdom in symbol. (Isa. 2; Dan. 2) A kingdom falls from the organized earth among the unformed nations under the judgment of God: its incorporation marks off a third of the nations for destruction; and one third of those not of the nations, yet living by them, are cut off; and one third of the traffic by the nations ceases, for so would be the death of the fish and destruction of the ships.

The third trouble is upon the rivers and fountains. A great star, which is a leader or ruler (Num. 24:17), or teacher (Rev. 1), fell from heaven. That heaven is the symbol of that which has rule is clear from Gen. 1:6, as gathered from its antitype, and from (Gen. 37:9-11) Joseph's dream: for the work of God in creation—matter, as recorded in Genesis 1, is exactly in analogy the same as His work in the development of the work of redemption—the wonders of each successive day in creation being types of the wonders of each successive dispensation. The distinctive feature of the second day in creation was the firmament, as dividing the waters from the waters; and the distinctive feature of the second, or antediluvian dispensation (of which we read from Gen. 4:1 to 8:14, inclusive), was the introduction of rule among the children of men as connected with the heavens. As to Gen. 37:9-11, we have the sun and moon and stars (Israel and the twelve patriarchs), as that for which and by which all order on the earth was regulated. This great teacher then descends with full authority, as coming thence where the authority of rule is; and He has a great show of light, being, as it were a lamp that burneth. In Matt. 25:3, 4, we have the lamp as the symbol of profession: “They took their lamps,” &c. In Psa. 119:105, we have, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths,” as showing the thing connected with God. The force of “a lamp that burneth,” as expressing bright light, is shown by Isa. 62:1, where it is said that Zion's salvation in the latter day shall be “as a lamp that burneth” while the connection of the lamp with wickedness is shown by Prov. 13:9: “The lamp of the wicked shall be put out.” (See also chap. 20:20.)

This great teacher, sustained with power and accredited by a great show of light, falls upon a third of the rivers and fountains. By a fountain I understand “doctrine.” “The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.” (Prov. 13:14.) “The fear of Jehovah is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.” (Prov. 14:27.) I might refer also, I think, to (Zech. 13:1) the fountain opened to the house of David, &c., for sin and for uncleanness, as meaning doctrine of truth in power; and in the same way, to Rev. 21:6; 7:17. And by rivers I understand the proceeds of these hidden springs and resources of doctrine or truth, whether in the concrete the waters themselves, or the channels through which they flow, or the teachings by which they were proclaimed. And thus Ezek. 47:5, and the parallel passages, as Joel 3:18; Zech. 14:8, show the flowing forth on earth, as Rev. 22:1, 2, the flowing forth in heaven, of those fountains previously referred to, even the river of God.

His name was Wormwood. In Deut. 29:19, 20, He that hears the curses of the law, and says, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst, is

likened to a root that beareth gall and wormwood. See also the strange woman, Prov. 5:4. In Jer. 9:15, wormwood seems the bitter results of disobedience, even being scattered among the heathen. See also Jer. 23:15. Here, as in Amos 5:7, “Ye who turn judgment to wormwood,” seems to mean the corruption of the waters, resulting in the death of those that drank thereof.

The fourth angel. On the symbolic meaning of the sun, and moon, and stars, I know not that I have anything to add to what was said under the last trumpet. If those remarks be correct, the result of this fourth trump will be obscuring judgment upon one-third of that which rules in that day on the earth, followed by an angel, or eagle] crying, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabiters of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the other angels which are yet to sound.

As the four first seals are marked off from the three last, so here we have a similar division of the trumpets into four and three. In both cases, of the seals and trumpets, the four first are more general in character than the three last.

Chapter 9—The fifth angel sounds. The object of this trumpet, as a whole, is evidently to bring torment for a limited time, and limited extent, upon all men, save the one hundred and forty-four thousand. The symbolic force of a star, and its fall from heaven to the earth, have been looked at. To him was given a key, the insignia of power, to open the well of the abyss. That there is a difference between “the well of the abyss” and “the abyss” I do not say, though I think it well to notice, that while here it is φρ■αρ τ■ς ■β■σσου, in verse 11, and in chapters 11, 17, and 20 it is merely the abyss which is mentioned. I incline to think that there is a difference, the abyss opening into hell itself, the well of the abyss opening merely into the deep parts of the earth.

The pit was opened, and thence ascended a large and thick volume of smoke as from a furnace.

I do not see definitely what “the well of the abyss” means, though the smoke ascending from it, as a thing from beneath, and from such a place, seems to impress the mind with the idea of the manifestation of an infernal origin.

Smoke, as the accompaniment and consequence of fire or “discernment” in the widest application, would have a variety of meanings, though all of them having one leading common idea. The smoke of Edom going up forever (Isa. 34:10) would be the abiding proof of God's having acted thereunto upon His discernment of its state, &c.

Isa. 7:4. The two tails of these smoking firebrands would express persons manifestly used as plagues. The smoke (Isa. 4:5), as of the cloud of smoke, was just the same as to the subject there—the manifestation of the presence of God. I cannot pass by the beautiful allusion here (Sol. 3: 6), the Bridegroom being likened to a pillar of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense. In Rev. 8:4 the smoke of the incense ascending up is the manifestation of God's approbation of the incense:

In Rev. 15:8 the temple is filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power, on the seven vials full of the seven last plagues being given forth. Here, in chapter 9, I take that the smoke is just the expression of the place whence it comes, being under judgment, and of the darkening tendency of what shall proceed thence, as the parent or nurse of the locusts thence issuing, and the smoke is” as the smoke of a great furnace,” I suppose as expressing the fullness of its volume; the result was, that the sun and the air were darkened thereby.

The air is, I believe, the symbolic mode of expressing universal connection with the earth, when looked at as not connected definitely with God.

[Eccl. 10:20, A bird of the air shall carry the voice]. Matt. 8:20, The birds of the air have nests—see also 13:32; Mark 4:32; Luke 9:58; Eph. 2:2, the prince of the power of the air; just as the word heaven is used in connection with the word fowl, Jer. 7:33; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; 15:3; Ezek. 29:5; 31:6, 13; 32:4; 38:20; Dan. 2:38, &c.

I conceive also that the sun is thus used, not as where the moon and stars are also mentioned, but as express—sing in like manner universality, as we find “under the sun” so constantly used in Ecclesiastes: “What profit is there in any labor under the sun?” “There is no new thing under the sun,” &c., and 2 Sam. 12:12, “I will do this before Israel and the sun.”

Out of the smoke, thus darkening the sun and the air, came forth locusts.

Locusts were among the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 10:4-19), and were known always as a plague. (Deut. 28:38; Psa. 105:34.)

In Prov. 30:27, the order of the locusts (“the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands") is spoken of, and in Nah. 3:15, 17, the number “make thyself many as the locusts.... thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as grasshoppers"); but these locusts are symbolic, for they are monsters most incongruous in their parts. The power they had of harming was not natural to them, it was given, “power as the power of a scorpion.” To harm the grass of the earth, the green things or trees (that is, to do the common works of their race), these locusts are prohibited, and limited to tormenting men—not to kill them, but to torment five months, with the anguish of the scorpion sting.

By this I understand the infliction of some such things as the mark of the beast; something which, while it circumscribes man's liberty in a painful way, at the same time has a poisoning effect upon his soul. If the marauding nation spoken of in Joel 1 and 2 are the same as these locusts, they come up against the land, ranging over its precincts, under a Satanic influence; for, God having then set to His hand to restore, Satan is seeking to binder. It strikes me that in the days of our Lord, when the remnant (issuing in the church) which corresponded with this 144,000, which shall (in the time we are now reading of) be delivered from the power of these plagues—that the remnant, I say, was delivered by its allegiance to the Lord from some such thing. If any man confessed Jesus to be Christ, he was to be, ipso facto, ■ποσυν■γωγος. Again, such edicts as we read of in Dan. 3 and 6 by Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, both of whom were of the stock which, in the day of these trials, shall be blossoming in wickedness, may also be considered. If the scene of these scorpion-stings be the land and its precincts, and any such thing be that referred to, we can see and understand it; for a Jew of very moderate attainment in Judaism would feel anguish and vexation of soul enough to make him hate life and choose strangling rather, though he might not refuse to submit. Many a thing in England the Hebrew nation has to submit to as the Jesuit of collision between its peculiar polity and the lenient laws of England. They are obliged, for instance, by a special covenant before marriage, to do away with their ability of acting upon part of their law. And we know how time was, when in Spain edicts were passed with a view of forcing the Jews to leave the country spontaneously, or to compromise their consciences.

The object of the description of their appearance seems to be to mark their monstrous character, and characteristics; yet this was universal, that, wherever they came, the result was “the tail and sting.” The description runs thus:—

lst.—In shape they were “like unto horses prepared for battle.” Horses were prohibited to Israel (Deut. 17:16), and they were brought from Egypt. (1 Kings 10:28.) Pharaoh is compared to a horse rider. (Ex. 15:21; Isa. 2:7; Zee. ix. 10.) The Assyrian hosts were famous for horses. (1 Kings 20:20, 25 Kings 18:23.) Thus they represent strength (Job 39:19:; Psa. 147:10), swiftness (Jer. 4:13; Hab. 1:8), fearlessness (Job 39:18; Jer. 8:6), majesty (Esther 6:8), and strength in the battle. (Prov. 21:31; Jer. 6:23; 8:16; 12:5, &c.)

2nd.— “On their heads crowns of gold,” expressing manifest and conscious dominion, for the crown is the symbol of royalty, priesthood, and victory, passim.

3rd.—They had faces like men's faces.” From the use of the face (Ex. 34:29; 33:11; Ezek. 10:14; 41:19; Rev. 4:6) I understand this as intelligence; and from its connection with man, who (as contrasted with woman in the next clause) personates lordship, they have manifest intelligent lordship.

4th.— “They had hair like the hair of women,” (length of hair,) being perhaps the badge of luxuriousness, or beauty (2 Sam. 14:26; Isa. 3:24). The reference to women definitely may be the assertion of the appearance of weakness (Isa. 3:12; 19:16), or (1 Cor. 11 the hair as for a veil) apparent subjection.

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Remarks on the Revelation: Part 7

5th— “Their teeth were as the teeth of lions.” This shows their preparedness for consuming; for the lion, whether applied to Judah, Messiah, Satan, or in nature, stands for courage and power. (Prov. 28:1; 30:14, 30; Dan. 7:7, 19; Joel 1:6.)

6th— “They had breastplates as it were breastplates of iron,” unassailable defensive armor. (Eph. 6:14; 1 Thess. 5:8.)

7th— “The sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots.” (See Isa. 37:24; Jer. 47:3; 46:15; Ezek. 26:10; Joel 2:5.)

They did not attack the grass of the earth, neither the green things, &c. (for the force of this, see trumpet first). Though competent, and though apparently made to conquer the earth, this was not their object. Perhaps the double name in Hebrew and Greek shows that their power will be upon Jews and Gentiles.

An edict, instituting and enforcing a fine upon the observance of circumcision, or of the unity of God, by any power ranging over the precincts of the land, would produce just the recklessness referred to. The nursery of these marauders, if not their nest, was a thick mist of mysticism and error from beneath.

The star, by whose means the way is made for them, does not seem to be marked as their leader. He, the star, is perhaps only the remover of the hindrances which prevent the smoke rising.

The mists from beneath, in themselves savoring of judgment (as smoke tells of fire), do away with the light and air, destroying apparently, that in which man finds his way before God, and that also which is the power of mutual association; thereupon result these marauders, already looked at. They seemed fit but for one thing, to eat grass, &c.; but, in fact, this they did not, but only used the power, not natural to them but bestowed upon them, of torment and torture.

Hitherto the sad results of each successive blast have been worse than those of that which preceded, and more manifestly laying bare, and declaring the presence of, the hand of God; and so in the coming trumpet.

On the sounding of the first, hail and fire, mingled with blood, were cast on the earth, to the destruction of one-third of its produce. The second brought a great mountain on fire into the sea, for a similar destruction of, one-third of its contents.

The third issued in the poisoning of one-third of the rivers and fountains, so that many men died.

The fourth brought darkness on one-third of the sun, and moon, and stars.

The fifth was a scourge and trial of all not having the seal of God, thus making manifest God's object of affection and desire, and so confessing Him more plainly than ever; even as the gradual development of power, in that part of the series which had preceded, had gradually made the

divine power, which was at the bottom of it all, more and more conspicuous, for the actions become more and more manifestly divine as to the extent of power. In the fifth, the sealed have been exempted from the trial, so far at least as the scorpion stings were concerned (whether beyond this I know not). On the sixth angel sounding, the cry comes from the golden altar, as showing where the mind which regulated, and which was the spring of it all, was; and perhaps also showing that that altar, which had been the altar of the heavenly calling, was in some sense, in its past history, connected with it all. The scene of this wave of trouble is wider than of the preceding, for its waters were circumscribed to the bounds of the Hebrew and Greek tongues. Here the trouble springs up in the Euphrates, and has a fourfold energy, going whithersoever there is idolatry. There is a haste and a wildness in the mighty rush here presented to us, and an all-devouring character of action prominently displayed in their first appearance, very unlike the character of action in the last trumpet. There is no presenting of any such idea of order, preparedness, dominion, intelligent lordship, or apparent gentleness, as in trumpet fifth; but the two hundred millions are presented at once, brilliant as the flames in, action; and consumption, rather than victory, marking their progress; while behind them is felt the stinging wretchedness of subjection to them. The sorrow rolls in judgment over heathenism, but leaves it, in moral result, just where it was. If these horsemen are the Lord's, this visitation may be, perhaps, a plague, or pestilence, and the four angels be the same who, in chapter vii. 1, are represented as having it in them to withhold the wind, and so injure the earth, &c.; and so symbol is preserved throughout, which I judge to be the case.

I know not whether the whole four angels were for a year, a month, a day, an hour, or whether one for a year, another for a month, another for a day: if so, as all four were loosed at once, the sorrow decreases, &c.

Ere proceeding, we must remark, how immediately between the close of the results of the fifth trumpet, and the sound of the sixth, the announcement (ver. 12), “one woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter,” comes in, referring to a somewhat similar verse (chap. 8:13) introduced between the results of the fourth trumpet, and the sounding of the fifth.

A verse, similar to the twelfth verse of the ninth chapter, is found (chap. 11:14):— “The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly,” which refers, I conceive, to the results of this sixth trumpet, and marks chapters 10 and 11:1-13 as a parenthesis. The object of this parenthesis I conceive to be just to show the state, morally and as to circumstances, of the inheritance (toward the assuming of which, by the Lord, all this action is moving on) at the time of the end. It seems to me also to be presented more as a piece of prophetic history; and the burden of the parenthesis is the vision of the state of things, as characteristic of the place at that time, and not of those actions of the Lord, like the parts we have been considering, which have, as their end and object, the introduction of His Lordship only.

Chapter 10—The object of the descent of this mighty angel, and his conduct as to the little book, seem to me two distinct things. Confessedly he is the archangel, and comes to claim the earth and sea as his own, as was promised in Psa. 8.

The connection of a cloud with the Lord is common. In the following places it was the covering of the Lord: Ezek. 16:10, “the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud,” chapters 19:9; 24:15, 16; 34:5; Lev. 16:8, “I will appear in the cloud, on the mercy-seat.” (See also Num. 12:5; Deut. 31:15; Dan.

7:13.) The connection of the returning Lord with clouds is too frequent to need notice. This, and the rainbow about His head—that is, His crown, the insignia, as seen in chapter iv., of the covenant with creation—and His face like the Son of man's (chap. 1:16), as the sun, and His feet like pillars of tire (as in chap. 1:15), all tell His dignity. Well, He comes forth in all this dignity, with a little book open in His hand. But the book does not seem the important thing, for He sets His right foot on the sea, and left on the earth, thus claiming them for His own, and shouts aloud. Perhaps, in 1 Thess. 4:16, “with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God,” refers to the shout here given, to the swearing which follows, and to the seventh trump—I say perhaps. Upon this shout, as of a lion, seven thunders utter their voices. In themselves I conceive they are the divine sanction, or response, to the action and cry of this lion, as in Ezek. 22:25; 1 Sam. 12:17.

In the substance of them, in that they could not be revealed, but were sealed up, they may have contained some expressions of God's mind in connection with that which the little book opens; which, as connected rather with God's estimate of the principle at work in the scene it would open, were not properly expressed at a time when all divine action was confined to the bringing in of the Lordship, and not to witnessing against evil. I know nothing which gives the soul more freedom in reading the book than this sealing up, as telling of the care and love and foresight which has closed in the book all that we might not see. It strikes me that the voices having been heard by John, and the writing of them forbidden to him, the revelation of them to him was probably somehow connected with his peculiar service of testimony. But oh, how sweet it is to rest in the love that sealed them to us, and opened them to John, and to be able to be without jealousy or grudging against Him who has made the difference, or against John to whom it was made. On the command, “Seal up,” and by a voice from heaven, the mighty angel lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears by Him; by the Everlasting Creator (thus letting out who himself the while was), that there should be no, more delay, but, on the seventh angel sounding, the close of the mystery of God, according to the testimony to the prophets, should take place. Then the voice that had commanded the sealing of the thunders' voices sends John to take the little book. The mighty angel tells him it shall be sweet in taste, but bitter in digestion; John takes it, and finds this true; and the mighty angel says to him, “Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.”

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Chapter 166

Remarks on the Revelation: Part 8

There seems to me a correspondence between the bitterness in John's belly and the voices of the thunders: on God's part, judgment; on John's, as the representative of the servants of God, bitter sorrow.

The introduction of this mighty angel also seems to me connected with the change in the character of the prophecy. Hitherto all the testimony had been about what God alone should do, and that as bringing in the Lordship—not a testimony to man, but a special prerogative revelation by the Son to His servants. Now, however, it seemed good to state what at that time would be a matter of testimony to all nations, tongues, &c., for they all shall have part in the scene; and the testimony is not as to God's actions in bringing Lordship, but God's forbearance to man, when he, led by Satan, will be setting up other gods; and therefore John is chosen. For though the Lamb will be and is the channel of communication, now and ever, from the Father, and from God to the sons and servants, not He but they stand before the world; and this, to me, is just the opening of the necessity for this change.

As the temple hitherto has been the temple in heaven (chap. 11.), such, I suppose, is here likewise; the more so, as the outer court is defined to be the holy city, that is, Jerusalem, and it cannot be both temple and court. Moreover, in verse 19, Jerusalem having been spoken of, and so the danger of mistake brought in, the temple in heaven is specified. What, is meant by the order, “rise and measure,” &c., I know not, unless it be the expression of God's desire, and the way taken, to call the servant's mind, at this juncture, off especially, and definitely to fix it upon. the blessed truths the servant knew from chapter 7 would, at the time this was acted out, he his own portion in the sanctuary itself. This would be refreshment from the bitterness of belly just felt, and about to be felt yet snore in the scene which followed; the marking too the character of his sorrow, and most high position, to be able to have such (not sorrow for himself, but) from association with the Lord's name, and honor, and Spirit. And such, both in Ezekiel (chap. 40 onwards) and in chapters 21, 22 of Revelation, seems to be the object of the specification of measure; and how blessed in that hour will be the worship in the temple, though so sadly contrasted with the holy city, or outer court.

And thus, for the first time in the book, I think, Jerusalem on earth comes before us,—estranged indeed from God's ways, and trodden down by the Gentiles, and that most actively for forty-two months, notwithstanding its being part of the earth claimed by the mighty angel as his possession. It is this claim, with the especial bearings of it on Jerusalem, which brings in the witnesses. And sadly is their lot, though most honorable in itself, contrasted with the lot and portion of the worshippers within the temple. Amid the treading down of the city, they witness in sackcloth for God till, their testimony being ended; the beast makes war upon them, and overcomes and kills them, to the joy of all the Gentiles (people, nations, kindreds, and tongues) treading down the city, and to the vindictive delight of (their own countrymen) those who are natives of the land. Who they are I know not, unless the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed in chapter 7. The

expression, “the beast makes war against them, and overcomes them, and kills them;" and their bodies being seen by the nations, peoples, tongues, &c., “in the broad way of the city,” rather inclines me to think that they are not only two individuals, but a large body of persons. Their power is of God (ver. 3), and by Him they are placed as His witnesses, fed by and giving light before Him, as now claiming to be God of all the earth. Verse 5 looks to me also, in addition to verses 7, 8, as symbolic, “fire proceeding out of their mouth, and devouring their adversaries, though verse 6 is not so. If Elijah and the one hundred and forty-four thousand constitute God's testimony; part may refer to the one, and part to the other. It may be also that there will be some such double action in Elijah as in Moses, in that he first goes to the people, and then makes the display of his power before Pharaoh. The work of Elijah, in the closing up of this dispensation, may be the means and instrument of gathering out the one hundred and forty-thousand. But whoever they are, their actions have a double character. I speak not of their testimony, but actions, as in verses 5, 6; partly like Moses, using power over the world, to the annoyance of one of its lords; partly like Elias, closing the heavens from an apostate people, &c.—just what will be needful for a testimony in Jerusalem, when the people, far from God, are lending themselves to some infidel heads of the nations round them.

I would remark, that all the action, in chapters 8, 9, is of God, toward the bringing in of the Lordship into earth; chapter 10 is the link from above, and chapter 11 the link into it from beneath; chapter 12 onward, the state of things on earth. Chapter 10 is thus the revelation of the connection of God's actions, seen by the saints, but not by the world, with the first manifestation of that purpose to the world.

It seems to me that “who the witnesses are?” is a question proper to the Christian while reading this; apart from the object of their mention it may be, and doubtless is so. Here the simple point was, “There would be an adequate witness supplied of God, and upheld by Him, till His purpose, and ours too, as fellow-laborers with Him, is accomplished.” The Old Testament does supply one witness for that day—Elias; the New another—the one hundred and forty-four thousand; so far is truth, if such be the meaning here.

The candlestick, in Zech. 4, with its seven lamps, seems to me the light of God's grace, establishing by righteousness, by His power in providential sway, a testimony. The question there is as to the return from Babylon. Salvation-of-jah was high priest when established by grace therein; a stone, with seven eyes in it, is laid before him and his fellows, as a pledge of the bringing forth of the Branch. Then this candlestick is shown to the Disperser of Babel, the Governor; and this word said (ver. 6), “Not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.” What is this, but that the great mountain should become a plain before Zerubbabel (that is, Babel utterly wane), and the headstone (of the temple, ver. 8) be brought forth, with shootings,” Grace, grace unto it!" The hands of Zerubbabel, who laid the foundation, shall finish it. Thus was Zerubbabel, as the representative of kingly power, establishing the temple for a great light, though it was “not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord;” for the stone (Dan. 2) should come in with the full impress upon it of the seven eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the earth.

The two olive-trees here, feeding this light, and standing before God, are Haggai the prophet, and Joshua the high priest, yet as representatives of the prophetic and priestly office especially—so, at least, I take it. (See Haggai passim.)

In Revelation both the witnesses are candlesticks and olive-trees. Their testimony is evidently double: first, to those that dwell on the earth; secondly, to the nations. This may account for there being two; and it is plain to me that the representative of kingly power here is not on the side of God, but against. These two both give light, and are anointed ones by God. The nations preventing their bodies being put in graves (ver. 9) carries the mind to Psa. 79. After three and a half days they are revived from death, and called up to heaven before all men, A great earthquake follows, and one-tenth of the city falls, and seven thousand names of men are slain. The rest are affrighted, and give glory to the God of heaven.

The second woe is announced to be passed, and the third at hand; and then the seventh trump sounds; and heaven proclaims that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He is to reign forever and ever. The twenty-four elders worship God (perhaps as showing the thing was still not a matter of manifested display even yet; or, if so, not yet to be looked upon by the reader as such), and praise God for having taken His great power, and reigned; and, spite of the anger of the nations, brought in the time of just retribution and reward to all, whether they have done evil or good. It does not seem that the recognition of the kingdoms of this world having become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ is made, as recorded in this chapter, anywhere save in heaven. This may be of moment to notice.

(Concluded from page 240.)

Chapter 167

Revised New Testament: Introduction and Matthew

Believing that it may be of service to examine the just published result of the ten years' labor bestowed by the Committee of Revision on the New Testament, I proceed to give a review of their more noteworthy changes from first to last. In this way the reader will have in the simplest and fullest way the evidence of their work for good or for ill before his own eyes, so as to preclude (as much as possible) any representation of its character otherwise than it really is. The close of the survey will afford a more just and fitting occasion to offer an opinion as to its value as a whole. It is but natural to us all to be either carried away by a hasty conclusion based on what pleases us at a first glance and a general impression, or to be unfairly repelled by corrections which, however well-grounded or wisely applied, shock the prejudices of our ignorance. Nevertheless none can well overlook the fact that the revisers have studiously sought to preserve the dignified simplicity of the Authorized Version, as they have assuredly purged it from an immense number of inaccuracies, known more or less to the Christian scholars who have studied our Bible during the last two centuries and a half. Indeed it was the impulse given to Biblical research by the mass of materials brought to light or considerably better known within the hundred years just passed which forced on this revision, notwithstanding the rather strong obstacles offered through the enormous circulation of the Authorized Version by the chief Bible and other Societies and by the public or private printers, who would obviously dread the probable depreciation of their vast stocks, &c. Apart from such influences, every sober and godly believer desires to have revealed truth in the purest form.

But there are two principal sources of difficulty: one of the original text; the other of translation. Of the two the harder to settle is the question of the Greek text; and the answer to this, though not the avowed object of the revisers, was necessarily their first and urgent duty to meet before the task of rendering could be carried on. Although able critics have for a century sought to edit the Greek Testament on documentary evidence of Greek manuscripts, ancient versions, and early citations, none as yet has succeeded in commanding more than partial confidence; neither Griesbach nor Scholz, neither Lachmann, nor Tischendorf, nor Tregelles; neither Meyer in his Critical Commentary, nor Alford nor Wordsworth. Hence it has been a necessity, for any careful and conscientious scholar who would really know the sources, to compare several of these editions, and search into the grounds on which their differences depend, so as to have anything like a correct and enlarged view of the text, and to judge fairly of the claims of conflicting readings. But few of the revisers themselves entered on their grave and responsible task with adequate and special knowledge of that which was essential to the right execution of their undertaking; and though no doubt their long and unremitting occupation with the subject has helped most of them to a much better understanding than they possessed at first, yet it is certain that, in order to do such a work well, mature spiritual judgment, with continual dependence on the Lord, is just as essential as a sound and thorough familiarity with the ancient witnesses of all kinds. For it could not but be that in so mixed a Committee the few adepts, who were at home in all the external matters of debate and possessed of superior learning and ability in these questions, would have an easy and

habitual preponderance over the less intelligent majority, especially after these had exposed to those their own shortcomings at an early day. But N. T. critics however skilled and competent, might be men of strong bias and committed to a mistaken or narrow school of recension, which would be sure to tell unfavorably on the revision, unless there were others of equal power and knowledge to stand for larger views with no less firmness and decision. How far one or other of these alternatives may apply to the working of the Revisers is best known to wise men among themselves: the fruit of their labors is before us, and we would now without further preface look into the details, which may disclose enough to outsiders.

Revised New Testament: Matthew

The first thing that strikes the mind, as undesirable in an accurate version of the Scriptures, is, that words supplied by the translators, which have no counterpart in the original, should not be designated as such by italics as attempted more or less fully in the Authorized Bible. Dr. Scrivener's Cambridge Paragraph Bible sought this more systematically, and therefore is happier in this respect. In the Revised New Testament, on the contrary, the indication of supply is less than ever. It would have been better for the reader had the amount indicated been far greater. Take the instance of “the Lord” so common in the Synoptic Gospels, especially Matthew and Luke, where the Greek word is anarthrous, and means Jehovah. (See Matt. 1:20, 22, 24.) Not so the official title of Christ, unless employed predicatively which would of course deprive it of the article. Again, in 1:20 we have “take unto thee,” and in 24 “took unto him,” without indicating that the pronouns are supplied. So with “our” in 3:9. It seems arbitrary to print “it” in Roman in 2:3, and in Italics in 3:15. Many an unlettered preacher is thus exposed to dwell with emphasis on words merely inserted by the translators as if they were the veritable expressions of the Holy Spirit, from which error they were better guarded by the Authorized Version, and ought to have been yet more now. It is allowable in a version of a Greek or Latin Classic or of any human composition to supply what seems idiomatically requisite in our tongue without distinct notification to the reader. But Scripture stands alone, and deserves the homage of carefully distinguishing what man judges necessary in the language which reflects the original. In some cases it may prove a danger signal; in all it seems due to God and man. As the tendency of the day is to deny the difference between the word of God and any other book, it is the more imperative.

It is singular that the Revisers have left 2:1 as it stands in the Authorized Version, when a slight and lawful change of rendering would guard the reader from a really groundless misapprehension of the history. As it stands one might infer, with superficial poets and painters, according to tradition, that the visit of the magi followed close upon the Messiah's birth. And this error has been greedily misused by skeptics. But a comparison of Luke 2 shows that it was not so; confirmed by the accurate ascertainment of the time by Herod, and his consequent slaughter of the male babes at Bethlehem from two years old and under. Room must be left for several months', if not a year's, interval. As we know, the parents came up to Jerusalem for the passover every year; and is anything more intelligible than the interest which would draw to Bethlehem those who knew that the Child was the promised son and heir of David's throne? Then, on a subsequent occasion, came the magi who had seen the star in the east, and gone to Jerusalem in consequence. They had learned, through Herod, from the scribes that Bethlehem was the predicted spot; and the star, to their joy, re-appears to guide them, till it stood over the place where the Child was. The aorist participle leaves the sense quite open, where “Now when,” &c., limits it in this case unduly. Translate, therefore, “Now Jesus having been born,” or “Now after Jesus was born,” &c.

In 4:18, 20, 21, the difference between a “net” (■μφ■βληστρον) and the “nets” (δ■κτυα) is not marked even in the margin (both distinct from 13:47); whereas they have properly done so as to the “baskets” in 16:9, 10. So there is no attempt even in the margin to distinguish between,

■γαθ■ς and καλ■ς, both indiscriminately rendered “good;” though the one means “kind,” “beneficial,” “excellent,” the other “upright” or “honorable.”

In 6:11 (as in Luke 11:3) the rendering is “daily,” which the context seems to refute as tautology. “Needful” or “sufficient” I believe to be the true thought, in contrast with περιο■σιος, “abundant,” “superfluous,” “more than enough.” Doubtless the word is unusual, coined (Origen thought) for the purpose. Bishop Lightfoot argues against this source, as if the form in that case should be ■πο■σιος. But ■πιετ■ς is opposed to this rigidity of derivation, being as far as we know a word of late formation like ■πιο■σιος, without question of the digamma. Hence ο■σ■α does not require the derivation ■πο■σιος. Still less must we restrict ο■σ■α to mean “essential being” or “substance” in that sense; for the New Testament itself uses it only in the meaning of “subsistence;” and its application in well-known orators, &c., to “property” real (φανερ■) or “personal” (■φαν■ς) is certain and common. It is unnecessary therefore to trace the word to ■πιο■σα (■μ■ρα) “the morrow,” and if we did, we could not without harshness make it mean “till to-morrow,” that is of to-day, which (as we have seen) does not suit the context. Nor is the mystical sense, founded either on ■■πι■ν κ. (the coming world) or on ■πι-ο■σιος (supersubstantial) worthy of serious argument. Nor is it worthy reasoning, finally, to say that, because the disciples were not to be anxious for the morrow, they were not to pray for their bread to-day.

It would have been well, if so small a point as “wine-skins” (9:17) is carefully substituted for “bottles,” that “demons” and “demonizes” (8: 28, 31) had always taken the place of “devils,” So, keeping the word “devil” for the different term which scripture gives to their chief.

A seriously mistaken change of reading is adopted in 11:19, ■ργων,” works,” on the authority of ■ Bp.m. 124 (a Vienna cursive of cent. xii.) and of some ancient versions, instead of τ■κνων, as in all other authorities, not to speak of Luke 7:35. Even Origen lends “works” no support, any more than Chrysostom. It is monstrous to suppose that we are carried back in thought to the moment when Wisdom's works were planned. The contrast is with “this generation;” as the Lord also in the verses following sets forth, the latter as objects of more than outward judgment, whilst the former are objects of the Father's sovereign grace. That the Wisdom of God should be justified of its works seems a truism-of its children is a weighty truth.

Timidity, or want of knowledge, is manifest in perpetuating (13: 39 and elsewhere) “the end of the world,” and relegating to the margin the unquestionably true rendering, “the consummation of the age.”

In 28:1 the old and common error reappears, which has created immense confusion in arranging the order of the facts of the resurrection. The word ■πιφ■σκειν applies equally to the dusk as to the dawn, the context alone deciding. The Jewish day began with the evening. Here it is assuredly the dusk, for the dawn of the first day could not be ■ψ■ σαββ■των. The women came to the tomb on Saturday evening as here, as well as on Sunday morning early to which no doubt the earthquake in verse 2 belongs, when they were there again.

It is a pleasanter task to note some of the improvements of the Revisers, though almost all of moment are familiar to Christians for many years, and may be found in versions of private men. Thus it has long been felt well that Old Testament names, as in chapter 1, should follow the Hebrew rather than the Greek form. Again, the tendency to assimilate the Gospels has been

watched against, as in 1:25 (cf. Luke 2:7); 5:44 (cf. Luke 6:27, 28); 9: 13 and Mark 2:17 (cf. Luke 5:32); 17: 21 (cf. Mark 9:29); 18: 11 (cf. Luke 19:10); 19:16, 17 (cf. Mark 10:17, 18, Luke 18:18, 19); 20:16 (cf. 22: 16); 20:22, 23 (cf. Mark 10:38, 39); 23: 14 (cf. Mark 12:40, Luke 20:47); 25:13 (cf. 24:42, 44). The repetition of our Lord's name, Jesus, is corrected as in 4:12, 18, 8:5, 13: 36, 14: 14, 25, 15: 16, 30, 16: 20, 17: 11, 22: 37, 24: 2. This was probably owing to ecclesiastical influence, like the doxology at the end of the prayer for the disciples (6:13), and the “Amen” at the end of the Gospel, and indeed of all the Gospels.

Revised New Testament: Mark

In chapter 1:2 the Revisers have rightly abandoned “in the prophets” though given in the Alex. and most other MSS, because it is an evident correction made to ease the difficulty. The Sinai, Vatican, Cambridge of Beza, Parisian (L) and St. Gall uncials, with some twenty-five cursives, the most ancient versions and express early citations, preserve the true text, “in Isaiah the prophet.” Even on human ground it is absurd to suppose that the writer did not know that the first words quoted were from Mal. 3:1; and if inspiration be allowed, the only question is as to the principle of thus merging a secondary in a primary quotation. Compare the somewhat different use of “Jeremiah” rather than Zechariah in Matt. 27. 9,10. There is purpose in both, which cursory readers have not seen; and so they have been quick to impute a slip, as the later copyists were to eliminate it. But it is as irreverent as unwise and evil to obscure or deny the truth even in such points as these, because the modes of scripture application differ from those of ordinary men, and we may not at a first glance be able to appreciate or clear up the profound wisdom of inspiration. Duster's conjecture that the reading was originally “in the prophet” seems a mere effort to get rid of what he did not understand; which really, like such attempts generally, leaves the chief point where it was—Verse 14, “of the kingdom” disappears with good reason, though most uncials and cursives insert the words, the old versions being pretty evenly divided. It is an addition borrowed from Matthew, whose Gospel it suits perfectly.

In chapter 2:1, 20 an article is needlessly inserted. Translate “at home” in contrast with being abroad or elsewhere, and “days will come.” At the end of the latter verse “in that day” has the best authority, not “in those days,” which came in from the corresponding passage of Luke 5—The end of verse 12 is simply “thus,” “on this fashion” being antiquated.

In chapter 3: 13, as in Matt. 5:1, the indefinite article appears wrongly in the Authorized Version, the Revised gives “the” correctly, not meaning any particular mountain, but the high land as contrasted with the low or plain, as on board ship or on the sea is in contrast with on the shore. In verse 14 the Revisers rightly give “appointed” instead of the equivocal “ordained.” They are no less fair in striking out the “ordained to be” of Acts 1:22, and in changing “ordain” to “appoint” in Titus 1:5. They would have done better in giving “chosen” in Acts 14:23 and 2 Cor. 8:19, as they do in Acts 10:41, though “appoint” is no doubt a legitimate rendering of χειροτον■ω.—The chief change of text is in verse 29, “guilty of an eternal sin,” instead of “in danger of,” or “subject to eternal judgment.” “Damnation,” as is well known, is not the true force of κρ■σεως, though its effect. But the true reading on excellent authority appears to be ■μαρτ■ματος, “sin” or “guilt,” which might naturally be toned down into judgment. It is more forcible and absolutely expressed than even in Matthew, where blaspheming against the Spirit is said to be irremissible, either in this age, that is, of the law, or in that which is to come, that is, of Messiah reigning over the earth, when all other iniquities are forgiven, and all diseases are healed.

There are many minute changes in chapter 4, but the only correction of version one would notice is the unquestionably right one of “in the stern sleeping on the cushion,” instead of “in the hinder

part of the ship, asleep on a pillow” in verse 38.

In chapter 5:36 it is well to remark the παρακο■σας of the critical editors instead of the [ε■θ■ως] ■κ. of the common text. But it is doubtful whether the marginal “over-hearing” should not rather have taken the place of the Revisers' text “not heeding,” which would have suited if the Lord had said nothing. But He heeds the word spoken enough to bid the synagogue-ruler, “Fear not, only believe.”

The latter half of chapter 6:11 seems an accommodation from Matt. 11 and Luke 10 with changes. Yet the ancient testimony is so ample (eleven uncials, nearly all the cursives, and some of the best versions) that it surprises one to see no remark on such a difference in the margin of the Revisers. In the footnotes of the corresponding Greek text Mr. E. Palmer of course gives the words,—The rendering of a phrase in verse 20 as well as the reading after it is questionable. Does συνετ■ρει α■τ■ν mean “kept him safe,” or “paid close attention to him"? and is the true reading “was perplexed,” ■π■ρει (■ B L Cop.) or the far more largely supported ■πο■ει, which their margin renders?

Chapter 7:8 presents a difficulty of translation if not of reading. Tischendorf now adopts πυκν■ from the Sinaitic copy, confirmed perhaps by some Latin and other versions; but the mass of authority sustains πυγμ■, lit. “with the fist,” or “up to the elbow,” the usual construing being “diligently” or “frequently,” with “vigor” or “with nicety.” The addition in italics at the end of verse 11 is rightly omitted by the Revisers, as in Matt. 15:5 also; but a serious Italic supplement appears in verse 19, This he said. Here again is the preliminary question of καθαρ■ζων and καθαρ■ζον, the former undoubtedly carrying much the most weight externally, if one did not bear in mind how carelessly the best MSS interchange ω and ο, which almost nullifies their suffrages on the point. The strange version of the Revisers seems due to Origen (Comm. in Matt. 15:10). K. usually is regarded, if in the neuter, as in apposition with the sentence; if in the masculine, as appended in an independent construction, with the gender conformed to τ■ν ■φεδρ■να, the departure from formal grammar giving the more force to the participle. Indeed καθαρ■ζει, and κα■ καθαρ■ζει are found in some copies, all indicative of the difficulty presented by the construction.

In chapter 8:24, 25, of the Revised Version, we have the healing of the blind man more graphically than in the common text and version. “I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking.” Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes, and he looked steadfastly (δι■βλεψε) and was restored and saw all things clearly (■ν■βλεπε τηλαυγ■ς [Tisch. δηλ.] ■παντα).

In chapter 9: 23 the oldest and best authorities omit πιστε■σαι, though it has large uncial support. Perhaps its difficulty may have led to the omission. If genuine, the true meaning is not the muddle of two clauses as in the Authorized Version, but rather the “If thou canst [is] to believe.” The question of power turns on faith. In verse 24, 29, the evidence is strong against μετ■ δακρ■ων ("with tears"), weak against κα■ νηστε■α, “and fasting;” but the Revisers leave both out, as they do verses 44, 46, none omitting verse 48. Some of these witnesses leave out the latter half of 49, followed by our Revisers. The substance of the truth abides no doubt; but the solemnity of the warning appears to be enfeebled in the curtailed form; and the distinction between the wicked and righteous as tested by God's judgment moral in grace or final in verse 49.

The Revisers, on few but first-rate authorities, read in 10:1 “and” beyond Jordan, for the A. V. “by.”

In chapter 11: 8 they read “fields” (■γρ■ν) instead of “branches” (δ■νδρυν), with other small changes.

In chapter 12: 6 the Revisers omit “his,” and in verse 20 “therefore” on firm grounds, and for “God” give “He” in verse 32.

There is no doubt that “spoken of by Daniel the prophet” is an importation into chapter 13:14 from Matt. 24. But there is an interesting though dubious reading in the same verse, “standing where [he] ought not” ■στηκ■τα B L and so Tisch. Tregelles, Afford), instead of ■στ■ς (Steph.), ■στ■ς (Elz. Griesbach, Scholz), ■στηκ■ς Lachmann and Green), στηκ■ν (seven cursives). If the masculine be well founded, it points to the Antichrist, the lawless one of 2 Thess. 2:4. But why should the Revisers perpetuate “her parable,” “her branch with its leaves” here, verse 28, as in Matt. 24:32? Why not “its,” especially as in Rev. 22:2 they correct “her” into “its fruit"?

In chapter 14 among other changes less noteworthy are the omission of “eat,” verse 22, and of “now,” verse 24, at the Lord's Supper, and the insertion of “thou” emphatically, verse 30, the best MSS substituting ■λαβον “received” for ■βαλλον for “did strike” in verse 65, and omitting the last clause of verse 70.

In chapter 15:7 they follow ■ναβ■ς “going up,” for ■ναβο■σας “crying out,” and omit “to drink” in verse 23 as well as verse 28 (from Luke 22:37).

The Revisers put most undeservedly a certain stigma on chapter 6: 9-20, because ■ B omit these verses, L with a break adding a miserable compendium, and many cursives giving them with more or less doubt. No good version of antiquity omits. But a few fathers on harmonistic grounds talk of the accurate copies ending with ■φοβο■ντο γ■ρ. We need not now discuss the alleged internal reasons against the paragraph. The positive external proofs are really overwhelming; and the internal prove not only that it is inspired scripture, but from none other than Mark himself.

Revised New Testament: Luke

There is more to court remark in the third Gospel.

In chapter 1:17 is the first change of version to be weighed: ■ν φ. δ. can hardly bear “to” the wisdom of the just, as in the Authorized Version. The Revisers are obliged to intercalate “to walk” in the wisdom, &c., in order to give the force. Some suggest “by” or “according to;” but the sense fails in this connection, if the preposition could bear it. In verse 28 there are two changes of text—the exclusion of “the angel,” though supported by much and good authority, and of “blessed art thou among women,” which incontestably appears in verse 42; in 29 also, “when she saw him” was probably suggested by verse 12. But the rendering of the last clause of verse 35 is strange and objectionable, that of the margin (which is in main the Authorized Version), or the American suggestion, being better. In verse 37 is a bold change of reading (το■ Θ. for τ■ Θ.) which necessitates the rendering “no word from God shall be void of power.”

In chapter 2 are changes of text or translation much to be considered. In verse 2 they give, “This was the first enrollment when Quirinius,” &c. It would seem really to be a parenthetic statement to guard from confusion. God caused the decree to bring about the presence of Mary with her affianced husband at Bethlehem, and so accomplish the prophecy of Micah years before the enrollment was completed. Of course they have in verse 10 “all the people,” that is, the Jews. Verse 14 follows the later editors, or their few but first-rate authorities, ■ν ■νθρ■ποις ■νδοκ■ας “among men in whom he is well pleased.” But Luke was given to magnify the grace of God, not to seal human righteousness. There is good and ample authority for the common text, only rendered “good-will in men,” which incarnation proved. Passing over minor points we have in verse 22 “their” instead of the common “her,” but hardly the exact shade of verses 31, 32. “All the peoples” is better than “all peoples,” and “revelation of Gentiles” is the true meaning, not “to all the Gentiles.” Before the Word was made flesh Gentiles were in the dark as regards the light of God; as the Jews who despised the true light have fallen into darkness, till the word is made good, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is arisen on thee.” The Revisers prefer, in verse 38, “redemption of Jerusalem” to “redemption in it,” though the witnesses are very few. “To Jerusalem” in verse 42 is probably a repetition from the verse preceding.

Chapter 3:2 should be “in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,” the true text being singular, not plural. A good many small corrections follow. It is surprising that few as yet see that the true parenthesis, marked or not, in verse 23 is not merely “as was supposed” but “being the son as was supposed of Joseph,” so as to connect the genealogy that follows directly with the Lord through Mary. For Joseph was the son of Jacob, in the Solomon line, as Mary was daughter of Heli, in the Nathan line; and our Lord needed to be thus born in order to be unequivocally heir of David and true man. To have been son of Mary was essential to the truth, the means and demonstration as well as the display of the good pleasure of God in men; to inherit the royal, or Solomonic, right to the throne depended on Mary's espousal to Joseph; whilst His being Son of God in the highest sense was the ground and turning-point of all blessing. Had He been really Joseph's son, as He

was not, all the truth of His person would have been denied; had He been, as He was not, Mary's son only, He had been true man but not true Messiah. He must therefore be Joseph's son legally, Mary's son truly, and God's Son supremely, in order to satisfy the word and accomplish the purposes of God; and all this the scriptures show plainly that He was. But the proof is enfeebled by not seeing the connection in Luke 3:23, and this in the Revised Version as much as in that of 1611, the only expressed ν■ος being in the parenthesis, and the proper genealogical line uniformly elliptic, as is often the case in such statements.

In chapter 4 the most striking change is in verse 8, where the common text and all versions founded on it have ■παγε ■π■σς μου, Σατανα■, taken from Matt. 16:23, and confounded with Matt. 4:10, where it is rightly ■παγε, Σ. Here however these were left out in the wisdom of the Spirit, who inspired Luke to place second what was in fact the third temptation. This made the omission necessary; as otherwise we should have had in Luke the Lord bidding the enemy depart, and instead of it the enemy making another assault immediately after. Perhaps not one of the critical editors saw the impossibility of the words of Matthew re-appearing in Luke, though they rightly left them out on grounds purely diplomatic. Luke as usual presents the circumstances in their moral order, (the natural, the worldly, and the religious temptation respectively,) whilst Matthew, as is his wont, gives them dispensationally, and this fell in here with the order of fact.

The Revisers in chapter v. do not distinguish more than the Authorized Version μ■τοχοι, verse 7, and κοινωνο■, verse 10, though the latter is the more formal “partners,” the former rather “companions.”

In chapter 6:1 they omit, save in their margin, the word “second-first.” Now the witnesses (■ B L) which omit the word are few, though high; and the difficulty of understanding a word nowhere else occurrent, and in itself hard to explain without an exact knowledge of Jewish scripture and usage, accounts readily for the tampering hand of copyists prone to cut knots instead of untying them. The sabbath before the wave-sheaf was offered the Jews ever regarded as great (John 19:31); the sabbath after the wave-sheaf was also in high esteem, but not equal to the former. It was δευτεροπρ■τον Nobody would or could create a needless difficulty by inserting this into A C D E H K M R S U V X r Δ Λ Π; but we can easily account for a few omitting what was hard in their eyes, as it is to most readers still. In verse 17 they rightly translate “a level place,” not a plain, as in the Authorized Version. It was a plateau on the mountain, which upsets the notion of two sermons: one on the mount, the other on a plain. Not so, but the Spirit gave Matthew to present the discourse suitably to his design, and to Luke another method equally in keeping with his aim.

Verse 35 is the most remarkable innovation, as far as translation is concerned, which as yet occurs in the Revision. “But love your enemies.... and lend, never despairing,” with the still stranger marginal alternation, “despairing of no man,” μηδ■ν (or, -α) ■πελπ■ζοντες. The Authorized Version is “hoping for nothing again.” Now we cannot reason on the usage of the word elsewhere in the New Testament, for this is its only occurrence. What influenced the Revisers is the fact that the word occurs in Polybius and the like in the sense of despairing or giving up in despair, and in the Authol P. ii. 114 of driving to despair. But even Liddell and Scott furnish, from Diog. L. i. 1-59, an instance of the modification, hoping that a thing will not happen. The fact is, that words thus compounded admit of meanings so widely different as to include senses nearly opposed. Thus ■π■γειν means to take away, or to bring home; ■παλλ■σσειν to release, to

destroy, to escape; ■παυρ■ν to take away from, or receive; ■πειπε■ν to speak out, deny, forbid, disown, or fail; ■πελα■νειν to drive away, or to march; ■π■ρχεςθαι to go away, or to come back; ■πεσθ■ειν to eat off or up, and to leave of eating; ■π■χειν to keep of or hinder, or to receive in full; ■ποβλ■πειν to throw away, and to throw back; ■ποβλ■πειν to look on, or at, or away; αποδακρ■ειν to weep much, or to cease weeping; ■ποδαρθ■νειν to sleep a little, or to wake up; ■π■κεισθαι to be laid up in store, or aside; αποκλα■εςθαι to bewail oneself, or to cease wailing, &c. This induction suffices to show that verbs compounded with ■π■ admit of flexibility enough in sense to cover the meaning attached to the word in our old and other Versions. The question then mainly turns on the requirement of the context. And when one weighs verses 30-34 with care, it seems surprising that a sense so unnatural here should be attached to the word in verse 35. Especially consider the immediately preceding verse: “and if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much.” What can be simpler than the converse call of grace, love, do good, lend, “hoping for nothing again.” (Cf.. Luke 14:12.) What worthy sense in such a connection is there in “never despairing"? Does it mean that, whatever we may give thus unselfishly in faith, we are to have no fears of coming short for ourselves? If so, it seems needless, mean, and out of character with all the rest. Never despair because of giving or lending to others! Even a generous man might be beyond such fears, not to speak of a son of the Highest exhorted by the Only-begotten of the Father. And what here is the force of the margin “despairing of no man"? If the Revisers understand despairing of no man's honesty or gratitude in repayment, it seems quite contrary to the spirit of verse 80, not to mention that the sequel of verse 35 casts the believer wholly on God's great recompense.

Have the Revisers caught the idiom in 38, 44; 14:35; 16: 4, 9; 23: 31? The Authorized Version followed by themselves takes it rightly in chapter 12: 20. To give the plural literally misleads the English reader. It is meant to be general, and for us an impersonal or passive turn best expresses the thought. In several cases God is really meant without saying so.

In chapter 7: 31 the Revisers properly drop, among lesser additions without due warrant, the spurious words which begin the verse, which were inserted by copyists who did not perceive that verses 29, 30 are a parenthesis of the evangelist, and that the Lord continues from the end of verse 28.

In chapter 8 one of the most weighty corrections is in verse 54, where “put them all out and” should not be, though rightly in Mark 5:40.

In chapter 9:35 “chosen” takes the place of “beloved Son” as in Matthew and Mark. Verses 55, 56 are simply thus: “But he turned and rebuked them. And they went to another village.” But the end of verse 55 in the vulgar text has more authority than the beginning of verse 56. The Revisers even omit the last words of verse 54.

In the parable of the good Samaritan the Revisers, on good authority, strike out additions of the common text, in verses 32 and 35 especially.

But chapter 11 affords more cases, especially in Luke's form of the prayer, where “Father” alone is read, not “Our Father which art in heaven,” an importation from Matthew, as is “Thy will be done as in heaven so in earth,” and “but deliver us from evil:” all of which petitions had special interest and value for Jewish disciples. Ought there not to have been a more distinctive version of ■ ■ξ

ο■ρανο■ in verse 13 than the “heavenly” of the Authorized Version here followed? (Compare Matt. 5:16, 44, 48; 6:1, 9.)

No doubt cases are not infrequent where an anarthrous form in Greek requires the definite article in our idiom. But the tendency even in the Revised Version is to introduce it needlessly. Thus in chapter 11:31, 32 (as in Matt. 12:41, 42) it is enough and even more exact to say “a queen” and “men of Nineveh.” The article might have been used in Greek if the intention had been to refer to them as those well-known in Old Testament history or prophecy. But as it is not, “the queen”, and “the men” seems uncalled for. On the other hand, why should we have “mint and rue,” &c. (and in Matt. 23:23, “mint and anise and cummin") when the Greek article is so expressly introduced to mark the minutious exactitude of Jewish legalism. Between these however may be noticed in verse 33, “a cellar,” an improvement on “a secret place"; and in verse 41, for “such things as ye have” or “your property,” an unquestionably sound rendering of τ■ ■ν■ντα, “those things which are within” and in the margin “ye can,” neither of which seems at all so suitable to the context. Of course those who advocate the revised textual rendering might point to the preceding verses in its justification; but to give for alms those things which are written is really a paradox, instead of the simple dealing with the Pharisee's conscience, which to plain minds is the thing intended. “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts and these defile the man, anything but a suitable material for alms, leaving all things clean to him.

In chapter 12:31 it is “his [your Father's] kingdom” rather than “the kingdom of God,” though the authorities are not numerous.

In chapter 13:15, Hypocrites, not “hypocrite;” and omit desolate in verse 35, brought in from Matt. 23

In chapter 14:5 the Revisers have resisted the temptation of following the mass of ancient authority and of modern critics, and retain “ass,” giving “son” in the margin.

In chapter 15:22 they add “quickly” on good, but not large, authority, and omit “again” in verse 32.

“It fails” in chapter 16:9 has beyond doubt preponderant authority over “ye fail;” but it is difficult to see its superior force or even propriety.

“Against thee,” in chapter 17:3, came in probably from Matt. 18:15, though even there ■ B omit, as here also with A L. Omit verse 36, borrowed from Matt. 24:40.

In chapter 18:1 the Revisers rightly translate “that they ought” &c., not “men.” In verse 28 they follow a few very ancient copies in giving “our own” instead of “all,” which however is supported by ■ A and many other uncials.

I am surprised ■ν τ■ ■γγ■ζειν α■τ■ν is not represented in its vagueness, “while he was nigh,” so as to suit going out of Jericho as truly as coming in. (Cf. Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46.) Perhaps they and the Authorized Version were deterred by the story of Zaccheus afterward as the Lord passed through Jericho; but this is no sufficient obstacle. To my mind the aim of the Spirit appears to be the bringing together this story and the parable of the Pounds (chap. 19.) to illustrate the moral ways of God in the two advents of Christ, which would have been marred by the interposition of the blind man healed in its actual historic place.

In chapter 20:13 there is good authority for omitting “when they see him,” with lesser points before and after; also “why tempt ye me?” from Mark, with other omissions. It seems singular that κρ■μαshould be confounded in verse 47 with κατ■κριμα: “sentence” (often included in “charge” also) is the true thought. (Cf. chap. 23:40.)

In chapter 21:19 the Revisers have adopted a reading and a rendering at least questionable. A B are but slender authority for κτ■σεσθε, as against κτ■σασθε differing only by one letter; and their own rendering of 1 Thess. 4:5 sustains the Authorized Version, “possess,” against their own “win” here.

There is in chapter 22:31 the precarious omission of the opening words “And the Lord said” with no more than three uncials (B L T). Thus they render, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren,” consigning to the margin the notion of Alford, &c., that ■ξαιτ■ομαι should here convey the sense of “obtained you by asking;” which is clean contrary to the context and indeed to the truth generally. They give the addition, on better evidence, of “to-day” in verse 61, whilst all but the same manuscripts omit “struck him on the face and” in verse 64.

Chapter 23:17 is rejected with the best authorities and critics; it was founded probably on Matthew and Mark, with a good many changes of words here and there.

It is strange that any critics should have been moved by an erratic uncial to doubt chapter 24:12 and 40. Many more instances of lesser moment might be added; but these selections may suffice.

Revised New Testament: John

The corrected rendering of chapter 1:9 seems not only clumsy, but so ambiguous that many readers will doubt or misunderstand what the Revisers really mean by it. “There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.” If the comma after “man” is intended to sever “coming into the world” from “man,” and to connect the phrase as a predicate with the true light or the relative that follows, it is all well; but is not so slight an intimation likely to be misapprehended? This at any rate, if so meant, aims at the true sense. John was not the light in question. The true light was that which lightens every man, not absolutely nor always, but on coming into the world. It is the character or effect of the Incarnation. The Authorized Version is unquestionably incorrect, besides giving a tautological meaning if the article could be dispensed with. Further to be a man, and to come into the world, are said to be equivalent in Rabbinical usage. But does any Rabbi add íÈãÈà to íÈìÊåò? It is not correct. They may employ “those that come into the world” to express “all men;” but where do they employ both phrases “every man coming into the world,” as John is presumed to say here? The truth is that in one form or another ■ ■ρχ■μενος regularly applies to the Lord Jesus, as in chapter 1:15, 27; 3:31 (his), as also in Matt. 11:3; Luke 7:19, 20; yet more fully and definitely ■ ■ρχ■μενος John 6:14, where it would be idle to take it for any man as such, and not as appropriated to the Messiah. (Cf. 11:27.) It would be well also to note chapter 3:19; 9:39; 12:46; 16:28; 18:37. These instances ought to leave no doubt in any careful mind that our evangelist habitually uses the phrase of Christ to the exclusion of every other, it must be connected here not with π. ■νθρωπον, but with τ■ φ■ς τ■ ■λ. The nearest approach is chapter xvi. 21, which is pointedly different, not to speak of any ulterior mystery in its figure.

It is surprising under such circumstances that the Five Clergymen should say it is impossible to determine with certainty whether the particle ■ρχ■μενον is to be taken with φ■ς or with ■ν in the nominative ease neuter, or with ■νθρωπον in the masculine accusative. They, too, while adopting the same sense as the Authorized Version, strive not to exclude a quite different reference, the converse of the Revisers,

But if the Revisers intended in their text to convey that Christ is the true light which coming into the world lighteth every man, they give in the margin, “The true light, which lighteth every man, was coming” into the world: a rendering grammatically possible, though not probable, but contextually excluded by the verse following which speaks of the Lord in immediate connection as in the world, and not to come, or in mere process of coming. Next, the margin adds another alternative, indicative of the uncertainty of the Revisers, “every man as he cometh.” But is this serious? It is no question of a reasonable soul or conscience, but of Christ the true light. Is it orthodox that Christ enlightens “every man as he cometh,” &c.? What do they suggest by it? What can any one infer but that, if this be true, Christ gives His own light to every man on his coming into the world? A doctrine less defensible and more unworthy than the delusion of every man's being born again by baptism. Here a signal spiritual blessing is bound up with every man's birth of nature. Would it not be nearer the truth of God to say that no man as he comes into the world is enlightened by Christ?

In result, then, we see that the Revisers reject apparently the Authorized Version, and give us in the text the right sense so obscurely that most readers will confound it with the only meaning meant to be shut out, while the margin gives the choice between a version possible and harmless, but quite unsuitable to the context, and another directly opposed to any creed in Christendom, unless it be that of Quakers. It is probably due to their adherence to the order of the Greek words that they have in the revised text left their meaning anything but clear and express. They have thus sacrificed their own principle not to leave any translation or arrangement of words which could adapt itself to one or other of two interpretations, but rather to express as plainly as possible that interpretation which seemed best to deserve a place.

They are also somewhat capricious in representing the article or the anarthrous construction. Thus in chapter 1:12 they say “the right to become children of God,” where they properly drop it before “children,” and needlessly insert it before “right.” They give us “a woman” in chapter 4:27, and “A servant” in chapter 13:16; but they do not say “the woman” in chapter 16:21, though they do say “the child,” whereas the one like the other is used generically, like “the bondservant” and “the son” in chapter 8:35.

Slight but generally accredited changes occur not seldom in chapters 1, 2, which call for no particular remark. In verse 11 of chapter 2 “signs” is rightly given, and throughout this Gospel, rather than “miracles;” but why should ■ξουσ■α be rendered “right” in chapter 1:12, “authority” in chapter 5:17, and “power” (margin, “right") in chapter 10:18?

In chapter 3:15 they adopt “believeth may in him have eternal life,” whilst in verse 16 they retain “believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life.” It is a question of readings, and it cannot be doubted that they have good authority. In chapter 4:42 they properly, with all critics and on good grounds, discard “the Christ,” the true force being far clearer without that title; so do they, on ample authority, omit other additions of less moment.

But the omission of the last clause of verse 8, and the whole of verse 4 in chapter 5, is grave. No doubt a few of the oldest and best MSS and versions omit all or nearly all this portion. Still the unquestionable answer of the sufferer in verse 7 seems hardly compatible with the omission, which ancient rationalism might desire, as does the same spirit in our own day. There seems nothing unworthy of God in the omitted clause, while, on the contrary, what is there falls in with the scope of what is undoubted, if it be not requisite to give the full force. God under the law had not left Himself without witness of mercy; but sin wrought havoc, and strength was needed to avail oneself of any remedy afforded. What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, and so gave us deliverance. Jesus with a word heals the man whom no angel's help, no ordinance, could avail to meet.

In the body of the Lord's discourse, wherein He shows Himself the source of life now to faith, vindicated by the execution of judgment by-and-by, we have the Revisers very properly exhibiting “judgment” where the Authorized Version had “judgment,” “condemnation,” and “damnation.” (Vers. 22, 24, 27, 29.)

Chapter 6 affords many small points of correction as to which most are agreed; and so does chapter vii. But on these details there is little reason to dwell.

The most noteworthy and important omission is of course the end of chapter 7 and beginning of chapter 8 to verse 11 inclusively. Here confessedly most of the old uncials are adverse, and not a few versions are silent, as ancient commentators also. But it is painful to add that Augustine at an early day, and Nicon, an Armenian abbot of the tenth century, bear their distinct testimony to the subjective reasons which led to leaving out the story, even where it was well known to exist in the Gospel. Nothing on the other hand can account for its insertion if it were not the inspired word of God; and in no place does it fit in, spite of strong and repeated efforts to dislodge it, save as the fact introductory to the discourse of our Lord in this chapter. The internal objections to the style or language are as weak as those alleged against Mark 16:9-20. The words, which viewed superficially afford occasion, turn out when duly weighed to be powerful evidences of their own genuineness as well as authenticity; as is indeed the case invariably with true scripture for all who value the truth.

But there is a difficulty of translation in the central part of this chapter which should not be lightly passed over. The Jews say to the Lord (ver. 25), “Who art thou? Jesus said unto them, Even that which I have also spoken unto you from the beginning,” τ■ν ■ρχ■ν ■τι κα■ λαλ■ ■μ■ν, such is the Revisers' translation and Mr. Palmer's text, pretty much as the Authorized Version, “even the same that I said unto you from the beginning." It is the more strange, as Tyndale followed by Cranmer had rendered it not only in better keeping with the context but with less violence to grammatical propriety: “Even the very same thing that I saye (C. speake) unto you.” The Geneva Version introduced the error which still taints the Revision: “Even the very same thing that I sayde unto you from the begynnyng,” which rendering appears to give a twofold meaning to τ■ν ■ρχ■ν, besides that one of these meanings leads to the violation of the time of the verb. This the Five Clergymen seek to avoid in “That which I also say unto you from the beginning." But even if this were otherwise allowable, how can τ■ν ■ρχ■ν=■ξ (or ■π’) ■ρχ■ς? It is common enough to see ■ρχ■ω or ■ρχ■ς, with or without κατ■, in the sense of at first, in the beginning, to begin with; and no doubt the assumption that so it means here gave occasion to “I said” or “I have spoken” as the rendering of λαλ■). Were all this permissible and feasible, where is the propriety of the sense that results? Plato's Lysis (recogn. Baiter. Orell. & Wink. 367, col. 2) proves that it is too hasty to say that the phrase cannot mean absolutely, altogether, save in negative and quasi-negative sentences; and Elsner adds a few more occurrences in later Greek. This alone gives a worthy meaning: “Who art thou? Absolutely what I am also speaking to you.” Jesus is the Word, the Truth: what He speaks corresponds wholly with His being. He is what He says, as none other: not only the truth in itself, but precisely what comes out from first to last in this chapter, where He first acts as the light, then reveals Himself as such, and shows that He is the truth, the Son, and finally God, the Eternal One: before Abraham was (γεν■σθαι) I am (■γ■ ε■μι).

There is little calling for notice in the Company's work on chapter 9 save the reception of ■μ■ς “us” in verse 4 instead of the first “me” without even a caution in the margin. Also they might have avoided both text and marginal alternative of chapter 10:2 by giving simply “is shepherd of the sheep.” It is not often perhaps that English answers to the anarthrous Greek without the definite, or even the indefinite, article; but here it seems to be unequivocally preferable. They have adopted a better text than the Received in verse 4: “When he hath put forth all his own,” reading “all” and dropping “sheep.” So in verses 14, 15, they have given the undoubtedly requisite correction on good authority, which beautifully connects the two verses now severed;} excluding the gross

blunder of “fold” instead of “flock” for ποιμν■ in verse 16, where Tyndale was right. To verse 29 it seems rather surprising they should, have deemed it advisable to give in the margin, “That which my Father hath given unto me,” even though read by some ancient authorities, seeing that this is not really “greater than all,” and that it also wholly breaks the context. No doubt Tischendorf, Tregelles and Alford adopt this unreasonable variation; but, strange to say, Dr. S. Davidson, who translates the text of the first, follows the ordinary readings here, and so does the last in his revised New Testament. And is there not a purposed omission of the object in both parts of the verse, which should be heeded by the translator instead of supplying “them” twice, as the Revisers do? The omission gives force to the gift, and strongly negatives wresting out of the Father's hand. Minor points may be left.

In chapter 11 nothing appears to detain us.

In chapter 12 why not “the” grain of wheat, as they themselves give “the” mountain, “the” rock, “the” bushel, “the” lampstand, “the” sower, “the” basin, “the” sop, &c.?

Nor is there in chapter 13 anything special to notice, “during supper” being certainly the true force of δε■πνου γιν., not “supper being ended.” Even if ger. (A D and a dozen uncials more, and almost all cursives, &c.) be read, it would mean “supper being come.”

In chapter 14:23 they of course give “my word,” not “words;” on 15 and 16 we need not dwell.

In chapter 17:4 “having accomplished” is well known to rest on excellent authority, but differs very slightly in sense from the more general text; so in verse 11, “keep them in thy name which” is accepted ordinarily instead of the common reading. Surely it would have been better in verse 16 to have adhered to the emphatic Greek order, “Of the world they are not,” as compared with the same words in verse 14. In verse 19 they say “sanctified in truth,” rightly omitting the article, as others did before them. They drop ■ν,"one in us,” verse 21, and read in their text of verse 24, “■, that which,” instead of “ο■ς, those whom” (of. John 6:37, 39), only that in the earlier chapter each form is used distinctly, not blended, as they would be here were the critical reading accepted as certain.

In the four closing chapters are corrections of slight blemishes in the common text, but happily nothing of sufficient moment to call for remark. “Simon, son of John” rather than Jonas, as in chapter L 42. “perceivest” is a poor alternative in the margin for “knowest,” γιν■σκεις as compared with ο■δας.

Revised New Testament: Acts

This book furnishes such an abundant harvest of various readings, as well as of questionable renderings that those pointed out, whether for commendation or for censure, must be regarded rather as samples than a complete review.

Chapter 1 calls for no special notice, though there is laxity in verses 14, 18, 19; correctness in verses 7, 17, 22. Why should πνο■ in chapter 2:2 be translated “wind,” as in the Authorized Version? The sound out of heaven seemed like the rush of an impetuous blast or blowing. And why should φων■ in verse 6 be confounded with the ■χος of verse 2, instead of the more natural Septuagintal sense of “report,” adopted in the Authorized Version? The rumor of what had occurred to the disciples might well attract people from all parts to the spot where they were gathered; how could the sound from heaven do so? T. S. Green takes it as “gift of speech,” Bloomfield as the noise of the multitude; but the former seems without example in the LXX, or New Testament, and the loud noise would be when the strangers flocked rather than that which drew them together. Another point by no means clear is the “parted” or “parting asunder” of verse 3, which they alternate in the margin with “parting asunder among them,” or “distributing themselves” —a very different meaning. Alford and the Authorized Version follow Erasmus' dissectae, rather than the Vulgate dispertitae, which Wiclif neglected wholly. But Wiclif was right as to men of Crete, where Tyndale and the Geneva by a strange error gave “Grekes” in chapter 2, and the Authorized Version “Cretes,” not the singular “Cretians,” of Titus 1:12. Again, is it desirable in verse 22 to continue “approved” (■ποδεδειγμ■νον), seeing that the word is never used now in the sense of “shown plainly forth,” “proved,” “appointed,” but judged worthy or pleasing, which wholly misleads? To this the Vulgate and Beza contributed, giving “approbatum,” rather than Erasmus' “exhibitum,” or “demonstratunt,” or “designatum.” In verse 23 the Revisers very properly give “by the hand of lawless men,” and leave out of verse 30 a clause as unauthorized as it is unnecessary; equally good is their omission of dolaptee in verse 41, an evident insertion from chapter 21:17. Verses 42, 46 are more correctly represented, though the close of verse 47 might be better than “And the Lord added to them, day by day, those that were being saved.” The marginal alternative is not more literally true to the Greek than requisite. “And the Lord kept adding together day by day, those that should be saved.” This formed “the assembly;” and so the words τ■ ■κκλησια crept in, and drove out ■π■ τ■ α■τ■ and, which then and there became useless, so as to introduce chapter 3, where they are not wanted. For the true force of το■ς σ., let me appeal to the respectable Company themselves in their version of Luke 13:23 (not to speak of 1 Cor. 15:2). Correct accordingly not only Acts 2:47 but 1 Cor. 1:18, and 2 Cor. 2:15, τ■ν σ. in Rev. 21:24 being beyond a doubt spurious. It has been often pointed out that of a. is a technical expression of the LXX for the Jewish remnant destined to salvation out of the ungodly people, and that the present participle is here used (as the indicative no less frequently) apart from time for the class; for the same persons at the same time have predicated of them the aorist and perfect as well as the present. This proves that the present must be used, not historically, but as the description of a class; the present cannot otherwise apply, as well as the two past tenses; abstractedly of the

character it might. Compare the use of “sanctified” in Heb. 10:10, 14, to which the same principle applies.

In chapter 3:13, 26, as in chapter 4:27, 30, the Revisers rightly give, not Son or Child, but “servant,” referring to Isa. 42:1; (Matt. 12:18); 52:13; 53:11. Verses 19, 20 are given accurately, “Repent ye, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus.”

In chapters 4-6 there are changes requisite, but not perhaps of any great importance.

In chapter 7:38 is perpetuated the old error of “church” in the wilderness, with “congregation” in the margin, the converse of Heb. 2:12, where “congregation” appears in the text, “church” in the margin. There is a good deal of uncertainty in the treatment of verse 53, the law “as it was ordained by angels,” or “as the ordinance of angels,” Greek “unto ordinances of angels.” Undoubtedly ε■ς διαταγ■ς ■γγ. is not an easy phrase, but moans at injunctions or ordering of angels. (Cf. Matt. 12:41; Gal. 3:19.) In verse 59 if words must be intercalated, they are more right in saying “the Lord” than the Authorized Version, which detracts from His glory by inserting “God;” better leave out either and give, “invoking and saying, Lord Jesus,” &c.

In chapter viii. verse 37 is with good reason expunged. Still stronger is all textual authority against the interpolated clauses in chapter 9:5, 6, from “persecuted” to “Arise,” or rather, “But arise;” for in error the conjunction has been omitted. This is a notable instance of Erasmus' temerity, misled by the Vulgate, the source of the corruption, founding the words in part on chapter 22:10; 26:14. The Complutensian text is right, δι■κεις ■λλ■ ■ν■στηθε κ. τ. λ., and so all modern critics, and of course the Revisers. But the Complutensian is as wrong as. Erasmus, and the rest who follow the inferior MSS in giving “Christ” rather than Jesus (■ A B C E, fifteen cursives; Vulg., Syrr., Sah., Memph., Theb., Armen., Aeth. &c.) which the Revisers follow, as also “church” rather than “churches” in verse 31, the Compluten. giving the plural form in Greek, the singular in Latin.

In chapter 10 the most remarkable change seems the omission of “and fasting” in verse 30, the most ancient MSS and Versions omitting the words, the mass sustaining them.

In chapter 11:12 is a very questionable adoption, “making no distinction” μηδ■ν διακρ■ναντα which rests on ■corr. A B and half-a-dozen cursives. The primary reading of the Sinait. with Laud's and a few cursives is μ. διακρ■νοντα, but the bulk of MSS with all the versions support μ. διακριν■μενος, as in chapter 10:20 where the MSS are not at all at variance. D and Syrp. omit the words, as Griesbach thought probable and Alford and Green certain. But the rendering is right in verse 17, as is the reading “Ελληνας, Greeks, (not ■λληνιστ■ς, Grecians,) in verse 20, as many have pointed out long ago. There would have been no great moment in, mentioning the gospel going out to Hellenists, for there was no question from the first about Greek-speaking Jews. The grand point is the free action in the Spirit of these scattered brethren in preaching to the Gentiles, besides and apart from the formal mission of Peter to Cornelius; and that the Lord's hand was with them.

There is nothing to detain us in chapter 12, but chapter 13 presents many matters of question and interest. Would it not be better to have distinguished between “sent” in verses 3 and 4? The first is only let go, the second is really “sent forth,” which when not distinguished might lead to false

inferences in clerical minds. Still stranger is the adoption with Tregelles of ■τροποφ■ρησεν which is the vulgar or Stephano-Elzevirian text and has high authority (■ B &c.) with the great mass of cursives and other witnesses. ■τροφ. has not only A C p.m. E and some cursives and almost all the ancient versions save the Vulgate, but Deut. 1:31 in Hebrew and the LXX (save a few copies of the latter), the intrinsic sense being in my judgment beyond comparison in its favor: and so Alford, Bloomfield, Griesbach, Green, Lachmann, Mill, Scholz, Tischendorf, Wells, and Wordsworth. Bengel too even thinks that the other word means the same thing, an alternative only in form, the context pointing to the sense of Deut. 1 and Num. 12, especially as Jehovah, whatever His grace, chastised their manners in the wilderness as is written for our admonition. Again, though the critical reading of verses 19, 20, is that of the Revisers, they involve themselves in an ungrammatical rendering of ■ς ■τεσιν κ.τ.λ. as if it were ■ς ■τη "for about four hundred and fifty years," instead of "in about four hundred and fifty years." The distinctive use of the dative and accusative in questions of time should not be overlooked in the version, as it is not in the context. On the other hand they rightly drop "again" in verse 33, as the participle cannot mean "up" and "again," though it may mean either; which is expressly distinguished in verse 34. In verse 34 they draw no attention to the peculiarity of ■σιος for "holy" or the preceding ■σια.

In chapter 14 there is scarcely anything to change; in chapter 15 verse 34 is not now read by any critics of note, as not appearing in ■ A B E H L P, some sixty cursives, &c.

In chapter 16:7 they rightly give "the Spirit of Jesus;" but why in verse 12 "a city of Macedonia, the first of the district," when "a principal city of the district of Macedonia" strictly represents the Greek text? Amphipolis had been for some time the capital of the district, and Neapolis was first in geographical order for one arriving from the East like the apostle. It is known however that a Greek city might be designated πρωτ■ without being the metropolis of the region, as for instance, Smyrna and Pergamos were so styled, though Ephesus was the capital of the province. And reasons were not wanting quite sufficient for such a claim on the part of Philippi, especially as Augustus had shown himself ready to show it uncommon favor.

Again in chapter 17:1 why should ■ς δ. be translated "somewhat superstitious"? Very religious, devoted to higher powers, or given up to demon worship, seems rather the force of the word here. They rightly change "the Lord" into "God" in verse 27; but τ■ θε■ον, the divine, or what is divine, in verse 29, should not be confounded with θει■της or still less θε■της.

In chapter 23:5 they correctly substitute "by the word" for "by the Spirit," whilst Alford would render it "earnestly occupied in preaching," and T. S. Green similarly.

In chapter 19:16 it is "both of them," not the seven, but two of them, easily made into all, but not the converse.

In chapter 20:7 it is correctly "when we came together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them," &c., and in verse 30 "the disciples."

In chapter 21:15 "our baggage" or "effects" is right instead of "carriages."

Chapter 22 affords little to remark on, but chapter 23:9 ends correctly with "and if a spirit hath spoken to him, or an angel?" So ■ A B C E and other good authorities, though the addition of the common text is not without numerous attestations. In verse 27 σ■ν τ■ στρ. is not "with an army,"

but with the soldiery, or my soldiers.

In chapter 24:14 the Revisers rightly say “a sect,” or faction or parties, as they should have said, not heresies but sects or factions in 1 Cor. 11:19, and in Gal. 5:20, as Titus 3:10 should be factions rather than “heretical.”

The only thing one would now notice in chapter 25 is in verse 5, where the Authorized Version deserts Erasmus and Stephens for the Complutensian and Beza (at least in his later editions, for up to that of 1565 he too omitted ■τοπον). Only the modern critics (Alford, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles) exclude το■τω “this” as well as adopt δυνατο■, “amiss.” It may be added that δυνατο■ here does not refer to ability, as in the Authorized Version, following Erasmus and Beza, but to power, influence, or authority, as in the Vulgate potentes, not qui.... possunt.

In chapter 26:17 ■ξαιρ. does not seem to mean deliverance or rescue, but taking Paul out from the people, and from the Gentiles. Verses 28, 29 are given correctly in the main. “In a little thou art persuading me to become a Christian. And Paul, I would to God, both in a little and in much, that not thou only but also,” &c.

Chapter 27 stands singularly ill in the ordinary Authorized Version. Verse 9 is “the voyage,” not sailing or navigation; and down south-west or down north-west (verse 12) means the opposite point of the wind, i.e. looking north-east and south-east. In verse 17, χαλ. τ■ σκε■ος is not “strake sail,” but “lowered the gear,” and so scudded (ο■τως ■φ.). In verse 80 the sense is to lay or carry out, not to “cast out,” anchors; nor does verse 40 mean “taking up” but casting off the anchors; nor committing themselves but letting the anchor go into the sea; as also by τ■ν ■ρτ. is meant the foresail, not the “mainsail.” The revision in all this seems quite correct.

In chapter 28 the doubtful authority of the central part of verse 16 is acknowledged, and the whole of verse 29, the best witnesses being adverse, not only in MSS but in the ancient versions.

Chapter 173

Revised New Testament: Romans

The apostolic epistles afford quite another test of our Revisers; for doctrine far more than narrative materially affects our judgment, as in the earlier half of the New Testament, where a choice of reading or of rendering lies otherwise open to me. A right decision is, if possible, as much more momentous as it is more delicate. Of course we take the epistles as they stand in the English Bible.

The first verse of the first chapter of Romans affords an instance of loose or wrong views. “Called to be an apostle” is no less mistaken than “called to be saints” in verse 7. As he was then an apostle, so were they saints. There is no need of supplying any words in either case; and in both the supply of “to be” rather weakens and falsifies, instead of justly defining the sense. It was for the saints in their call, as for the apostle in his, a fact. In neither case was it a birthright, nor was it a human acquirement; but they became, what they were, apostles or saints by calling. It was the call of grace, according to divine purpose, but an actual relationship, which “to be” at least obscures. So it is also in 1 Corinthians, Jude, and the Revelation, as well as in Rom. 8:28. Again, γρ. singular or plural, for “the scripture” or “the scriptures,” regularly takes the article; so that, in Greek, there must be a specific reason here to render the word anarthrous. The epithets here and in chapter 16:26 are supposed by some to account for this, as others allege the prepositions; but neither ground seems satisfactory; and it is weak to say that it was indifferent to insert or omit the Greek article. The expression here then appears to be purposely general. Further, the characteristic description of, not God's gospel only, but His Son, in verses 3, 4, is not as faithfully reflected in the Revision as one might desire: see also verse 16. So, in verses 17, 18, one doubts the need of saying either “a” righteousness or “the” wrath, the phrases being alike characteristic.

But the Version of κατεχ■ντων in verse 18 calls for the more notice, as the Company adopt a sense which has prevailed extensively among ancients and moderns; yet is it not the primary force of the word but rather a possible contextual modification, which the context here in my judgment proves inadmissible. The word means, not simply like ■χειν, to have, but to have thoroughly, to take (Matt. 21:38, Luke 14:9), to possess (1 Cor. 7:30), to hold, or keep if there be danger of losing, to hold fast (Luke 8:5 Cor. 11:2; 15:2; 1 Thess. 5:21, &c.); if there be an opposing power, to withhold or hinder. (2 Thess. 2:5, 6.) What then is the connection of the passage helping us to determine which of these shades of meaning is best here? The apostle (ver. 16) was not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power unto salvation to every one that believeth, both Jew first and Greek. For God's righteousness is revealed therein from faith unto faith, according as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith, verse 17. This may be fairly regarded as the subject-matter of the epistle. The next verse states summarily why such an intervention of grace was requisite if a man was to be saved righteously. For there is revealed God's wrath from heaven against (or upon) all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men that possess or hold the truth in unrighteousness. This is precisely what is unfolded in what follows to the end of chapter 3:20: first, every sort of ungodliness in the Gentile world, gross to the end of chapter 1, and more refined in the first half (vers. 1-16) of chapter 2; where secondly he turns to the proof of unrighteousness in those that

hold the truth in unrighteousness, which marks the self-satisfied and unbelieving Jew. Nor is anything more common in Christendom than truth, or orthodoxy, held ever so firmly along with total disregard of practical righteousness. It was notoriously so at that time among the Jews. Assuredly this is a phase of evil against which God's wrath is revealed; and the warning is as solemn as it is instructive in the most comprehensive treatise inspiration furnishes on the foundation of Christianity. Stifling or hindering the truth is a part of men's ungodliness no doubt; but for this very reason it does not fit in so strikingly with the Spirit's distinction between every sort of ungodliness and unrighteousness of those that hold the truth in unrighteousness. It appears to me then that “hold down” or hinder,” as the Revisers (English and American) say, does not give the true sense, nor does the marginal alternative “withhold” of the previous English Versions, still less “detain” of the Rhemish, with the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic. The Coptic is right, if I may judge from Wilkins. The Ethiopic is there quite unreliable, I believe therefore that the Authorized Version is right, not the Revision.

The Company have, as almost all allow, properly cast out “of Christ” (ver. 16), “also” (ver. 24), “of and fornication” (ver. 29), “implacable” (ver. 31). In verse 28 they render ο■κ ■δ. “refused,” which is beyond question more correct than “did not like” of the Authorized Version. From “proving,” in the sense of assaying, the word comes to mean “approve,” or think good, or choose; and “hateful to God” is the true force rather than “haters of God” in verse 30. Whether they are not deceived by sound in giving πρ. rather than ποι. the sense of “practice” is a grave consideration, though they stand not alone in their judgment; it affects the bearing of many scriptures from Matthew to Revelation as well as Romans frequently.

In chapter 2 there is much less to arrest us. “Incorruption” is right, not immortality, in verse 7, as in Eph. 6:24 morally, and 2 Tim. 1:10, as well as 1 Cor. 15:42, 50, 53. But “a” law in verse 13 seems objectionable, if they discard the article with the first ν■μου and accept it with the second where Mr. Palmer gives the article. With Alford, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Wordsworth, the article should be in neither, and the version accordingly be “the law-hearers” and “the law-doers,” or “the hearers of law” and “the doers of law” as Mr. Green. We all know that Bishop Middleton in his celebrated treatise repeatedly pronounces this form inadmissible; but it is his oversight of cases not in the New Testament only (Matt. 11:13; Heb. 9:13) but in the purest Attic Greek. (Plat. Phaedr. 808, 811, edd. Bait. Orell. et Winck.) Equally wrong was Mr. Gilbert Wakefield, who tries to account for the absence of the article in the sentence of Mark where it is well established. The governed noun need not therefore take the article, because the governing noun has it; whether it should take it or not depends on general principles. In verse 27 they have followed others in correcting the strange inaccuracy of the Authorized Version “by” the letter, &c. for which they give “with” to express the condition, not the instrument. The medium through which the act was done is not in question. But here again why not “who with letter and circumcision art a transgressor of law"? Of course the blunder of ■δε “behold,” for ε■ δ■ “but if” (ver. 17) in the vulgarly received text is corrected.

Chapter 3 offers more frequent and grave matter for inquiry. Thus the Authorized Version in the end of verse 4 is corrected into “comest into judgment,” and “taketh vengeance” into “visiteth with wrath.” But why should not the Revisers adhere to their usual “judgment” in verse 8? In the following verse they render προεχ■μεθα “are we in worse case than they?” instead of the generally preferred “better,” with the marginal alternative of “do we excuse ourselves?” The active

voice may mean to have the advantage or surpass, the passive to be excelled; and so Wetstein suggested here, whom substantially the Company follow in their text, whilst giving the view of Hemsterhuis, Venema, Koppe and Wahl, in the margin, founded on one sense of the middle voice as such is beyond question of common usage. As the word occurs but once in the New Testament, we have no direct help to decide; but it has been pointed out that παρ■χεσθαι is used (Acts 19:24; Col. 4:1; Titus 2:7) where it differs from παρ■χειν only by a delicate shade. Hence in not a few passages there is a conflict of readings between the active and the middle form of verbs, as in Luke 15:9, John 14:23, Acts 23:13. Whether in the simple verb or in its compounds, the active and the middle in some cases approximate, though no doubt each has its appropriate application. In the present instance the middle voice suits the force intended, far more than the active προ■χομεν: “are we on our part better?” And as the context favors this rendering, so it condemns the version of the Revisers beyond all others as well as their margin. For in the previous verses the apostle had shown clearly that the Jews possessed signal advantages of an exterior sort over the Gentile; and this he was careful to press as aggravating their responsibility: for the argument towards the close of chapter 2 might have seemed to place them all on one dead level. But if we, the Jews, have superior privileges, specially in having the scriptures, are we in ourselves better? Not so certainly; for we before charged both Jews and Greeks with being all under sin; and then scriptures are quoted from the Psalms and the Prophets exposing their sins in every way and in the highest degree. Thus the very law in which they boasted was the irrefutable witness of their universal and heinous guilt; that, as the Gentiles were already proved abominable, and the Jews were now convicted by what the law speaks to those within its scope, every mouth might be stopped and all the world come under God's judgment. And this serves to show the mistaken division here; for verses 19 and 20 close this paragraph, the opening words being bound up with the citations from the law, or Old Testament. Sin was universal; law, far from delivering, wrought only full knowledge of sin. Man had nothing but unrighteousness for God: had God anything for man but wrath and judgment?

“But now apart from law God's righteousness hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe.” Such is the fresh subject, though in resumption of the great keynote just raised for a moment in chapter 1:17, but interrupted to let in the demonstration of man's state which called forth God's wrath. It will be noticed by the reader what havoc is made by the omission of κα■ ■π■ π. “and upon all” in verse 22. No doubt four or five of the oldest uncials with two cursives and some ancient versions and fathers leave the words out; and they are followed by Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort. But the Homeoteleuton simply and satisfactorily accounts for the slip, aided as it may have been by the inability of many to see the double beating of the truth enunciated. For how readily the mind swerves to Calvinistic views, or to Arminian; and how few accept the truth in its fullness, of which extreme partisans see but one part, unintelligently opposed to the other part! The main body of uncials, cursives, versions, and fathers declares for the text as rendered in the Authorized Version. Even the mutilated form of some of the best Latin copies (“super omnes") bears witness against that abbreviation which has found favor. And though the expositions of Greeks and Latins have little worth or point, they show the fact; for it is no question of Jews and Gentiles, but of God's righteousness manifested unto all, going out toward all indiscriminately, and taking effect actually on all those that believe. To overlook the difference of the prepositions is unworthy, and yet more so to confound “all” with “all that believe.” The old

writers who state but misapprehend the difference were certainly not the men to foist in a clause which, giving both comprehensiveness and precision, falls in as strikingly with this epistle in particular as with all scripture generally. God's righteousness could not but be for all; but in fact none but believers profited by it through faith in Christ. Its direction was towards all, not merely all believers, but all mankind; its application was upon all that believe. To take away the former is to deprive it of breadth; to blot out the latter is to deny its depth and strength. “Unto,” not “upon,” all that believe is far short of divine truth. The ordinary reading just suits the gospel of God; that of the Revisers seems equally one-sided and useless. To say that God's righteousness is unto all that believe would be a truism.

On the other hand it is strange to see that they retain “a propitiation” with the Authorized Version in verse 25, instead at best of presenting a “propitiatory” or mercy-seat as the Greeks generally understood, and they themselves do elsewhere (Heb. 9:5) and Tyndale did here. The rendering also that follows, “through faith, by his blood,” is by no means sure. In verse 28 it seems peculiar that “for” (■ A Dp.m. E F G, many cursives, versions, and fathers, and hence received by almost all, notwithstanding B C K L P and the Syrr. &c. which favors “therefore") is not approved by the Company, but “therefore” as in the received text. What misled was the supposition that it is a conclusion from the argument preceding, but rather a reason in support of verse 27. They are bold men who reject the judgment of Alford, Bengol, T. S. Green, Griesbach, Harwood, Koppe, Mill, Scholz, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Wells, Wordsworth, and the Five Clergymen. Is it that Drs. Westcott and Hort have changed their opinion? Judging by Dr. Vaughan's text of Romans (1st ed.) they did not then oppose the critics.—Nor do the Devisers seem successful in dealing with the anarthrous form of verses 31, 32, nor with the distinctive force of the prepositions, &c. in verse 30. It is not “the” circumcision and “the” uncircumcision, which would imply these bodies of people, but persons of either class as such: “by faith,” not by works of law which Jews might plead, and “through their faith” if Gentiles believed in Christ: the one excluding legal pretension, the other honoring faith where it existed.

In chapter 4 the main blemish is one perpetuated from the Authorized Version in verse 12, and probably due to not seizing the force of π. π., which means chief, or first characteristic, type of true separation to God; “father of circumcision, not to those of circumcision only [Jewish], but also to those that walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham, which he had in uncircumcision [Gentile believers].” The erroneous version appeared in Tyndale, but not in the other English translations (Wiclif, Cranmer, Geneva, and Rhemish), which rightly give two classes, not one only characterized doubly.

In chapter 5 none can be surprised to hear that the Revisers adopt for their text “let us have” for “we have,” though in Greek it is only the question of a long for a short o, letters habitually confounded (Itacism as it is called) in the best and oldest MSS. The diplomatic groundwork, though seemingly strong beyond measure, is therefore really precarious, unless the context be also clear and sure. But in my judgment the dogmatic or inferential, not exhortatory, character in this part of the epistle decidedly demands the indicative rather than the subjunctive in chapter 5: 1, 2, 3, as is strongly confirmed by the structure of verse 11, which does not admit of the latter. But souls weak in the gospel would naturally incline to the subjunctive of old as now. Of course, “reconciliation” displaces “atonement” in verse 11. But it seems strange that the Company have not adopted, even in the margin, the excellent suggestion of the famous Dr. Bentley (Ellis, p. 28)

presenting the first clause of verses 15, 16 in the interrogative form. The sense is clearer thereby. They correct the confusion of ο■ς as if it were ■π■ in the elliptical verse 18, and rightly say “unto all men to condemnation,” &c.; also of course “the one” and “the many” are accurately given throughout, with other corrections of interest.

In chapter 6 the revision of verse 3 may dispel the delusion that all were not baptized, only many: strange oversight of the force of the phrase. But baptism was to or unto, not “into,” a person, though that of the Spirit was “into one body.”

The revision of chapter 7:3, 4, “be joined to,” is certainly better than the too definite “married” of the Authorized Version. The Greek exactly answers to the Hebrew, as for instance in Hos. 3, “To be, or belong to” is the literal and precise force. Again, it is high time that the doctrinal error involved in the editions of Beza, and repeated in the text of the Authorized Version, should be expunged. Indeed, it seems to lack the support of a single MS or even version, and to have been a mere conjecture of Beza founded on a misconception of Chrysostom, who really, like every other early ecclesiastical writer, had ■ποθαν■ντες (not —τος). That the law died is Antinomian in tendency; that the Christian died to law (Gal. 2:19; Col. 2:20, Hi. 3), is sound and fundamental truth. There is a various reading here (το■ θαν■του) supported by Greco-Latin uncials, and mentioned by Origen as then extant in some Greek copies, and followed by the Vulgate (except the Amiatine, which gives morientes, though it should be mortui), and many Latin fathers. But this is to miss the means of discharge or quittance from the law. Of course the Rhemish, like Wiclif, adheres to the less correct form of the Vulgate, whilst all the other English Versions were right in this till the Authorized Version went farther astray than ever. Erasmus, not in his first but in a later edition, had paved the way for Beza's rash conjecture through a misuse of Chrysostom's comment on the passage. Dr. Bloomfield, in his Recensio Synoptica, v. 580, attributes ■ποθαν■ντος to accident. But this is beyond controversy a mistake, from not knowing the facts. Had it been found in Greek copies, it might have been so; but we can trace its first appearance to the intentional alteration of Theodore de Beze.—Toward the close of the same verse (6) do not the Company go too far in translating ■στε δουλε■ειν ■μ■ς, “so that we serve,” and not “so as to serve,” or “so that we should serve"? There seems no effort on the Revisers' part to distinguish between σαρκιν■ς (ver. 14) and σαρκικ■ς in 1 Cor. 3:3; 9:12, though there is in 2 Cor. 3:3.

Chapter 8 is of mingled character. The Revisers are justified in excluding the last clause of verse 1, which, even if genuine, is incorrectly rendered in the Authorized Version. But why print “Spirit” with a capital in verses 2, 9 (twice), 11 (twice), 14 and 16, while they print it with a small letter in verses 4, 5 (twice) 6, 9 (twice more), 13, 15? Again, in verse 4 the textual rendering and the marginal should change places; and so perhaps in verse 11. In verse 24 they have adopted “who hopeth for that which he seeth?” on the authority, as far as I am aware, of the great Vatican uncial (1209) supplemented by the margin of a Bodleian cursive, Roe 16, conventionally cited among the Pauline copies as 47. No editor has as yet ventured to put this forward as the true text, though no doubt the resulting sense seems simple and suitable—indeed so much so as to look like the smoothing down of a rather rugged phrase. And it may be mentioned that Mr. Hansell's Oxford edition of the more famous uncials does not represent B aright, any more than older editors, ■ γ■ρ βλ■πει τις, τ■ ■λπ■ζει; whereas Tischendorf reports its text (p.m.) as ■ γ■ρ βλ., τ■ς ■λπ. The margin of verse 47 is the less trustworthy here as reading ■πομ■νει for ■λπ. though, strange to say, ■p.m. and A do the same. Is it not strange that under such circumstances so ill-sustained a

reading should be the ground of a change in so grave a work as the publicly revised version of the New Testament? In verses 27, 28, the added words in Italics only encumber and enfeeble the sense. The Spirit intercedes for the saints according to God and His nature, yet more than His will, which comes very short of the truth. And though the “purpose” be without doubt of God, still it has pleased Him not to qualify it here in any way, as the fullest explanation follows in verses 29, 30. The conformity to the image of His Son is in resurrection glory, far beyond and distinct from any transformation meanwhile by the Spirit as described in 2 Cor. 3:18. The punctuation of verses 33-35 is better than in the Authorized Version, but not quite uniformly correct. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth [or shall condemn]? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us: who shall separate from the love of Christ? shall tribulation,” &c. In the close of this part of the apostle's profound communication there is good and full authority, as is well known, for placing “nor powers” after (not before) “nor things present nor things to come.”

The opening verses of chapter 9 are fairly rendered in the Revised V. as in the Authorized, being substantially alike. The marginal alternatives are of no real weight; the last, like the American suggestion, being unidiomatic. For in such cases the predicate ought to have the emphatic position, and the subject should have the article in Greek, the only apparent exception being the LXX's rendering of Psa. 68:19, which is acknowledged as corrupt. Mr. T. S. Green has inadvertently dropt the rendering of κα■ ■ νομοθεσ■α, “and the law-giving” out of this portion. Verse 9 runs “For this word is of promise” or [one] of promise, the Revised seeming looser than the Authorized Version. And ought there not to be “one” vessel (not “a” merely) in verse 21, to express the first 8 Verse 28 is presented in the abridged form of the oldest MSS and versions, which most modern editors prefer; the larger form seems assimilated to the LXX. Other omissions of less moment occur here and there. The Authorized Version alone fell into the unmeaning error of “that” stumbling-stone in the last verse.

In chapter 10:1 all critics of weight on ample evidence, instead of “for Israel,” read “for them,” as following up chapter 9. But the Revisers also adopt the briefer reading in verse 5, on small but ancient and good testimony. In verse 12 the Revisers go back in substance, though more correctly, to the English versions older than the Authorized Version, with a copulative perhaps needlessly inserted. They also drop as not duly authenticated one of the last clauses of verse 15 (“of those that announce glad tidings of peace") with the noble quaternion, H A B C, supplemented by a few cursive witnesses, ancient versions, and early writers.

The latter part of chapter 11:6 is rejected by ■p.m. A C D E F G P, &e., with the ancient versions, save the Syrr. and Eth., and so is properly left out of text and margin by the Revisers, notwithstanding its presence (p.m.) in the favorite Vatican, L, and the mass of cursives. In verse 17 they adopt, on the doubtful authority of ■p.m. B C with the Coptic, the singular exclusion of κα■; “and.” That the copyists took liberties with the verse is plain from D F G omitting τ■ς ■■ζης altogether, and in Latin as well as Greek. In verse 21 they discard (as do some modern critics) fame's, and with the best copies read simply ο■δε σο■ φε■σεται in the face of Chrysostom's express contradiction. (iv. 338, Field, Oxon, 1849.) Certainly the preferred text is far easier than that commonly received, which is opposed to the well-known canon of diplomatic criticism. In verse 22 θεο■ “God's,” is now given on weighty grounds. Verse 31 is an unhappy instance of

misrendering; the comma if inserted should follow, not precede, τ■ ■μ. ■λ■ει, as the true force is “even so have these also disbelieved your mercy, that they also may be objects of mercy.” The older English versions were right, following with the Pesch. and the Philox. Syrr., the Coptic, and the Vulgate, till the Geneva misled under the false guidance of Beza. Luther on the one hand and Estius on the other were nearer the truth; and so apparently Green, Lachmann, Tischendorf and Tregelles.

There is little to arrest in the revision of chapter 12. To render ■ πρ. in verse 8 “ruleth” is a deduction from the close meaning of “presideth,” though perhaps allowable and true; as in verse 10 the word translated “preferring” means being the first, or leading the way in the honor paid to each other. It is one of the strange phenomena of ancient copies that some (Dp.m. F G) should be found with the monstrous reading καιρ■ “time” or “season;” that Erasmus should have adopted it in his editions ii.-v. after having “the Lord” in his first edition; and that Stephens, Mill, and even Griesbach should have followed in his wake. The weight of external evidence as well as internal propriety so decidedly preponderates against this heathenish maxim that one is surprised to see greater weight attached to it by the marginal note of the Revisers than in the Authorized Version. Every recent editor of weight rejects it with N A B Dcorr. E L P and almost all the cursives, ancient versions and fathers, save some Latins. To buy up the fit time is one thing; to serve it is another, which wrongs the Lord to whom alone we owe allegiance unlimited. In verse 16 το■ς ταπ. συναπαγ■μενοι is rendered worse than in the Authorized Version, which adheres to the personal application prevalent with the Greek commentators. But the Revision on too narrow a view of the antithesis decides with some moderns for the neuter, “condescend to things that are lowly,” adding in the margin the impossible literal rendering “be carried away with.” Now condescension is not a Christian feeling, but rather of Gentile patrons (cf. Luke 22:25, 26). It supposes the maintenance in the saints of what Christ destroys and displaces by grace in a new creation; whereas “going along with,” or some such rendering stronger than the “inclining” of the Five Clergymen, seems to me required by the word as modified by the context. It would be too much to expect in heathen writings the expression of a feeling there unknown; but Chrysostom (in loc.) fairly explains. Theodoret's συγκατι■ναι falls into the idea of condescension (Opera Omnia ex recens. Jac. Sirmondi, v. 134). Mr. Green gives “assort yourselves with the lowly.”

In chapter 8 are a few inconsiderable but warranted changes from the Text. Rec. and the Authorized Version, as in verses 1, 3, 7, 9.

In chapter 14 they rightly omit the second clause of verse 6, as well as “both".... “and revived” in verse 9. They also properly substitute “God” for “Christ” in verse 10. Then again they duly distinguish between “destroy” in verse 15, and “overthrow” in verse 20, which is neglected in some careful versions. On rather slender authority they leave out “or is offended, or is weak” at the end of verse 21. But they are certainly justified in relegating to the end of chapter 16 the doxology which some 200 cursives with L and others foist in here, though two uncials A P have it in both, and some in neither.

In chapter 15 some few slight differences from the Authorized Version are adopted, as in verses 4, 7, 8, 17, 19, 29. In verse 16 is not some of the force of the apostolic phrase lost in the vague “minister of Christ Jesus.... ministering the gospel of God"? It is” serving sacrificially” as just after explained in an allusion to Num. 8—Mr. Green by the way leaves out of his version the English

corresponding to ε■ς τ■ ■θνη in this connection.

Chapter 16, furnishes but inconsiderable variations. In verse 1 it should be “Cenchreae.” The “also” of verse 2 should be with “she herself,” not with “myself.” — “Prisca” is the true form in verse 3; as in verse 5 it should be “Asia,” not “Achaia,” and in verse 6 “you” rather than “we.” Junias and Urbanus are preferable to “Junia and Urbane.” In verse 16 the apostle added “all,” which slipt out of the received text and Authorized Version. “ Amen” should disappear from the end of verse 20, after a benediction which some repeat with π■ντων added as verse 24, contrary to N ABC and other good authorities; as others omit it at verse 20. “ By the scriptures of the prophets” in verse 26 misleads: read “by prophetic writings” or scriptures, meaning thereby his own epistles on “the mystery,” or the inspired writings in general of the New Testament. For the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. (Eph. 2, 3.)

Revised New Testament: 1 and 2 Corinthians

The First Epistle To The Corinthians.

It is only needful to call attention to “called to be,” in verses 1, 2, as the error of the Blemish version, followed by the Authorized Version and Cranmer. Wiclif seems better, but especially Tyndale and the Geneva version, as they gave “by vocation,” and “by calling,” which reflect the sense justly enough, though (strange to say) in Rom. 1 both were wrong in verse 1, right in verses 6, 7. Verse 24 helps to prove that the addition of “to be” is not only needless but wrong. Again in verse 18 the Company gives us “are being saved” from not bearing in mind that the present participle may be, and often is, employed to present a class stamped with the character of salvation, rather than the process or fact going on. Compare the remarks made on the revision of Acts 2:47. They forget the absolute present, which this must be, not an actual present, as already shown. They are right in verse 21, “the preaching” or thing preached, as also “signs” for “a sign,” in verse 22, as has been generally allowed; so also in the imperative force “behold,” in verse 26. They are justified again in their rendering of verse 30.

But in the first verse of chapter ii. occurs an extraordinarily violent change, the “mystery” instead of “testimony” of God. This of course turns on the adoption of μυστ■ριον (as in ■p.m. A C, some seven or eight cursives, the Pesch. Syr., and Memph., with some early citations, whereas all the editors of note, even the most extreme, properly adhere to μαρτ■ριον, with the great stream of authority early and later. Alford and Meyer treat it as a gloss from verse 7, Bachmann and Tregelles, bold as they were, reject it from their text. None but Drs. Westcott and Hort admit it. Was it not strange that a company of grave men, under the call to provide a version aspiring to general acceptance, should yield to so precarious and generally rejected a reading? The context is, in my judgment, certainly and irreconcilably opposed to the innovation. For the apostle distinguishes between his first announcing at Corinth the glad tidings, apart from every human effort to make the truth palatable, not knowing anything among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the speaking wisdom among the perfect or full-grown, God's wisdom in a mystery. This evident and most momentous contradistinction is ruined by endorsing the blunder of scribes, who confounded two words similar in appearance, and easily interchanged by any whose spiritual senses were not exercised to discern the difference. Hence Bengel gave this variant his lowest mark in the Appar. Crit., while in his Gnomon he expounds, with his usual fine tact, the difference between verses 1 and 7 in a way which shows how rightly μυστ■ριον, must vanish from any place in the first. Griesbach gave a better mark to the reading than it deserves. Pott pertinently remarks that not καταγγ■λλων but γνωρ■ζων or λαλπων would suit μυστ., whereas it exactly fits in with μαρτ. Omitting lesser points, the last clause of verse 13 appears to be inadequately rendered if we take the context into account. The marginal “combining” is the simple unmodified force of συγκρ■νειν, to which is opposed thinly. directly afterward. Now if the aim of the verse had been duly weighed, it would have been seen that it is a question, not here (as in verse 14) of receiving and knowing, but of communicating. Hence the conveyance of spiritual things by spiritual [words] is the meaning, rather than expounding or interpreting special things to spiritual men, though

otherwise the words might quite bear this. Thus the source that revealed, the means of communication, and the power of reception, are shown to be in the Spirit of God. “Combining” is too vague; “comparing” or “interpreting” would do well for the receiver; but neither expresses properly the conveyance of the truth or spiritual things by the inspired agents in a medium of spiritual words.

In chapter 3:3 they have rightly dropt “and divisions,” and in verse 9 rendered the phrase “God's fellow-workers,” instead of “laborers together with God,” which is very objectionable, as irreverent and feeding human vanity. It is the more peculiar therefore that in 2 Cor. 6:1 our Revisers should there introduce the obnoxious idea in italics. So do the Five Clergymen, and Dean Alford in his version. They were fellow-laborers doing God's work; but to say “fellow-workers with God” is false and presumptuous, and so of course is “with him.” In verse 16 they make the apostle say, “a temple of God,” as does Mr. T. S. Green. No doubt the phrase is capable of being so rendered in itself; but the truth forbids. It should be God's temple. The same oversight of the anarthrous construction often occurs. The Company were not masters of the use or absence of the Greek article. Whether the English should have the indefinite article or not depends on the nature of the case, and often on the truth as defined elsewhere. A similar error occurs in Eph. 2:22; it is common in other subjects also.

In chapter 4:1 they have, like others, rightly added “Here” (■δε), though Mr. Green adheres to the received reading (■ δ■), and translates “And for the rest of the matter.” And in verse 6 they follow the critical omission of ψρονε■ν, which would then give “that in us ye may learn the [lesson], Nothing above what is written.” There seems no need to depart from the historic force of the aorist in verse 18 (compare also their rendering of the aorist in vers. 8, 17).

The received reading “is named” in chapter 5:1 gives place to the true and nervous sense resulting from its simple omission according to the best authorities. In verse 9 they retain the Authorized Version, instead of the epistolary aorist, which, however, they express in verse 11. This insinuates the idea of some that the apostle had written a previous letter which we have not. Grammatically there is no doubt that both may refer to the epistle he was then writing, as every scholar must know; and νυν■ may have a logical force, or a temporal, as required. Of course τ■ ■πιοτ cannot mean “an epistle,” as in the older versions, but “the,” or “mine.” The revision properly omits “therefore,” in verses 7, 13. It is a direct call in both, not a consequence.

The most important change in chapter 6, well known and fully sustained by authority, is the omission of the latter half of the last verse. Unspiritual men thought “the body” too low, and must needs foist in, “and in your spirit, which are God's,” which distracts from the aim in view. The body of the Christian, which is even now God's temple by the Spirit's dwelling, soon to be conformed to the body of Christ's glory, is claimed meanwhile for his glorifying God therein, whatever be the difficulties or doubts or unbelief of philosophy.

In chapter 7 there are unwarranted additions of the common text struck out with good reason from verses 3, 5, and 39. The chief mistranslations in the chapter, are, however, not rectified in the text, and in one weighty case at least not even in the margin. Thus “abusing,” in verse 31 would answer to χρ■μενοι, not to καταχρ■μενοι (as the margin corrects, and the text in chapter 11:18), and the great difficulty created by not extending “virgins” to virginity in both sexes (cf. Rev. 14:4) is left without help, especially in verses 36-38, where the estate seems meant. Doddridge was more

perplexed by this passage than by any other in the epistle; and no wonder, if he followed the Authorized Version, which the Revisers also follow. Verse 47, as he admits, “puts the issue of the matter on the man's own mind, the power he had over his own will, and his having no necessity; whereas if a daughter or a ward were in question, her inclination, temper, and conveniency were certainly to be consulted; and it would be the same if the virgin spoken of were one to whom the man was himself engaged.” That παρθ■νος should be extended from the person to the condition (παρθεν■α) is easy to see, though it may want proof. Perhaps we should hardly look for it in the classic language of the corrupt Greek mind. The difficulty of ■κγαμιζων, or rather of γαμ., the critical form, is null; were it γαμ■ν, as Mr. Slade thought, in the case of his own virginity, it would be insuperable, for how could a man be said to marry it? If he took a wife, he might be said to give it in marriage by an easy figure, from just before speaking of keeping his own virgin estate—an emphasis very hard to apply to one's ward or daughter as assumed. The addition of “daughter” three times, in my opinion, makes the revision worse than the Authorized Version.

In chapter 8:7 the Company, like Lachmann, Tischendorf and Tregelles, have adopted συνηθε■α, “through their habituation,” with-s A B P, four or five cursives, Memph. Basin. &c., against συνειδ■σει, “through their conscience,” with the great mass of other authority. They have also reversed the ordinary order in the latter part of verse 8.

A similar inversion occurs in chapter 9:1.—Passing over minor matters, they have rightly inserted the omitted clause of verse 20. Yet why translate ■δ■κιμος here “rejected,” but in 2 Cor. 13 “reprobate” as in Rom. 1:28? “Worthless” would be yet better than “rejected” in Heb. 6 where it is a question of “land” or “ground.”

From chapter 10 the Revisers have struck out some additions long abandoned on good authority, and substituted particles (or other words as in verse 9) more in accordance with the context, which had got changed by careless or meddling scribes. See verses 1, 10, 13, 23, 24, 28, 30.

“Traditions,” in chapter 11: 2, though lawful otherwise, seems objectionable as exposing the unwary reader to a serious assumption of Rome, which tends and is even boldly used to subvert the authority of scripture. In the margin of verse 19 they give “factions” or “sects,” which more truly represents α■ρ■σεις than “heresies” or heterodoxies, which does not seem meant. They were parties in separation from the assembly, which the apostle warns must result from the “schisms” or divisions already within. This is very important; for many mistake the truth here taught and imagine that “schism” is the fruit of “heresy;” whereas on the contrary splits without, or “heresies” as here shown (that is, factions or sects), come from splits within (that is, “schisms” or divisions). Differences within are dangerous and bad; but when self-will and impatience burst all the bands of unity and boldly take shape as a party without, how much worse? The kindred word, “an heretical man” in Titus 3:10, is thus rendered plain, as not necessarily heterodox, but independent and self-willed, impatiently breaking through unity in his self-confidence and disregard of the assembly. It is strange that the Revisers, or any one else, should continue the misleading “heretic,” when it really means a sectary or party-leader. Hence it is no question of putting him out; for he was gone out; and Titus after a first and second admonition was simply to have done with him, “knowing that such a one is perverted and sinneth, being self-condemned.” The main mistranslations in the section relating to the Lord's Supper are corrected by the Revisers, though “guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord” in verse 27 may still leave the door open to mistake. But “Take, eat” and

“broken” are rightly gone from verse 24 “covenant” appears in verse 25, “or” displaces “and” in verse 27, “the” supplants “that” twice in verse 28, above all “judgment” expels “damnation” which was always an inexcusable error refuted by verse 32, and “discern” is rightly used both for “the body” that is, the Lord's, and “ourselves” in verses 29, 31. These corrections, long known and sure, are none the less to be thankfully received in what is now so largely disseminated where the English language is used or known. Evil and superstitious doctrine, too common, will hence be detected; and by grace the truth will get in where it has long been obscured.

Chapter 12 affords much less scope for remark, as there was less disposition in the copyists or translators. In verse 2 the Revisers rightly read “when ye were Gentiles, ye were led away unto those dumb idols, howsoever” &c. Verse 3 is also rendered better. Needless additions of the received text vanish from verses 6, 12, 21.

I cannot but coincide with the Revisers in preferring “love” to charity in chapter 13 as elsewhere.

The changes in chapter 14 are almost as few as in chapter 12, but those made (5, 18, 25, 35, 37) seem well-founded, though it is strange that τ■ πν. in verse 1 and πν. in verse 12 should be alike translated “spiritual gifts.”

Nor is there much to remark as to chapter 15. In verse 2 “are saved” is right, though not consistent with the work elsewhere. One omission, of ■γ■νετο, is notorious in verse 20. “ To God even the Father,” in the Revised as in the Authorized Version, is not a happy rendering; and still less is Mr. Green's “to God the Father;” because both tend to lower the Son, as if the Father only were God, or as if the Father might be all in all, whereas it is really God (i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Ghost). Hence “to him that is God and Father” appears less objectionable. “To God and the Father” say the Five Clergymen, which sounds as if the Father were not God; yet this none can mean. There is a double correction though slight, in verse 44, as also in verse 47; see also verse 55.

In chapter 16 it is surprising that the Revisers support the various old English versions (Wiclif excepted) in verse 3, against the more natural sense which the Greek commentators prefer. His recommending them by letters is the point. There is nothing else that strikes me as notable save in verse 22: “if any one loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema. Maranatha [that is, Our Lord cometh].”

The Second Epistle To The Corinthians.

In chapter 1:9 the margin seems better than the text, which seems to betray ignorance of the truth conveyed. In verse 12 the Revisers are pretty bold in absolutely discarding “simplicity” for the alternative “holiness” without even a marginal note. In verse 20 they give the sense, if not perfectly, far better than the Authorized Version.

It is not at all clear, to say the least, that the apostle refers, in chapter 2: 3, 4, to the same letter. But in verse 3 he may speak of the present or second, and in verse 4 of the first, which would affect the version. Here the two are identified. Verse 10 is rendered from a better text than the received. “Leadeth us in triumph” in verse 14 is correct; but “in” them that “are being saved” does not agree with “are saved” in 1 Cor. 15:2 any more than with the truth. Is not “retailing,” or “trafficking with” the word, the point in verse 17? “Which” is an error, and rightly dropt in the revision.

In chapter 3: 3 is a bold adoption of the reading καρδ■αις, with the version “tables that are hearts of flesh.” It is to be presumed that the two Bishops Wordsworth, Dr. Scrivener, and other sober scholars in the Committee did not tamely give in, without a severe struggle, to what one of them not long ago called a “perfectly absurd reading.” Yet that reading externally has the strongest authority. The Five Clergymen adopt the reading of the most ancient copies, but adhere to the Authorized Version, explaining it by “heart-tables of flesh.” But a grievous error follows in the very arrangement of the paragraph. The vital thread of connection is cut through by closing one section at the end of verse 11, and beginning a new one at verse 12. Now, whether we do or do not use parenthetical marks, there is one of the apostle's frequent parentheses in this chapter, embracing verses 7-16; so that, for the sense, verse 6 is followed (with a most instructive digression helping on the truth between) by verse 17,” for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.... Now the Lord is the spirit.” It is not that the Lord is the Spirit, as they print, which tends to confound the Lord Jesus, the spirit underneath the letter in question, with the Holy Ghost. I am convinced that spiritual intelligence of this most instructive scripture, as a whole, is impossible without seizing this; and it is, I submit, equally evident that the Committee cannot have perceived it: else they had not so divided what ought at least to have been left unbroken, if they did not supply the aid of the usual parenthetical signs to help the reader, as they do sometimes, but too sparingly. Again occurs the strange version “a” new covenant, through their not apprehending the characterizing force of the anarthrous construction, to the detriment of the meaning. “ Came with glory” is right, only stating that it was so brought in, and contrasted with the ministration of the Spirit (for it should be thus, not “spirit") being, or subsisting in glory. Compare verse 11 also.

In chapter 4 there are some peculiar changes, especially in verse 6, where they represent the apostle thus: “Seeing it is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined,” &c. Here they follow Tischendorf's eighth edition against his seventh, or rather ■p.m. A B Dp.m. and a few other witnesses against the great mass of manuscripts, versions, &c. They are right of course in giving “the gospel of the glory,” not “the glorious gospel:” a most unhappy rendering, which leads into all sorts of wrong thoughts, besides missing the truth. In verses 10, 11 it is “Jesus” all through, not “the Lord,” as the received text adds in verse 10.

In chapter 5:3 they rightly adhere to the Authorized Version, rejecting the perversion of Dean Alford and others, as also in verse 7. Of course they avoid the equivocal language of our version in verse 9. But there are grave questions in verse 14, where, with the critics, they follow the stream of the most ancient manuscripts, and drop the hypothetical particle represented in the Rescript of Paris and many other copies, with the best versions, and, I think, most early citations. But in my judgment. whatever the reading or translation, the Bishop of Durham is not warranted in saying that a death to sin is meant, but death through sin to interfere with a revelation so foreign to Christendom.

It is not true that all men have died with Christ to their former selves and to sin, so as to be therefore bound to lead a new life—His life. Nor is this said here; but Christ's dying for all is used as a proof of death in all. There is even a contrast, “they which live,” with all who died; and ο■ζ■ντεσ means not merely that they were alive, but that they lived spiritually, and of these as distinguished from all who died—of these only is it added that they should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who, for their sakes, died and rose again. The “all” who died are all men, who are naturally lost; “they who live” are the saved who are called to live to the dead and risen

Christ, and no longer (as once) to themselves. It is true that these died with Christ to sin; but this is the doctrine of Rom. 6, and not of 2 Cor. 5. It is here death through, and not to, sin; and the making it “to sin” introduces the confusion and heterodoxy evident in Dr. Lightfoot's doctrine. All men have not participated potentially, as he says, in Christ's death; for this is true only of those who live through faith, in contrast with all who died through sin. I doubt not that all are bought; but only believers have in Him redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of their trespasses. The righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ is toward all, and upon all that believe. The gospel is not limited, as some would make it; but it is efficacious, though for faith only, unlike what others say. In verse 19 the Revisers avoid the error of the Five Clergymen, but the omission of the comma after Christ vitiates their rendering as compared with that of the Authorized Version. The last verse is more energetic without “for,” which some Greek scribes thought proper to insert rather early.

For chapter 6:1 compare the remarks on 1 Cor. 3:9; and with verse 16 compare those on chapter 3:16.

The Revisers are assuredly justified in connecting closely chapter 8 with the preceding chapter, the rest returning to what he had said in chapter 2, the end of which had led him out in a grand unfolding of the gospel, which some were even then quick to clog and adulterate by mixing the law with it; and the gospel led him out into an admirable setting forth of the service of Christ according to His death, resurrection, and glory in the power of the Spirit. From this rich digression he comes back to his question with the Corinthian saints. Verses 8-10 are in general far closer than in the Authorized Version, though one may question the taste of “which bringeth no regret,” in verse 10: not, or never to be regretted seems simpler. Verse 13 is more correct now.

In chapter 8:8 and 4, stand more correctly in the revision; as also verses 7, 12, 19, 21, 24.

In chapter 9 there is, if possible, less to note: verses 4, 10, 18, 14.

Of chapter 10 the reader can compare verses 7, 13, 16, which give the sense better than the Authorized Version.

Their judgment as to the true text of chapter 11: 3 seems very questionable; but I do not argue it here, nor specify more.

Chapter 12:1 should be weighed: see also verses 11, 12, 14, 18, 19.

Nor is there much to be noticed in chapter xiii. But it seems strange that the Revisers should fail here also to preserve the force of the scriptures from ruin through vicious punctuation. Verse 3 ought to begin a new sentence, interrupted by a digression which begins with the latter half of that verse and includes also verse 4; and the conclusion or apodosis of the sentence, which answers to the protasis of the first half of verse 3, follows in verse 5. So that if by external marks, we are to help readers who easily let slip the connection of thought, it would run thus:— “Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me (who to youward is not weak but is powerful in you; for indeed he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by God's power; for we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him through God's power toward you), try your own selves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves,” &c. The arrangement, bad in the Authorized Version, is no better in the Revised; and perhaps this has contributed to the singular misconception which has prevailed as to

the passage. How many misuse it to consecrate their inward workings of question and doubt as to God's grace toward them, as it this scripture set them so to work! It is really an irrefragable argumentuni ad honzinent and a withering rebuke to Corinthian vanity if they had any heart for Christ and His apostle. Since they sought a proof of his apostleship, why not examine themselves? They were their own selves the proof, unless they were reprobate—the last thing they thought. As surely, then, as they were in the faith, he was an apostle—to them without doubt who, through his speaking, had Christ in them. The whole force of this argumentative appeal turns on their assurance of being in the faith to the certainty of his apostleship; and this, generally misunderstood through stops which ruthlessly surrender all the links and ignore the parenthesis essential to be noted, is perverted by unbelief to prove that the apostle calls on the believer to search and see whether he be not an unbeliever after all The Revisers certainly cannot boast of rescuing the passage from the confusion which here reigns in the Authorized Version, and almost all others. They probably just followed mechanically in the wake of their predecessors; for had they previously understood the reasoning of the apostle or stopped to consider the meaning of the text they were translating, it is hard to see how they could have overlooked the facts, that verse 2 closes the previous subject, and that the new sentence passes from 8 to 5, with an intervening digression.

Revised New Testament: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians

The Epistle To The Galatians.

The changes in this brief Epistle need not occupy us long. In chapter 1: 6 the present force is properly given, “ye are so quickly removing” (not “removed"), and “in” (not “into”) the grace of Christ, and of course, “unto a different [not “another”] gospel” a very considerable correction of mere renderings, and long known to be necessary, for a single verse. So also the slight shade of distinction between “should preach” in verse 8 and “preacheth” in verse 9 is due to truth. The revision of verse 13 seems more cumbrous and less Pauline than as it stands in the Authorized Version.

In chapter 2:2-4 we have to complain of the same defect in catching and conveying the scope, which we saw so conspicuously in 2 Cor. 3 and 8, reproduced here also in a punctuation which quite destroys the true, and insinuates a false, connection. It is the more striking because the Company show no disinclination to avail themselves of parenthetical signs for verse 8, to which nobody demurs, though these are less required there than here: they were guided in both by their predecessors, who so marked verse 8 but not verse 3. There is strictly another insertion in verse 6; but there is perhaps less necessity there to indicate it, though there be parenthesis within parenthesis. The late Mr. Bagge was more right than Dean Alford or the Bishops of Bristol and Durham.—But the rendering of verse 16 in the text is really strange, “save” being here most inadequate to convey the strongly oppositive exception conveyed by ■■ν μ■. The margin “but only” is much better, for it excludes works of law, whereas “save” admits of them conjointly with faith in Jesus Christ. Now the entire argument, and especially this verse, contradicts any such combination. Justification is not by law-work; it is through faith. We believed on Christ Jesus that we might be justified by faith in Him, and not by law-works, because by law-works shall no flesh be justified. Hence every shade of orthodoxy concurs in giving a stronger opposition to the phrase than the Company convey in their singularly mild version. Law-works are excluded from being put with faith in Christ in order to justification. It is really stronger than ■λλ■, whatever the common point implied besides the contrast.

Here we see, too, how little the Revisers estimated the force of the anarthrous construction. They put in the margin “works of law,” and “law,” where their text gives “the works of the law,” and “the law;” and they do not always mark this, as twice in the latter part of verse 16. It is as opposed to fact as to philological principle that the article was inserted or omitted arbitrarily. Prepositions are no exceptions, though from their nature they suit with peculiar facility the anarthrous usage; but the presence or the absence of the article depends on its general principle. Thus in Rom. 3:19 the article is twice required with ν■μος, and once with a preposition; in verse 20 it is twice left out just as correctly, and in verse 21 it is once both omitted and inserted with ν., and in each with a preposition; in the last verse of the chapter it is twice anarthrous, and in both the object of verbs. It is bad grammar and perhaps feeble theology to confound ν■μον with τ■ν ν. The apostle generalizes, though no doubt “the” law falls under the expressly characteristic term. So it is often in

Romans, as in Galatians and elsewhere; but there is not the least backwardness or laxity in giving the article with this word or any other where its presence is really wanted. The indefinite article of our tongue would be quite improper in all or most of these cases; nor does English idiom forbid the exact representation of its anarthrous usage in at least very many instances like these cited, and Gal. 2:19, 21; 3:2, 5. Verses 10-13 are valuable in confirming the refutation of the too prevalent fallacy, where we have the broad, principle in its characteristic and therefore anarthrous form, and then the article for the particular matter of fact; see again the principle in verse 11, and the fact in verses 12, 13. If the Company had understood the true force of the anarthrous usage, they never would in my opinion have agreed to consign to the margin what ought to have been unhesitatingly set out in the text.

In chapter 3:1 they have rightly struck out the addition (from the end of chap. 5: 7), though it has no little ancient support in manuscripts, versions, and Fathers, also at the end of the verse. In verse 12 it is rightly “he” (not “the man”); but “upon” in verse 14 goes beyond ε■ς (unto). It is not Paul, but his translators and commentators who fail in the force of the preposition. In verse 17 the gloss “unto Christ” rightly vanishes. In verse 20 the article is no doubt generic; but why should we not say “the” Mediator, though we only speak of one descriptive of the class? Perhaps in this particular instance it was desirable to avoid the equivoque of mere previous mention, which is not at all the reason of its insertion here. Again, it seems to me that the italic insertion here is needless, and rather enfeebles the apostle's idea that it “is not of one” (that is, it supposes at least two parties, whilst God is one), promising and accomplishing Himself. Nor is there any need of inserting “to bring us” in verse 24, where “up to,” or “unto,” is better than “until,” as expressive of the object in view, and not of a temporal limit only. Nor does the severance of “faith” from “in Christ Jesus,” here insinuated by the punctuation, seem warranted.—Our being one in Christ Jesus follows in verse 28; but here it is not one in Christ, nor Abraham's seed, that is being urged, but that the Galatian saints were God's sons through faith in Christ Jesus. Drs. Alford and Ellicott were right, not the Bishop of Durham. In verse 28 they translate ■νι by the more forcible “there can be,” and omit the copulative in verse 29.

In chapter 4:7 the critical reading which rests on superior authority is adopted, for the comma softening down the sense in Text. Rec. and the Authorized Version. But do the Revisers really understand the import of verse 12? The apostle exhorts the Galatians to be as he is, free from law, “for I [am] as ye.” To say “as ye are” seems to spoil the thought, for at that time they were affecting the law, and from this he is earnestly dissuading them. They did him no wrong in affirming that he taught or practiced freedom from the law in virtue of Christ's death; for such is the doctrine and the life of the Christian, as Romans, Galatians, and Colossians clearly prove. Are the Revisers justified in treating δ■ ■σθ■νειαν as “because of infirmity"? No one, of course, questions that δι■ with the accusative ordinarily means “on account of;” but the question is, whether this narrow view which yields so strange a sense be here intended, when in poetry at least such a form was notoriously used to express a state in which one might be, The Greek fathers saw no difficulty in thus interpreting the Pauline phrase, and never thought of confounding it with the phrase in Thuc. vi. 102; and it appears to me that Nicias would have startled his audience beyond measure if he had said δ■ ■σθ■νειαν ■σωσα τ■ν κ■κλον, in the sense of “on account of an infirmity I saved, &c.” though he might very simply be left behind on that account. Again, the version of verse 18 seems hazardous, and little agreeing with the context, though one can readily admit the difficulty of

the passive form, which some believe to be a true middle. But the passive sense makes sad havoc in the verse and its connection.

Chapter 5: 1 is an entangled question as to text and translation: whether the Revisers were wise in giving us so awkward a result seems doubtful. Is the rendering of verse 10 English? “I have confidence to your word in the Lord” —confidence to, or toward a person! Who ever heard of such language save among youths whose mother-tongue got spoiled by Greek idiom? On the other hand the “in” of the Authorized Version goes beyond ε■ς, which in this connection should be translated “as to.” Verse 12 appears to be fairly given. The rendering of verse 17 is uncompromisingly accurate.

In chapter 6 there is nothing specially calling for remark beyond the correct rendering of verse 11, and the omission of “the Lord” in verse 17.

Revised New Testament: Ephesians

In chapter 1:1 the common class is obscured by putting in “the” before “faithful,” like Dean Alford, though less than in the Authorized Version, reproduced by Bishop Ellicott. Mr. Green is more accurate.-I do not think that τ■ν ■πολ. in verse 7 is rightly rendered “our” redemption, though no doubt it is ours. The article simply designates redemption as a distinct object which we have in Christ, like παρρ. in chapter 3:12 where the Revisers do not say “our,” and this properly. But passing over questionable points, is not the version of verse 11 distinctly for the worse as compared with the Authorized Version? It is exactly one of the marked points of contrast between the faithful now and Israel of old, that these are designated the inheritance of Jehovah, those are styled God's heirs and Christ's joint-heirs. Hence the force of ■κληρ■θημεν is that we were allotted our inheritance, not “made a heritage,” the κα■ adding this to our being called. For there are two main parts in the blessing: our calling, and also our inheritance, which embraces the universe as put under Christ (cf. verse 10), given as Head over all things to the church which is His body. The church is in God's grace and purpose the heavenly Eve of the Last Adam, to possess all things, not merely the things on the earth like the first man, but the things in the heavens. Here accordingly it will be noticed that the apostle speaks not of the glory of God's grace (ver. 6), nor of the riches of His grace (ver. 7), but of His glory (vers. 12, 14). He looks not at present privilege, but onward to the redemption of the purchased possession which will be then, as distinguished from the redemption we have now through His blood, the forgiveness of our offenses. There is no doubt that God purchased the church with the blood of Christ, and that the believers from among the Jews are now reckoned a people of possession, or peculiarly His own, as indeed are all saints; but this does not at all decide the true force of the purchased possession here, which is really the inherited universe when His glory dawns. There is no need for introducing the italic supplement “God's” here or elsewhere. Of our inheritance in that day the Holy Spirit of promise is meanwhile earnest, because we are not yet in possession.-Next we have an instance of what seems nothing less than hardihood in the Company, due probable to scholastic influence overriding all right spiritual feeling: a too common fault in the Revised New Testament. Three of the primary copies with later uncials, also a single cursive, and a few Fathers, omit ■γαπ■ν τ■ν: an omission obviously accounted for by one of the most frequent causes of various readings, homeoteleuton. The omission, to my mind, gives us no sense; and this has positively passed muster as the collective judgment of the Company “For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and which ye shew toward all the saints.” Of course they say in the margin that many ancient authorities insert “the love;” but what temerity in adopting for their text what Lachmann alone (now followed by Westcott and Hort), never hindered by the least apprehension of divine truth, ventured to endorse! No doubt Bishops Ellicott and Wordsworth, and Drs. Brown and Scrivener, and one would hope others, protested, but were outvoted. Tischendorf and Tregelles were daring, especially after the Sinaitic MS gave sometimes its voice in accordance with the occasionally wild readings of the Vatican copy; but even they, in spite of their tendencies, here withstood this idolatry of ancient documents to the destruction of truth. Love “toward all the saints” (Col. 1:4) should have guarded against such an error in their thoughts of

Ephesians 1:15, though each scripture has its peculiar form. There are other things by no means sure in the chapter; but we pass on.

With chapter 2: 18 compare chapters 1: 7 and 3: 12. They are right in adopting ■στε (verse 19), and ε■ρ■νην (verse 17), omitted in Text. Rec. Against their dropping the article, though sustained by ■corr. A C P many cursives, &c., in verse 21, I have anything save objection; but their version, as so often in such cases, is in no way justified, though it might seem so on a first glance at the anarthrous form. But π■σα ■ ο■κ. would imply that the building was complete, in contradiction to the express teaching of the clause that it is only in process— “groweth into a holy temple in the Lord.” So the Revisers themselves render π■ς ο■κος ■σρα■λ in Acts 2: 36, though they give “every house” in the margin. This they might have done here with less opposition to God's word generally; for “each several building” is irreconcilable with what is everywhere else insisted on. There is no such thought in scripture as ecclesiastical independency, but inter-communion. It may not be here the church as one, but as a whole, not every part. (Cf. the revision of Matt. 3: 15; Eph. 1: 1; and many like cases.)

In chapter 3: 7 was there any real need to say “that” grace of God?—Of course in verse 9 it is “dispensation” not “fellowship” as in Text. Rec. and Authorized Version, and “by Jesus Christ” disappears. In verse 14 they appear to be justified in rejecting “of our Lord Jesus Christ,” as also in saying (not all the, but) “every family.” But they do not seem right in verse 18, which should be “being rooted and grounded in love in order that ye,” &c. This adds to the clearness of the truth, if it be not absolutely needful. External authority is confessedly strong for the insertion of α■ before ■ν Χ. ■. in verse 21; but one does not wonder that Ellicott, Green and Wordsworth rejected, and that Alford hesitated to accept it even in the face of ■ A B C and other witnesses.

In chapter 4:6 most editors, like many copyists, have lost the finely drawn truth by a misapplied love of uniformity. It is exceedingly hard to suppose the insertion of ■μ■ν (not ■μ■ν as in Text. Rec. and Auth. Ver.) unless it were really of God. Man would be prone to remove it even in the early days, as we find it wanting in ■ A B C 0corr. P and not a few cursives, &c. But the mass of testimony in MSS uncial and cursive, Versions and Fathers, favors “us all.” And so beyond cavil does the internal requirement. For as the apostle had traced vital or intrinsic unity in verse 4, and external unity in verse 5, he closes with the unity of the God and Father of all, universally supreme and permeating, and withal most intimate for “us all,” but this limited to us all (them who believe).

No blunderer, still less a forger, could have hit on a shade of truth so unexpected beforehand, yet so momentous and happy when expressed. If people had introduced a gloss, they would have extended the pronoun to all three. In verse 10 “due” measure seems hardly allowable. Do not verses 22, 23, set forth truth in the person of Jesus “Your putting [or having put] away,” &c. (Compare Col. 3: 9, 10.) For the Christian it is a fact already accomplished in the Savior, of which faith lays hold; as mysticism always strains after it in man's own feelings. And what is the meaning, verse 30, of “the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed"? &c. The sealing was in His power, or in virtue of Him. The Revisers rightly say in verse 32, “even as God also in Christ forgave you.”

In chapter 5:1 they correctly say “imitators” of God, and in verse 4 “befitting” for the obsolete synonym “convenient.” In verse 5 they read ■στε (not ■στε) λ.; as also the fruit of “light” in verse 9, so agreeable to the context. But whether their view of the end of verse 13 is sound may be doubted. With verse 20 compare note on 1 Corinthians 15:24. “Christ” is right in verse 21; and the

more correct “washing” stands in the text of the Revisers as in the Authorized Version. Only they say “with” for “by” the word, which is regrettable perhaps. In verse 29 it is “Christ,” not “the Lord,” as in the Authorized Version, followed by Text. Rec. In verse 30 they leave out the latter half in Text. Rec., as in the Authorized Version also.

In 6 but little appears to demand notice. See verse 5 for a change of order, and verse 9 for a necessary correction of the Text. Rec. and of the Authorized Version. The rendering of verse 12 is also much better, “high” places being unequivocally wrong. The last verse ends rightly with “in uncorruptness,” or incorruption. “Sincerity” is misleading.

The Epistle To The Philippians

Chapter 1: 5 is more correctly translated “in furtherance of,” not “in” (ε■ς), the gospel, as the same preposition should be “for” (Rev. Ver. “unto"), not “till” (Auth. Ver.) the day of Christ in verse 10. In verse 13, instead of “in all the palace, and in all other places,” the Revisers prefer “throughout the whole praetorian guard and to all the rest.” The interference with the true order of verses 15-17, to give a more mechanical exactitude, is rectified, whereas as originally written it is more forcible. But verse 22 seems ill represented. Does not καρπ■ς ■ργου = operae pretium, worth while? Thus the connection would run: If to live in the flesh (fall to me), this (is) to me worth the while; and what I shall choose I know not, whereas not only does the arrangement of the Revisers seem cumbrous but the result is unsatisfactory. “But if to live in the flesh—if this is the fruit of my work, then what I shall choose I wot not.” What does this mean, if the sentence would bear so awkward and violent a construction? Even the literal sense given in the margin appears far preferable, “this is the fruit of my work,” or this is to me fruit of my work. It gives me opportunity for longer labor and its yield in the Lord's harvest.-Nor are the Company happy in their rendering of the last words in verse 27, where they miss the apostle's animated identification of the saints with the faith of the gospel, personified as the agent engaged in conflict. Striving “with,” that is, in concert with, is much better than “for.”

In chapter 2: 1 “comfort” and “consolation” rightly change places:-In verse 6 “a prize to be on an equality” is mote correct than “robbery to be equal,” as also “emptied himself” in verse 7.—In verse 9 the right reading “the” (not a) name is adopted, and “in” (not at) the name in verse 10.—But why “things” instead of “beings” when we have the knee and tongue called to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord? Is not this very distinct from the personification of universal nature in Psalm 148 or elsewhere? The groaning or deliverance of creation in Rom. 8 is quite another thing, and ■ποκ■τω τ■ς γ■ς in Revised Version is not at all the same as καταχθεν■ων here, being things which burrow, not the lost infernal beings.—In verse 30 it is surprising the Revisers did not see that the Rescript of Paris in giving simply “the work” preserves the true reading, to which others added XY or KY. But others must here have overborne the Bishop of Durham. The insertions are easily accounted for.

Chapter 3:3 “worship by the Spirit of God” is right; and “have I counted” in verse 7.-Of course in verse 11 it is the resurrection from (or from among) the dead, not “of” as in the Authorized Version, following the bad reading τ■ν ν. instead of τ■ν ■κ ν., not to speak of the intensified form of the word (■ξαω■στασις) here, only occurrent in the New Testament, as has been often noticed and is obvious.

[But let me here express my astonishment at a very learned Reviser's comment on verses 12-16, as if the Apostle Paul (!) held “the language of hope, not of assurance My brothers, let other men vaunt their security. Such is not my language,” &c. What surprising ignorance even of the gospel practically! How could men so short of ordinary Christian faith be expected to translate the New Testament adequately, no matter what their scholastic attainments? They may be pious, but do

not see that the apostle treats of enjoying Christ experimentally, and then of being actually in glory with Christ, not in the least of assurance as to eternal life in Christ or the forgiveness of sins, which are matters of common Christian knowledge. (1 John 2:12, 18.) He could not rest in anything short of what characterized Christ—the out-resurrection and glory—to be with and as Himself on high. It was this prize he had not already obtained, in this respect he was not already perfected. There is no question of false security, but of eye and heart set on the goal above, instead of the profession of Christ combined with the minding of earthly things. Other scriptures denounce fleshly license; here judaizing or fleshly religion. The Right Rev. Reviser is quite mistaken (pp. 70, 151, 152) in the apostle's drift. It is unChristian nomianism, not corrupt antinomianism, of which he here writes such solemn and even stern words of warning.]

The version of verse 20 is an improvement on the Authorized Version, but is it not feeble? We await as Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation in this epistle is regarded as incomplete till the body of our humiliation has its fashion changed into conformity with the body of His glory.

The Authorized Version is duly corrected in chapter 5:2, 8, in its misunderstanding of the female names, a false reading, and a false rendering.-There are also corrections of misreadings in verses 13 and 23, but nothing of special moment.—The rendering is improved especially in verses 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 15, 17.

Chapter 178

Thoughts on Romans 7-8

After justification in Rom. 5 we have in chapter 6 life. In chapter 7 having life, what is to be done with the law? This is the whole subject of the chapter. No man knows himself or the law, if he thinks for a moment of putting himself under it. The first thing, very strong, is nature fancying it can keep the law, thanking God for what it is itself, instead of for what God is. Nature looks to keeping the law as a way of getting a standing before God. Any supposition that being under grace and not under law is setting aside morality really implies that morality can do it. No one who speaks of law and being under it has ever known the wickedness of his own heart. No one can see God without having a nature suited to God. The law and Christ cannot go together. If under law, we cannot have Christ; and if we have Christ, we cannot be under law. I may use the name of Christ, and make a law of Him. Has the flesh a single motion in Christ? I do not want a fresh life if I have got the old one. Law deals with a man, whatever nature he may have; it says, Are you what I require? Do you lust? It is no matter my saying, “I do, but I hate lust.” The law says, “I will not have you: you must give entire obedience—do continually all things written to do them, if not you must be cursed, for cursed is every one,” &c. There is no sense in putting oneself under law, and allowing it to be broken. If I talk of mercy acting with law, I am counting myself to be not what the law requires, and am letting myself off. At the close of the chapter we get the case of a person under law, who knows its spirituality, “I would do good, but I cannot.” Could such a person be happy? No, always a miserable and wretched man. Did God give His Son to make men be always saying, Oh wretched man that I am? No. I am quite sure the Son of God was not given to save our souls, nor the Holy Ghost sent down to dwell in us, to have that result. The law says, Here I come with my claim upon you; you say, “I have such a bad nature—the law is spiritual, but I am carnal.” Such a person has not to do with Christ or the Holy Ghost, but himself. The law, besides condemning the sinner, provokes the sin; resisting the will only makes it stronger (not the fault of the law). Another thing I have found out, sin is in me; the natural man knows nothing about sin, but I find out I am a bad tree, I have lusts, &c., and another thing, I have no force to get out of it. (This is much harder to learn.) I want to get my conscience quieted by holiness, but this will not do. It is not Christ. We have not got to learn what ungodliness is, we know that already; but what we have to learn is what we are. None has ever done that quite. Have any in this room that knowledge of self which looks at the springs in self and finds no good at all in it! The tree is condemned—nothing will do till the thing that produces all bad fruit is judged. Christ declared, and was, what God required. My being born again cannot meet the case, because righteousness must come in. I am not righteous; but am I hoping to be by going back to the old husband, and giving up the Second, Christ? In all cases it is thinking of self instead of Christ. Am I to be thinking only of self? Many Christians are; in this chapter it is all “I,” it does not hint at Christ. When talking of sin, it is I that have come out. What we love is what we are. I say, “Oh, wretched man that I am I how shall I be holy?” but when I say, “Who shall deliver me?” it changes the whole thing. Another comes in that can deliver; then instead he exclaims, “I thank God through Jesus Christ.” This finishes the whole thing; nothing more is wanted. Deliverance has come in through Jesus Christ. You say, “Shall I then not find the power of sin in me?” To be sure you will, but it will not have dominion over you; you are delivered

from it by another. When I was in the flesh is a past thing, not the flesh in me, but I in the flesh. Now I am moved out of it altogether; I am not in the flesh at all. Suppose I say I was in France, I am not there now. I am dead. Where are lusts in a dead man? The law has killed me. I am dead out and out.

You say, “Have you not got any lusts now?” I am not talking of that, nor of the old thing at all, but of the new. I am in Christ. Christ was down here as a sinless man—takes my place—is made sin for me on the cross. I am dead with Him: he that is dead is freed from sin. What can the law do against a man that is put in prison and dies there? Christ was killed. I am dead to the law by the body of sin having been destroyed; it has no power over me. Many Christians make an idol of their experiences, making a pride of what ought to lay them in the dust.

I remember a Christian once saying, “Do you know anything of the killing power of the law?” Yes, I replied, I do know it so well that I am dead. Utterly ruined and condemned, I look for a Deliverer from both—that is, from the flesh, and from condemnation. I have got deliverance by going through death that delivers. Is there no conflict? To be sure there is, but it does not mix itself up with my condition before God at all. If not standing in the flesh, conflict I must have against it—and failure too. How much have I been wanting in love all this day! If in the flesh, I should be totally lost.

There is no question about conflict with God. Why? Because Christ has gone through it, and is set down at the right hand of God; the new nature in Christ is the true “I.” The flesh is the same as ever, but I am not in it. Turn to Gal. 5:16-18, and see where conflict is spoken of. We do not find a word about the Spirit in Rom. 7. There we get life under law here in conflict against the flesh, but not under law. If really in communion with God, and I indulge a single idle thought, It is gone: restored it will be of course. If led by the Spirit, you are not under law; what you want is the rule of the Spirit in your heart. When you are wrong, what do you want? You want power to get back again. Are you going to get it in the law? I shall not find power out of the path God has put me in. “If thou wilt, I will.” I do not question you may be kept from sin. Peter got into a dreadfully slippery place, yet afterward the Lord could trust all to him.

We must have a risen Christ to bring forth fruit. When the prodigal son was in the Father's presence, he did not want help; he found perfect love, he got the best robe. I want to be brought into the Father's presence to know that all is over with me. Then comes the experience of Christian life.

The last part of this chapter (8.) gives us God's security; we are kept, not by the Holy Ghost in us, but by God for us. This last point is seen in a double way: God for us, and then Christ (joined together), God in the power and majesty of a divine Being; then Christ as man entering into all we have to pass through; so that in every circumstance, and in all that seems against me, I reckon on His love, from which nothing can separate me. We have the Holy Spirit showing us all glory—then in us, comforting and leading, and now the apostle adds in conclusion, “What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” We have got God Himself to reckon on, not reckoning what we are before God, but that He is for us. And that is not all. Not only I am justified before God, but God Himself has justified me, and is for me. This truth is before everything, and reaches over everything. “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

We find it brought out in Zech. 3 Joshua clothed in filthy garments, and Satan at his right hand. What could Joshua say? Nothing but Jehovah answered for him, and Satan was foiled. He tried to accuse God's work, and could not. If God was for Joshua, that settled the whole thing. If God, having plucked me as a brand from the fire clothes my soul, He clothes me as He would have it. If He washes it, it is washed, as according to His mind, it needed.

When the thought of appearing before God is vividly realized by death being brought near, there is often fear. I do not speak physically; many may dread death as far as the body is concerned; but I speak of fear in the sense of peace being disturbed; I mean as to confidence before God, on one side the dense of sin, on the other the affections being exercised. There is a wonderful mingling of heart and conscience. A quantity of things may be going on before the mind that have never been before God at all—things that go on in the heart unsuspected from day to day—certain motives, &c., that have never been before God. At the hour of death, all will come up with the sense of sin, and get from the heart into the conscience before the Lord. Most certainly all will come up, and might have great power to disturb my peace, but that in the presence of it all I know God is for me, and nothing can be laid to my charge. At the same time I bow down my soul and own how I have failed, half my time occupied by nothings and not God, who yet in spite of it all, is for me, before I begin to judge myself. If I begin with self, I shall begin under law; but if I begin with God, I begin under grace. I join with God against the evil of my own heart; I not only learn that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin, but how I came to have that blood: God is for me. God will thoroughly empty and cleanse the heart, but everything depends on His being for me.

The starting-point is, God is for me. I am to count upon God, and reason from Him downward, not from myself upward. If I am speculating upon what I am, I can never have settled peace. When I know God to be for me, I reckon on Him as the spring and source of peace and joy, if I by Christ believe in God's actings towards me. If He did not spare His own Son but gave Him for a poor wretched sinner like me, shall He not freely give all else? The Holy Ghost's reasonings and man's reasoning are totally different. The Holy Ghost reckons from God working in His own grace; man, from what he is or hopes to be.

At the well of Samaria the Lord says, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee,” &c.; that is, if you knew God was giving His own Son, and that this gift of God had come from the Father's bosom down to this world so lowly—depending for a drink of water on a poor woman like you—you would have understood the whole secret, and asked of Him instead. “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

There is a passage in the Old Testament, in Isa. 1:7-9, which brings this out in a remarkable mariner, showing the place we get in justification in Christ. In verse 4, He takes His place as man; then in verse 7 “The Lord God will help me,” &c. to verses 8, 9. Paul takes it up and applies it to a believer: “Who shall condemn? It is God that justifieth.” God justifies us just as much as Christ, because of Christ we are justified. “Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world.” If I think of God for me, I have His love in everything. I get it in all tenderness and grace as regards circumstances. God in Christ enters into all our sorrows and difficulties. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” I have got One up there who as man passed through all sorrow down here. Do I look at death? Christ died, and is at the right hand of God, thinking about you now, and making intercession for

you. Yes! this gracious Man is there for me in all my sorrow. The sting of death has been taken away by Him; death is not death to a believer, it is merely a step nearer to God; death should be no trouble to us, but “to depart and be with Christ which is far better.”

We have a life death cannot touch at all. Through all this life down here I have trial and difficulty, but Christ with me in all. I go to the heights and depths, and Christ has been in it all. Shall tribulation separate? Why that is the very place where I find the love of Christ so precious. He had not where to lay His head—He has gone through everything a saint could suffer. The sufferings of Christ were borne alone; but in ours we find a depth of love and consolation in Christ in them. We never should fear anything if we walked by faith. The nothingness of the world links the soul with Christ's fullness. “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want” —not on account of the green pastures, but because He is my Shepherd. Though in The valley of the shadow of death, I am not to be afraid, I have His rod and His staff—a table prepared, and I can eat quietly in spite of enemies. “Thou anointest mine head with oil,” &c. (ver. 6) (he did not say that in the green pastures), when all is gone, when all rivers fail me, oh! then I say I never can faint, I have got God for me, not circumstances or blessings.

The Psalmist would say, “Lord, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.” (The mountain was gone in a moment.) When we rest on blessings, we shall be broken from them; when we rest in Him, we can never be moved away.

In 1 John 2, the apostle in addressing the different classes—children, young men, and fathers—exhorts the young men not to love the world, nor the things that are in it; but when he comes to the fathers he simply says, I write unto you because ye have known Christ. He as it were enlarges for building up the young men; when he comes to the fathers, the scaffolding drops down, and Christ remains; you know Christ. This is what gives settled quietness and calmness, and a consciousness He is for us in all. There is nothing to be compared with a growth in the knowledge, of Christ; all else will drop off, and Christ remain. If I can speak of God being for me and Christ being mine, what is all the rest? only the creature. Suppose I get into depths (the creature), into heights (the creature again); but the love of God is not a creature at all.

If I look at this world and all the trial and difficulty I may have to go through, why that is not God, but I have got Him for me in it all, and nothing can separate me from His love. It is a certain thing I can reckon on; I may forget it, but nothing can have strength to separate me from it; nothing can ever come in and say, “I have a strength beyond the grace of God.” There may be chastening and trial and breaking down; but the love of God in all to lead us on in dependence on His will, and trusting in His love, when all else fails. And what a proof of that love is not having spared His Son, and Christ having gone through all!

I cannot get at a thing in heaven or earth where I do not find Christ, nor a place where the love of Christ has not left its stamp—love not exhausted in dying, but poured out from the place He is ascended to—the right hand of God—ever living to make intercession. He went through everything we have to pass through; and in all we have to learn what the sympathy of our great High Priest is; all the trials, exercises of the wilderness, a blessed means of learning it. Take a family; do you think that, if any float down the stream without trouble and trial, as much affection will be called out? No! the trouble brings out the genuine affection. When we think what Christ has given us—Himself and all in heaven! and we shall be with Him when we have learned the other story

down here; and all flowing from the blessed truth “God for us,” but God for us in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord give us to get emptied of ourselves and to rest entirely upon Him. By looking at Christ we shall find that, as He fills the heart and the eye, all else drops off.

Many a Christian has a day and night existence—one day self, the next Christ; self all darkness—Christ all light.

Chapter 179

Practical Hints on the Ruin State of the Church

I believe that the churches have been merged in the mass of ecclesiastical popular hierarchism, and lost; but I believe also that the visible church, as it is called, has been merged there too.

Still there is a difference, because churches were the administrative form; while the church, as a body on the earth, was the vital unity.

What I felt from the beginning, and began with, was this: the Holy Ghost remains, and therefore the essential principle of unity with His presence; for (the fact is all we are now concerned in) “wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

When this is really sought, there will certainly be blessing by His presence: we have found it so, most sweetly and graciously, who have met separately. But when there is an attempt at displaying the position and the unity, there will always be a mess and a failure: God will not take such a place with us. We must get into the place of His mind to get His strength. That is now the failure of the church. But there He will be with us.

I have always said this. I know it has troubled some, even those I specially love; but I am sure it is the Lord's mind. I have said, We are the witnesses of the weakness and low estate of the church.

We are not stronger nor better than others (Dissenters, &c.), but we only own our bad and lost state, and therefore can find blessing. I do not limit what the blessed Spirit can do for us in this low estate, but I take the place where He can do it.

Hence government of bodies in an authorized way I believe there is none; where this is assumed, there will be confusion. It was here [Plymouth]; and it was constantly and openly said, that this was to be a model, so that all in distant places might refer to it. My thorough conviction is that conscience was utterly gone, save in those who were utterly miserable.

I only, therefore, so far seek the original standing of the church as to believe that, wherever two or three are gathered in His name, Christ will be, and that the Spirit of God is necessarily the only source of power, and that which He does will be blessing through the Lordship of Christ. These [the Spirit present, and the Lordship of Christ] provide for all times. If more be attempted now, it will be only confusion. The original condition is owned, as a sinner or mutilated man owns integrity of conscience or a whole body. But there a most important point comes in: I cannot supply the lack by human arrangement or wisdom; I must be dependent.

I should disown whatever was not of the Spirit, and in this sense disown whatever was not short of the original standing; for that, in the complete sense, I am; but what man has done to fill it up; because this does not own the coming short, nor the Spirit of God. I would always own what is of God's Spirit in any. The rule seems to me here very simple.

I do not doubt that dispensed power is disorganized; but the Holy Ghost is always competent to act in the circumstances God's people are in. The secret is, not to pretend to get beyond it. Life

and divine power is always there; and I use the members I have, with full confession that I am in an imperfect state.

We must remember that the body must exist, though not in a united state, and so even locally. I can then, therefore, own their gifts and the like, and get my warrant in two or three united for the blessing promised to that. Then, if gifts exist, they cannot be exercised but as members of the body, because they are such, not by outward union, but by the vital power of the head through the Holy Ghost.

“Visible body,” I suspect, misleads us a little. Clearly the corporate operation is in the actual living body down here on earth, but there it is the members must act; so that I do not think it makes a difficulty.

I believe, if we were to act on 1 Cor. 12, 14 farther than power exists to verify it, we should make a mess. But then the existence of the body, whatever its scattered condition, necessarily continues, because it depends on the existence of the Head and its union with it. In this the Holy Ghost is necessarily supreme. The body exists in virtue of there being one Holy Ghost. There is one body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling. Indeed this is the very point which is denied here.

Then Christ necessarily nourishes and cherishes us as His own flesh, as members of His body; and this goes on “till we all come,” &c. (Eph. 4) Hence, I apprehend we cannot deny the body and its unity (whatever its unfaithfulness and condition), and (so far as the Holy Ghost is owned) His operation in it, without denying the divine title of the Holy Ghost, and the care and headship of Christ over the church.

Here I get, not a question of the church's conduct, but of Christ's; and the truth of the Holy Ghost being on earth, and His title when there; and yet the owning of Christ's Lordship. And this is how far I own others. If a minister has gifts in the Establishment, I own it, as through the Spirit Christ begetting the members of, or nourishing, His body. But I cannot go along with what it is mixed up with, because it is not of the body, nor of the Spirit; I cannot touch the unclean, I am to separate the precious from the vile.

But I cannot give up Eph. 4 while I own the faithfulness of Christ. Now if we meet, yea, and when we do meet, all I look for is that this principle should be owned, because it is owning the Holy Ghost Himself, and that to me is everything.

We meet and worship; and at this time we who have separated meet in different rooms, that we may, in the truest and simplest way, in our weakness, worship. Then, whatever the Holy Ghost may give to any one, he is supreme to feed us with, perhaps nothing in the way of speaking; and it must be in the unity of the body. If you were here, you could be in the unity of the body, as one of ourselves. This Satan cannot destroy, because it is connected with Christ's title and power. If men set up to imitate the administration of the body, it will be popery or dissent at once.

And this is what I see of the visibility of the body; it connects itself with this infinitely important principle, the presence and action of the Holy Ghost on earth. It is not merely a saved thing in the counsels of God, but a living thing animated down here by its union with the Head, and the presence of the Holy Ghost in it. It is a real actual thing, the Holy Ghost acting down here. If two

are faithful in this, they will be blessed in it. If they said, “We are the body,” not owning all the members, in whatever condition, they would morally cease to be of it. I own them, but in nothing their condition. The principle is all-important.

Christ has attached, therefore, its practical operation to “two or three,” and owns them by His presence. He has provided for its maintenance. Thus, in all states of ruin, it cannot cease till He ceases to be Head, and the Holy Spirit to be as the Guide and the Comforter sent down.

God sanctioned the setting up of Saul; He never did the departure from the Holy Ghost. The “two or three” take definitely the place of the temple, which was the locality of God's presence, as a principle of union. That is what makes all the difference. Hence, in the division of Israel, the righteous sought the temple as a point of unity, and David is to us here Christ by the Holy Ghost.

On the other hand, church government, save as the Spirit is always power, cannot be acted on. [Feb. 1846.]

I suspect many brethren have had expectations, which never led me out, and which perplexed their minds when they were not met in practice. I never felt my testimony, for example, to be the ability of the Holy Ghost to rule a visible body. That I do not doubt; but I doubt its proper application now as a matter of testimony. It does not become us.

My confidence is in the certainty of God's blessing, and maintaining us, if we take the place we are really in. That place is one of the general ruin of the dispensation. Still, I believe God has provided for the maintenance of its general principle (save persecution), that is, the gathering of a remnant into the comfort of united love by the power and presence of the Holy Ghost, so that Christ could sing praises there.

All the rest is a ministry to form, sustain, &c. Amongst other things, government may have its place; but it is well to remember that, in general, government regards evil, and therefore is outside the positive blessing, and has the lowest object in the church.

Moreover, though there be a gift of government, in general government is of a different order from gift. God serves ministers, hardly government. These may be united as in apostolic energy; elders were rather the government, but they were not gifts.

It is especially the order of the governmental part which I believe has failed, and that we are to get on without, at least in a formal way. But I do not believe that God has therefore not provided for such a state of things. I do believe “brethren” a good deal got practically out of their place, and the consciousness of it, and found their weakness and the Lord is now teaching them. For my part, When I found all in ruin around me, my comfort was, that where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there He would be. It was not government, or anything else, I sought. Now I do believe that God is faithful, and able to maintain the blessing. I believe the great buildings and great bodies have been a mistake—indeed I always did. Further, I believe now (although it were always true in practice), the needed dealing with evil must be by the conscience in grace. So the Apostle Paul ever dealt, though he had the resource of a positive commission. And I believe that two or three together, or a larger number, with some having the gift of wisdom in grace, can, in finding the mind of the Lord, act in discipline; and this, with pastoral care, is the main-spring of holding the saints together in Matt. 18. This agreeing together is referred to as the sign of the

Spirit's power.

I do not doubt that some may be capable of informing the consciences of others. But the conscience of the body is that which is ever to be acted upon and set right. This is the character of all healthful action of this kind, though there may be a resource in present apostolic power, which, where evil has entered, may be wanting; but it cannot annul “where two or three agree, it shall be done.”

So that I see not the smallest need of submission to popery (that is, carnal unity by authority in the flesh), nor of standing alone; because God has provided for a gathering of saints together, founded on grace, and held by the operation of the Spirit, which no doubt may fail for want of grace, but which in every remaining gift has its scope; in which Christ's presence and the operation of the Spirit is manifested, but must be maintained on the ground of the condition the church really is in, or it would issue in a sect arranged by man, with a few new ideas.

Where God is trusted in the place and for the place we are in, and we are content to find Him infallibly present with us, there I am sure He is sufficient and faithful to meet our wants.

If there be one needed wiser than any of the gathered ones in a place, they will humbly feel their need, and God will send some one as needed, if He sees it the fit means. There is no remedy for want of grace, but the sovereign goodness that leads to confession. If we set up our altar, it will serve for walls. (Ezra 3:3.) The visibility God will take care of, as He always did; the faith of the body will be spoken of, and the unity in love manifest the power of the Holy Ghost in the body. I have no doubt of God's raising up for need all that need requires in the place where He has set us in understanding. If we think to set up the church again, I would say, God forbid. I had rather be near the end, to live and to die for it in service, where it is as dear to God; that is my desire and life. [Sept. 1846.]

Chapter 180

Rulers and Clergy

The principle of Heb. 13:17 (to which I would add 1 Thess. 5:12, 13 Cor. 16:15, 16) is in our days more important than ever, because a regular authority, established by the apostle and confirmed by his sanction, no longer exists. Only one thing modifies the application, namely, that the case which is in question in these verses is so extensive generally in practice that it has not the same hold on the conscience.

Then on the other side God permits jealousy of the clergy, the pre-eminent bane of the church, the great barrier to the progress of souls. Clericalism is opposed to the progress necessary for their deliverance from the influences of this present age and from the principles which carry away the exterior church in the way of perdition which will be accomplished in the last days. Whatever the case be, examine the effect of a clerical position, and you will find souls stunted, hardly any spiritual growth, or intelligence in the ways of God.

As to the moral state of individuals, I believe that it consists in many cases in despising the influence God gives the services rendered to His church by the power of His Spirit. But as soon as this influence is placed between the action of the conscience and God, the clerical principle is established, and moral decline begins.

The relation of individual conscience with God is the great true principle of Protestantism, without doubt much buried now by what has happened to it. It is not the right to judge for oneself, as they say, but the direct relation of the conscience with God. “We must obey God rather than man.”

Man has no right to judge; but no more has he the right to interfere between God and man so as to intercept the direct action of God on the conscience. The ordinary interpretation of this principle of Protestantism is the root of rationalism; the denial of this same principle, taken in its true sense, is Popery. The true relations between God and the soul preserve the Christian from each of these errors. When there is only man, he has only room for the one or for the other of these two things, because it is but a question of man. If God enters the case, He can have neither the one no the other, because God is there. But for it to be practically, one must be kept before Him.

When the conscience is before God, one is individually humble, and in that very place one owns God in others. When the will acts, one rejects God, in person as well as with others, and there is what is evil; it is also what the apostle had in view in the above exhortations. When the influence of true ministry is exercised (and it is of great value), it is sweet as the relation of a nurse with its child, as Paul says; so much the more as spiritual power acting in personal devotedness is hardly manifested now as in the cases indicated by the apostle. Also it supposes a workman “manifested to God,” and consequently manifested to the consciences of those in the midst of whom he acts. I have never seen that, when such an one acts and his action flows from much communion with God, this influence, this moral authority, has not been acknowledged. Further, such a workman is not pushed in that case beyond what he has received from God, so that his ministry is found justified in hearts without any pressure.

Nevertheless there are cases where things go badly, and the workman is put to the proof. In such a case he should keep himself before God and act only for Him; he should be at the service of Christ, and leave the result with Him alone. The Lord will always hold the reins, and decidedly, if patience have its perfect work, the wisdom and justness of the judgment of the person who has acted will be made plain. Without seeing it, his authority will be even greatly increased thereby, although it may have perhaps in appearance been wholly lost. But for that one must have to do with God. I speak of what happens, and of the principles connected with this question.

I find that in these times the principle of our passages makes them of great value, because it is a question of a sort of authority which no state of the church can weaken. Every other authority will be lost; this will but shine out the more. It is exercised by the direct action of the Spirit of God in service. Besides, he who seeks this authority will not have it; whilst he, who heartily and with the love of Christ acting in him makes himself servant of all as Christ did, will obtain it. To be servant of all is what Christ is essentially in grace—is what love is always.

There is another kind of authority. Christ exalted on high could establish apostles to represent Him officially; they could establish other servants to exercise a delegated and subordinate authority, each in his sphere. This has taken place. In the passages that occupy us the apostle speaks of another sort of authority. He does not speak of that which represents Christ exalted on the throne, regulating the official order of His house, but of that which represents Christ's servant in love. Be this my portion!

Now, in the present state of ruin and scattering of the church, this last authority, which is acquired by service in love, is of great value. But it is evidently exercised in the conditions of devoted service, humility, and nearness to Christ such as to exclude all other influences and make us act only on His part. As to the measure of confidence afforded, it is a question as in every other case of spirituality. By-sloth flesh confides in flesh. The soul is not then before God. Walking according to the Spirit I am before God, and I have the consciousness that there is more spirituality, more of the action of God, in another; and I own these things. This never stifles spirituality in me and cannot stifle it, for it is the same Spirit who produces spirituality with the workman and with me; only it increases my spiritual capacity as to the fact which is realized and raises it to the height of him who has more of it. An inferior degree of spiritual intelligence and affection in a Christian can discern what is more excellent in another, and accept it where the will does not act, although he could not himself have made the discovery of such or such a step proposed by greater spirituality and love beyond his own. As I have said at times in Geneva, wagoners know if a road is good and well formed, and can make use of it; but engineers alone could have planned and made it.

Now the presence of God in the church comes in aid and regulates all when the difficulty does not without that vanish. God is there for the purpose, and He suffices to do so. If the assembly is too unspiritual, if the will acts with such force that one can only follow what one knows by divine intelligence to be God's will, one has but to leave the thing to God and wait till He manifests His will or manifests Himself so as to put others in the good way.

I do not speak of that which demands an absolute separation. When an assembly accepts positively an evil which the Spirit of God cannot endure, God maintains His rights in favor of what He has given. One must have recourse to Him for that. I believe that the confidence of a simple soul and its submission by conscience, not to man as man, but to the manifestation of God in man,

is one of the sweetest and most useful things possible.

The difference between the influence of true ministry and that of clerisy which has borrowed its name is as clear and simple as possible. Ministry presents God to the soul and places it in His presence. It desires to do so, seeks to do so, by blotting itself out in order to succeed in it. Clerisy puts itself between God and the soul and seeks to guard its position before others. Every spiritual person will discern clearly its place. He will find God in one of the cases; in the other he sees Him despised and sent off to a distance that the influence usurped by man may be exercised.

Chapter 181

Saul Who Also Is Called Paul

The statement that he had not learned the gospel from man leads the apostle to relate the history of his life—a history which the Galatians had already heard; but he repeats it afresh, because in that history was found the source of the authority which he possessed from Christ for announcing the gospel, as it had been committed to him by Christ Himself, whose heavenly glory he had seen, and who had sent him to preach it. And he had even been a persecutor, zealous of the law, and had sought to get rid of the name of Christ from the earth! He had been a Pharisee, living according to the straitest sect of his religion, persecuting the church of God with all his strength, and wasting it. Moreover he had excelled many, his equals in his own nation, in the knowledge and observance of Judaism, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers. He was ruled by the law and traditions.

We see in Saul a zealous and religious man; one, too, who was unblameable in his conduct. And now God, who had in fact separated him from his mother's womb, came in and called him by His grace, revealing His Son in him, that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. The ways of God as to this call for our utmost attention. He first prepares a vessel—a man full of energy, courageous, bold, ready to undertake all things, full of zeal for the cause which he espoused, and having, moreover, nothing as to his life with which to reproach himself touching the law, with a powerful mind, that could enter into the highest subjects, and yet know how to come down to occupy itself with the smallest details, and to think of individual circumstances, with a heart full of affection. Taught of God he could, through grace, understand the greatest and most glorious truths, and at the same time he could fully enter into the relations of a poor fugitive slave with the master from whom he had fled. Naturally independent, he had enough greatness of heart to submit himself to all who hold a position entitling them to exercise authority, and honoring also each one in his place. It is the mark of greatness of mind to despise none, if not wicked men, assuming to exercise authority against that which is good; but even in such to recognize the authority of God, in the position in which God has set them.

But all these fine qualities were marred and hidden by the activity of a will which sought only to please itself, and to increase its own glory in upholding the honor of the sect, and the traditions of the fathers, making use of the name of God for this end, and carrying on persecution, even to strange cities: so that the energy that characterized him was but the means of satisfying the malice and passions which sought to destroy the name of Christ.

But God had used Saul's energy and ardent will to separate him from Jerusalem, where the apostles were, who had been already called by the Lord and sealed by the Holy Ghost. At Jerusalem it would have been difficult for him to be entirely independent of the other apostles; he would have come into the Christian assembly under their authority and directions: it must necessarily have been so. But his energy, under the hand of God, had led him away from a position which was not in accordance with God’s thoughts. He had asked for letters from the high priest, to bind and bring prisoners to Jerusalem all who in strange cities called upon the name of

the Lord.

And thus he found himself on the road to Damascus, accompanied by his traveling companions. But the Lord had His eye upon him; and suddenly, as he drew near to the city, there shined round about him a light from heaven, They all fell to the earth; they all saw the sudden light; Saul alone saw the Lord. All heard a sound, but not the voice of Him who spake to Saul. They were to be witnesses that the heavenly vision had appeared to Saul, but it was for him alone to receive the revelation from the Lord. He was to be an eyewitness of the glory of the Lord, and a testifier of the words which He had personally spoken to him. For him it was a revelation of the Lord and of His will, a direct and personal revelation; be must be able to say, “Have I not seen the Lord?” (1 Cor. 9:1.) But it was the glorified Lord. He had not known the Lord in His humiliation, he was to begin with the glory.

The other apostles had known the Lord in humiliation, as the earthly Messiah, in His life of grace and patience. They had followed Him to Bethany, had seen Him go up into heaven: they knew that He was set down on the right hand of God, but they saw Him no more after His ascension. Saul appears for the first time as taking part in the death of Stephen—that moment when the Jews showed themselves to be enemies of the glorified Christ, as they had already shown themselves to be enemies of the humbled Christ; for the testimony that Stephen gave was that he saw the Son of man in glory at the right hand of God. It was the end of all God's relations with the children of the first Adam. They had already rejected Christ humbled upon the earth: sin was complete. But Christ had interceded for the Jews upon the cross; God had heard His prayer, and the Holy Spirit answered by the mouth of Peter (Acts 3), announcing to them the glad tidings that God had set Christ at His right hand, according to Psa. 110, and that when they repented of their sin He would return. They took Peter and shut his mouth. And finally, when Stephen had plainly declared His heavenly glory, they rose up with fury and stoned him. The Christ in glory was rejected, even as Christ in grace had already been crucified upon the earth.

And here we find Saul, helping on Stephen's death by word and deed. Spurred on by these events, and still breathing out threatenings and slaughter, he asked and received from the high priest, who was prompt to help him in his zeal against Christ, letters for the prosecution of warfare against Him. Thus engaged, the Lord took him up, the apostle of the hatred of the human heart and of God's chosen people against Him and against His Christ, in order to make him the apostle of His sovereign grace, which in his own person he had experienced, as also of the glory of Christ which he had witnessed.

What grace in God! what a change in the man! It is the same grace towards all who are saved, but Saul was a marvelous testimony to it: a testimony which would make it plain and manifest to all, as says the apostle himself, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.” (1 Tim. 1:15, 16.)

The way in which the Lord prepared the two chief laborers among the Gentiles and the Jews is remarkable. Peter, cursing and swearing, declared that he knew not Christ. Paul sought to destroy His name from the earth. Neither the one nor the other could have opened his mouth, except to declare the sin of man and the sovereign grace of God.

But we shall do well to examine what the revelation made to Saul was. First, as has been said, it was the revelation of the heavenly glory of Christ, the Son of God, who still was man. The twelve had followed the Savior till the cloud received Him; beyond that they could not be eye-witnesses. Saul had not seen the Lord, except beyond the cloud: his knowledge of Him began when Christ was in the glory. He was to declare the gospel as be had received it. A Messiah living down here was for the Jews. A Christ who had died and been glorified after having been rejected by man became the Savior of the world. He had died for all men, and thus His work was complete. God had owned Him, taking Him up to His right hand, into the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. And yet He was the same Jesus, the Nazarene (Acts 22:8), marvelous truth! who had before walked upon the earth among men.

Moreover He said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” But how? If He were in heaven, Paul could not persecute Him. But He esteemed His own as Himself: they were united to Him, so united by the Holy Ghost, that they were members of His body. He loved them as a man loves and cherishes his own flesh. The Head and the members were but as one person before God. These are the two great principles of Christianity as Paul taught it: a Christ glorified after all had been accomplished, and Christians united to a glorified Christ, were the germs of all Paul's teaching—Christ, a man beyond death, beyond the sin which He had borne, beyond the power of Satan and the judgment of God against sin, redemption being complete.

Saul, having left Jerusalem, bold and full of confidence, is arrested in the way, when on the point of carrying out his purpose. He falls terror-stricken to the earth at the sight of the Lord. He heard a voice calling him, and discovering that it was the Lord, all is at an end as to his own will; he surrenders himself to the will of the Lord, and is sent by Him into the city, that he may there humbly learn what is that will. In other words, he at that moment submitted himself to Christianity in the ways of Christ's will. But he was blind; that so the inward work might be perfectly accomplished, and the immense change in his soul might be experienced before God, in its true power, without any hindrance or interruption from man. Also he neither ate nor drank for three days. But although he was to go into the city in order to learn what he was to do, yet many and great things depended upon the revelation that had been made to him.

First, the glory of the Lord had appeared to him, the Lord Jesus of Nazareth, rejected of men, but declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead. Immense truth! A man was in heaven, a man, the Son of God; but He was there because the sacrifice for sin had been accomplished and accepted by God—a sacrifice so perfect, that He who had presented it was set down in His own person at the right hand of God in His glory, and that according to the righteousness of God.

Man, at the same time, was shown to be wholly evil and corrupt, for he had rejected God when He was present in perfect goodness in the midst of men. Israel had forfeited all their privileges and their right to the promises, by rejecting Him in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen: and not only the dispensation of the law had come to its end by the coming of Messiah, the Head of the dispensation that was to follow that of the law, but the title to the promises was lost by His rejection; and thus, He being rejected, all God's relations with the people to whom He had given the law were at an end. The Gentiles had never had it; they had never been in relationship with God; they were outside the promises made to Israel, and they had fallen into the most complete

darkness. (See Rom. 1) There no longer existed any relationship of men with God, if not that of sinners and rebels with their Creator.

But on the other hand, the sovereign grace of God had been manifested to the greatest sinner in the world; to the apostle of rebellion and rejection of the Christ of God, apostle of the enmity of man against God manifest in grace, against Christ exalted in glory. Important moment in the history of man when redemption being accomplished, and love being free according to righteousness and divine glory, God rose above all the sin and enmity of man to work in sovereignty according to His grace; not only to manifest love—this He had already done at the coming of Christ down here—but to cause grace to reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Him:—righteousness which had placed Christ as man at the right hand of God, because, as Man, He had perfectly glorified God. (John 13:31, 32; 17:4, 5.)

But there was yet more in this revelation of the Lord. We have spoken of the dispensation of grace which was founded upon this revelation. It was needful that the soul of Saul should be in a state suited to the service of God in the dispensation that began by the revelation. And this is what took place. First, all the things in which he had trusted were utterly condemned: judged by God Himself, they no longer had any value. His own heart was all upset: all that he thought to be of God, and which was so until the cross, was set aside. His conscience—for he thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus—had deceived him. His confidence in the law as given of God, and by which he had hoped to obtain a righteousness before God—the authority of the heads of the Jewish religion, their fathers—in a word, all these things had but led him to find himself in open enmity against the Lord; there was nothing left upon which his soul could rest. He was the enemy of the Lord Himself, boldly seeking to destroy those whom He loved. Saul was all this in the presence of the Lord!

What a revolution! Saul himself, instead of having an externally pure conscience, found himself to be the chief of sinners, the enemy of the Lord, the apostle of that hatred against God which had rejected from the world the Lord of glory, the Son of God, and which was still rejecting the testimony rendered by the Spirit after He had been glorified. The old dispensation, the law, the promises made to Israel, had disappeared; and instead of these, the Lord of glory, alive in heaven, is revealed by sovereign grace to him who sought to abolish the memory of His name. Eternal life is communicated to him, eternal salvation through the work of Christ is presented to his heart in the glorified Man who had borne his sins, and was now making the work effectual by the operation of the Spirit of God. The Son of God is revealed in him.

This is true conversion, true faith. Sovereign grace reveals the Son of God in us, a glorified Man, and—if we have already understood the truth—a Savior who has borne all our sins. But it is the revelation of Christ in us. In Saul's case this revelation was also in order that he might preach Him among the Gentiles.

Thus, he who had been exceedingly mad against Christ and against the Christians, persecuting them even to strange cities, is sent forth with these remarkable words from the Lord Himself: “For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive

forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:16-18.)

Thus Saul was taken from among the Jews (it is the real force of the words), separated from his nation, to belong to Christ; but he did not therefore become a Gentile. The starting-point of his new life was a glorified Christ for the announcing of that which he had seen, and by the power of grace had revealed in his heart, besides other revelations which were afterward made to him—always, however, of a Christ rejected by the world and glorified by God. Knowing by the experience of Christ revealed to him and in him that the mind of the flesh was enmity against God, as was also his religion and his past life, Christ glorified was thenceforth his all: a Christ who had wrought redemption for him, and who had cleansed him from his sins; a Man in heaven for whom he waited, as the fulfiller of the glorious hope of His own who were already united to Him, and were esteemed by Him as Himself.

Called by such a revelation of the person of the Lord, and by the words of His mouth, it was not the moment to go and consult others, whoever they might be; he does not go. His mission was from the Lord Himself, from a Lord who had not been thus revealed to others. He was the Lord, it was the same salvation; but it was a special revelation which stamped its character upon the whole ministry of a servant who knew Christ Himself no more after the flesh, that is, no more as the Messiah of the Jews upon the earth.

But it was needful that all should be wrought as experience in his soul; he was therefore made blind, in order that he might be separated from every external thing which would distract him, and that he might be entirely occupied with the change that had taken place in him, and that this revelation of the Lord, this total revolution in the state and relations of his own soul, blight without interruption be felt, and might work within. It was needful that the condemnation of the law, the sin of having persecuted the Lord of glory in the persons of His people, the glory of His person, the perfect grace which had called him, should be realities for his soul; that the new man should be formed by this means.

Thus he is left to himself. He does not think of seeking the rest of the apostles at Jerusalem; the Lord Himself had called him to Damascus, and Saul had received his mission from Him. He had not to consult the apostles, for the Lord had taken him for Himself. He was the servant of Christ, immediately dependent upon Himself. He goes into Arabia, and returns again to Damascus. After three years he goes up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and stays with him fifteen days. He did not see the other apostles. He also visited James, the Lord's brother. He is careful to recount all these details, that the Galatians might understand that his apostolic relation was directly with the Lord Himself, that he owed nothing to the other apostles.

Thus he who, but a little time before, had been a persecutor, advanced in Judaism before many his equals in his own nation, is now laid hold of by sovereign grace, in the midst of his greatest activity against the name of the Lord—an apostle sent directly by the Lord to the Gentiles, sent by a glorified Jesus.

But though chosen and called, he must await the positive direction of the Holy Ghost for entering upon the field of his apostolic labors; this was afterward given at Antioch. It is a most important principle: we need, in order to work according to the Lord, not only the call of the Lord, but also the

positive direction of the Holy Ghost.

Saul, as a Christian, immediately confessed the Lord; he did not delay, he waited for nothing; his faithfulness in publicly confessing Him is at once manifested.

This done, be all but disappears until the time when the Holy Spirit sends him as a witness for Christ into the heathen world. Only those things which show his perfect independence of the apostles and of men are here recalled. He gloried, as in an honor, in that with which his enemies and the enemies of the truth reproached him. He did not hold his mission or his authority from any man, nor by means of man, neither of Peter nor of the other apostles, but from Jesus Christ Himself. We shall see that Peter had no share in the mission to the Gentiles.

Paul was not known by face to the churches of Judea, when he afterward visited Syria and Cilicia; they had heard only that he who persecuted them in times past now preached the faith which once he destroyed, and they glorified God in him. This was the truth, as in the presence of the Lord. Later, he was sent to the Gentiles, not from Jerusalem, but from Antioch, by the Holy Spirit, as we read in Acts 13 Neither Peter, nor the apostles, nor the church at Jerusalem, had anything to do with it; it was a wholly independent mission: they knew not even what was being done. He carried on the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles (always however evangelizing the Jews where. he found any), taking with him various brothers, whom grace had prepared for the work, as we find it stated in Acts. But this is not the place to speak of such details.

Chapter 182

Scripture Queries and Answers: 2 Corinthians 5:19

Q. 2 Cor. 5:19. What would have happened if men had received the Christ of God? We see Him forgiving governmentally, as in Matt. 9 R.

A. The blessed Savior was “reconciling,” acting toward this gracious end, during His life. “God was in Christ,” &c. He was rejected. God knew that redemption by His blood was necessary to reconcile; so that in reality He was made sin in order to put the ministry of reconciliation in the apostles. And when it is said, “God was in Christ reconciling,” it is a question, not of the basis necessary for giving effect (which is the thing treated in the verse but one following, 21), but of the ways of God with regard to man by Christ during His life. If Christ had been received, the result would have proved that the evil was reparable. Now we know that the truth is quite otherwise. But God presented the thing to the responsibility of man before manifesting this moral impossibility. Though He called to it, He was calling them according to the knowledge He had Himself of that which He was going to-do. “What shall I do? I will send my beloved Son. It may be they will reverence him, when they see him.” There, is what was presented to man. The object of faith is the person of Christ. Believing in Him one enjoyed the efficacy of His death, during His life true to Him in ignorance, later on with intelligence.

There is a governmental pardon, which could not be save in virtue of expiation, it is true, but which is notwithstanding another thing. Besides, the pardon accorded in detail in view of the offering of Christ was according fully during His life here below in view of the ways of God in grace. The effect was shown, the case occurring, by a healing as proof. But grace at all times has its application in view of the work of Christ. (See Rom. 3:25, 26)

Chapter 183

Scripture Queries and Answers: John 10:36

Q. John 10:36. In what sense is the term “sanctified” used— “whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world"? Why does it precede the sending into the world? J. B. P.

A. My impression, for it is not as a result of theological examination, is that the Lord God speaks of Christ's mission as a whole from the time it was said (if time it can be called) “a body hast thou prepared me” till the service was accomplished. He sent that blessed person with the whole scene before Him into the world; but the actual sending down here when a man in the world was from the Holy Ghost coming upon Him when He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. With quite another object in view the two steps are in Phil. 2, “emptied himself,” and, being a man, “humbled himself.” So God prepared a body for Him (dug ears for Him); and then, though Son all the while as when twelve years of age, He was sent out as man set apart to bear the witness He was sent for. God had created the world by Him, He will judge the world by Him. But here He is looked at as sent into the world for service; and His whole person, Son of God and man, is in view as one while in service. He took the form of a servant. “Lo, I come to do thy will.” The sanctifying was the appropriating—setting apart—this person to the humble, in one sense, but glorious service which Christ performed, though service He never gives up. The Father set apart this person for this service—did so in preparing a body—did so in incarnation, and did so in anointing and sealing when the opportune time was come. He was sent into the world so actually set apart (in divine purpose in Psa. 40) for the service, the Word made flesh and dwelling among us, and then as man by the Holy Ghost coming and abiding on Him. He could not be sent before He was set apart for it, but while actually set apart in Matt. 3; 4, He could not have been actually then if not in God's mind and by incarnation before. J. N. D.

Chapter 184

The Seal and the Earnest of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit has not only sealed us, but is the earnest of our inheritance. He is the source of our strength, and of our communion. This chapter shows us, first, what we possess already as redeemed; secondly, the hope of the glory; thirdly, the Holy Spirit given us here below in the absence of Christ as the pledge of our inheritance whilst waiting for the redemption of all things. The Holy Spirit is given to those who already believed. From the time of the apostle this was by the extraordinary gifts or signs. The fact of the presence of the Comforter is today too much misunderstood and forgotten. In fact we do not see the children of God relying on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to direct them. It is not the subject of our habitual thoughts. It is thus that in fact we do not consider Satan as governing the world and being its prince. If Satan governs the world, the Holy Spirit was to guide the church. The word never speaks of the influence of the Spirit, as a person, as God. He acts.

The Spirit communicates to us life. This however is distinct from the presence of the Spirit who ought to guide us, and the church too. No more are the gifts (χαρ■σματα) His presence. There may be in fact those who had the power of working miracles whom Jesus will deny that He knew. The Holy Spirit should act in us and be the link between Jesus and us. The Lord said that when He went away He would send an Advocate or Comforter who should abide forever with His own. Jesus having accomplished all is seated on the right hand of God. The Spirit was to be sent not to the world, but to the disciples only. He is the immediate agent of God in our hearts, as in the creation of God. (Gen. 1:2) He produces life in us. (John 3:5) We receive the Spirit for communion and worship. (John 4) But it is not only a fountain of living water springing up; it is also as rivers flowing out of us. (John 7) The gifts must be distinguished from the Spirit in person, even His presence. Balsam prophesied of old (as there might be a like gift now); nevertheless he was a wicked man. Judas wrought miracles without being converted. Saul prophesied; yet he fell under the judgment of God. Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is God, He acts as God in His sovereignty, without regard to the state of the heart. In the church He distributes the gift as He will, but this is not the Spirit as Comforter or Advocate. The life which the Spirit has communicated to us is the principle of all good; but the Holy Spirit acts on this life to make it grow and produce all its effects. It is thus that He becomes the pledge of all that belongs to us.

All that the child of God does ought to proceed from the Spirit. It is by the efficacy of the Holy Spirit that we are begotten of God. He convinces us of sin and troubles us for a moment by the sight of our evil and weakness. One is still a little child which then begins to catch a glimpse of the difficulties of the career. We arrive thus at the sense of an entire powerlessness which has for object to bring us into the sense of a direct responsibility to God that flows from grace and is not under law. One can listen to the gospel with grace without entering into the sense of this responsibility. One can enjoy the effects of the gospel without enjoying communion with God which puts us in responsibility as regards Him. When the Spirit acts in producing life, He gives rise to the sense of this responsibility; afterward He sets us free and produces joy. (Gal. 4:6.) At the beginning of the work in our souls the Spirit communicates life; but when one is a child, one

receives the Holy Spirit as a spirit of adoption and cries, Abba Father. (2 Cor. 1:20-22.) John 7:37 shows the Spirit is given to the believer. In believing they have life eternal; the Holy Spirit becomes the power of this life. First, the believers are saved; the righteousness of God is applied to them; secondly, their position before God is not to be servants, but to be sons of God. (Gal. 4) We are the sons of His house. The Holy Spirit is the seal of our salvation, and spring of emancipation. (Rom. 8:15.) This gift is the consequence of the accomplishment of the salvation; He could not be given before the accomplishment of this salvation, before that Jesus was glorified. he was formerly the Spirit of prophecy; whilst He is now necessarily for believers the seal of what is accomplished, the seal of their salvation. In our hearts He bears witness to the thoughts of God. He cannot be in us a spirit of fear. He does not put us under law. He reveals to us the thoughts of God; and these thoughts are that God considers us not as servants, but as sons. The word we, us, is found since Pentecost in speaking of the church. Christ loveth us; He washed us; He made us kings and priests. God raised us up together with Him. It is no more a Spirit of prophecy who makes him that speaks a stranger to the events predicted. He is a Spirit of accomplishment, of communion, the source of my adoption, of my salvation, of my glory. It is not humility that says, I do not know if I have the Holy Spirit. The testimony of the Spirit cannot be doubtful; it is the knowledge alone of Christ that sets us free: the Holy Spirit is the pledge of all that.

One may be joyful without being converted. But the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of liberty, of joy, of power. The fruits manifest themselves and make us see if this joy is true or false. There is always in the heart of him who is converted, spite of his joy, a conscience quickened by the introduction into the presence of God. The joy of Christ was to do the will of God. If we do it not, we are sorrowful. Privileges always make us more responsible before God; our conscience is so much the more jealous as it is nearer God. The child of God hates sin and not the consequences of sin. He does not hate it to escape hell, but in love to his Father. The child of God is grateful for his pardon, and rejoiced to do the will of his Father. He who would rejoice at being pardoned and would not fear to sin, who would not hate sin if with sin he were permitted to enter heaven, that man could not be a child of God. The joy of him who is not converted is not a joy in the presence and the communion of God Himself; it is excited by the presence of the children of God or by a good preaching: A delicate conscience, joyful in the presence of God, more joyful than out of that presence, cannot be found, save with a true child of God. He feels himself ill at ease in the world, he can find himself altogether free in the presence of God. The effect of a false joy is to harden the conscience. Such is that which distinguishes the presence of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the child of God who is delivered.

Another characteristic of the Holy Spirit is the knowledge and intelligence of the things of God. The unction of the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of understanding which makes all things known. (1 John 2) it is the anointing from the Holy One, it is not said from the wise one. If we are guilty of sin and grieve the Spirit, we cannot have this knowledge in large measure. It is in full power with God that we understand and know the thoughts of God. In a friend we know intimately his thoughts. If one is habituated to see in Christ the counsels, the thoughts, the promises of God, one comprehends His mind. This does not reveal itself to him who does not live in fellowship with God. These things are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to the babes. When we feel ourselves little, we feel the power of the riches of God. Sin obscures to us the word of God, but the unction from the Holy One makes us know all. The Holy Spirit in revealing to us the accomplishment of salvation is the

seal of our adoption. He is a Spirit of joy, of deliverance, and of liberty.

He is a Spirit of power. (2 Tim. 1.) The new man is not power. The Holy Spirit strengthens those who have life. He communicates to us the things of Christ with the sense that they are ours—what distinguishes it from the Spirit of prophecy. If I pass through this defiled world, the heart turned toward God, the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power, because He pre-occupies us with Christ, with heaven, with God, and He makes us enjoy Christ's things as ours. He gives us in full power with God the assurance that God is for us. The eye is single, the body full of light; we are on God's side in the world. If all that is true, the church of God bears testimony by its state that it has grieved, and that we have grieved, the Spirit of God. It is feeble, deprived of knowledge, certainty, and power. It is not distinguished in the world's eyes by the effects of full power with God. It is a humiliating state. Let us content ourselves with little things; retrace the way; humble ourselves before God, pray for one another, and intercede for the church.

Chapter 185

The Service of a Good Man Full of the Holy Ghost and of Faith

The Spirit of God has seen good to give us for our profit this notice of one whom He could use fully, in service to the saints, for the glory of Christ; one, a pattern, doubtless, and worthy of imitation by all. It is here unreserved devotedness which is so essential to blessing in service, whatever may be the line in which the servant may move, or the place filled by such a member of the body of Christ.

Let us notice, first, the start of this “good man.” It is “Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation) a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.” (Acts 4:36, 37.)

Here is one disentangling himself from the things of this life, and ready to enter on the service of Him who had called him to be a soldier, with a heart for the needy too; but we see him getting rid, for Christ's sake, of the things which might burden and fetter him in the race. (Heb. 12)

Thus is he ready (a convert on the day of Pentecost) early for the Lord's work; nor do we find him long unemployed. If the apostles were tardy in carrying out the Lord's instructions (given after His resurrection, and consequent on their being endued with power from on high on the day of Pentecost, for which they were told to wait), “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” (Mark 16:15), He is not at a loss for instruments for the work. If the children do not cry “Hosannah” in praise of Messiah, Son of God, the “stones will;” for God's decree is that His beloved Son must be owned and honored when here; neither is He going to be hindered in having the name of that blessed One told out to the ends of the earth, as a Savior for man lost in trespasses and sins. If some had settled down, He can fit instruments for His purpose out of materials more unlikely than “the stones.”

There is the chief of sinners standing by the clothes of those who had laid them down at his feet to take care of, until they stoned the Lord's faithful servant, Stephen—mad with rage against Christ and all that owned Him. This man is to be made a willing instrument to carry the name of Christ, “the Son of God,” to all the nations.

The Lord speaks from heaven, and in a moment he is turned and ready. “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” is what expresses it. He must, however, tarry awhile, and then he shall know, not only what the Lord would have him to do, but what “he should suffer for his name's sake.”

And now has the Lord a service ready for the “good man,” whose eye was so single at first, and as a clean vessel, to be honored and used by the Master.

Saul, escaping from Damascus, would “join himself to the disciples at Jerusalem: but they were afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.” They did not know of his conversion; but Barnabas knew; and the Lord uses him to bring in Saul to the assembly at Jerusalem. “But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in

the name of Jesus.” We are not told how Barnabas knew all this, but it is remarkable that he should know so much better about Saul's conversion than the apostles and disciples at Jerusalem. His heart was in it all, and the Lord, doubtless, had put him in the way of knowing all this, in order to form a link between these two for future work together.

The persecution which arose about Stephen opened out this. Saul had been the means of scattering abroad the church at Jerusalem, also Judea and Samaria. These simple disciples, driven away from their homes for their faith in the Lord Jesus, yet carrying Him in their hearts, must needs speak of Him wherever they go, even at last “to the Greeks;” and “the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord.” This spontaneous work is specially owned of God, carrying out His purpose by the gospel, to the glory of Christ, among the Gentiles.

The apostles had not done this work. Saul was the instrument used. “The Lord makes the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder He restrains,” by stopping the wrathful man on his way to Damascus, and fitting him to labor, side by side, with those whom his wrath had driven among the nations, to tell of God's love in Christ.

Here there is more work also for the “good man,” “son of consolation,” fit instrument to be used and honored in service.

“Then tidings of these things came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, who, when he came and saw the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord.”

The church at Jerusalem had perfect confidence in this “good man,” as having spiritual discernment as to the work of which they had heard. Their confidence is not misplaced. He discerns at once the Lord's hand, and the reality of that which was wrought thus far, apart from any official channel. His whole heart is in it. “He was glad when he saw the grace of God,” and in service follows up by “attending to exhortation,” All was right thus far; they must have “full purpose of heart, and cleave unto the Lord.” It is but the echo of his own state of soul; he was but leading them, and encouraging them to walk in the path he had trodden hitherto himself. There had been “full purpose of heart” in “Joses, surnamed Barnabas,” from the day that the grace of God had met him, and delivered him so completely. He did not lead them beyond himself—this was not possible. Blessed state of soul, and blessed the servant, or saint, who was, or is, in it, and increasingly blessed its results: “and much people were added to the Lord;” “for he was a good man,” &c. The Spirit of God gives as a reason for the large blessing, “full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,” the state of this man's soul. What could hinder large blessing when such was the state? May we lay this to heart.

Next we see what is most beautiful. The work is enlarging, and help is needed in this field. Barnabas knows of the one whom he introduced to the church in Jerusalem, and he knows what he is. “Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul.” The disciples do not send for Saul. This “good man” judges Saul to be fitted to help in this work. Was Saul unemployed at Tarsus, waiting for the Lord's call? If so, he has it by Barnabas, and immediately responds to it; for “he found him, and brought him to Antioch,” and there these two labor, and “teach much people for a whole year,” after which the church sends them to Jerusalem, with relief to the brethren there in

their distress; and they return to Antioch, bringing with them John Mark,

This work, then, at Antioch goes on not independent, indeed, of Jerusalem, Barnabas being the link of connection in service; yet was it the free and spontaneous action of the Holy Ghost for Christ, if I may so say; and He (the Holy Ghost) is in Antioch, as in Jerusalem at the first, not only in the salvation of the souls of much people, but in giving gifts; so we find “at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon, that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen—and Saul;” five in all, harmoniously ministering in Antioch, the mention of the names beginning with Barnabas, and ending with Saul. These two distinguished ones must yet go together in service.

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” Thus the Holy Ghost still keeps this “good man” in his preeminent place in service. I do not follow them in this their first tour, taking John Mark with them to help, who lowers himself by turning back to Jerusalem, at Perga in Pamphylia (lacking the faith and full purpose of heart needed in a true servant), just remarking in passing that Paul increases in energy, and is the “chief speaker,” changing his name to Paul, it would seem, at Paphos.

This service being completed, they return to Antioch, “and declare all that God had wrought by them.”

Up to this point, with the exception of John Mark's defection, all had gone on harmoniously in this new work, at and from Antioch; the freshness of first love was there, until certain men come from Judea, and introduce, or try to introduce, circumcision. I pass by this to notice the place that Barnabas still held in service; but now it is “Paul and Barnabas, who had no small dissension and disputation with them;” and this not settling the question, it is “determined that Paul and Barnabas should go to Jerusalem about it.”

Their mission there is successful, and they return to Antioch, with “letters from the apostles, elders, and brethren,” settling the question in dispute, which, when read at Antioch, caused them to “rejoice for the consolation;” “Paul and Barnabas continuing in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with, many other also.”

Here we would gladly stop in following the path of this “good man,” if the Holy Ghost stopped here. But no. Up to this all had been bright; and how sad that such a light should be dimmed How it grieves one's heart that these two beloved ones, laboring so long and faithfully together, should quarrel and part Mark, indeed, whose default was the occasion of it, is afterward deemed “profitable unto Paul,” as he writes. Had the Lord called away His beloved Barnabas then?

Yet so it was. Had he forgotten his own beautiful exhortation, “with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord?”

His relation, John Mark, and his native island of Cyprus, doubtless weigh too much with him as a man naturally, and not Christ's interests; and the Holy Ghost drops him out of the record further given in the

Acts. Up to this last all was worthy of imitation, and full of encouragement; this last is but as a beacon light, to warn our souls of danger, when and where it may be least expected. In all there is instruction and profit.

Chapter 186

The Seventh Day and the First

The sabbath is not “a” seventh day, but significatively “the” seventh day, the rest of God, Jehovah's rest, It is not now the seventh day, the rest of the old creation (to an intelligent Christian that is impossible), but, as clearly distinguished by scripture, the first day of the week in contrast with the seventh, Christ having been unquestionably in the grave during the seventh, and rising (the ground of our rest) on the first, not the seventh. Talking about the sabbath being originally the first is slighting the facts, and ignorance as to the purpose and meaning of the change of day. It is not a Jewish or legal sabbath either, but the Christian “Lord's day.” The only part flesh can have in it now is mercy to man in flesh, and that is a fresh revelation of Christ's. When originally instituted, toil was not man's portion; God's rest he might have enjoyed in a worshipping way, but never did.

Now that sin is come in, the Lord can tell us the sabbath was made for man. So far therefore as the Lord's day can be made a day of rest for all, grace will do it. I may not be able to impose it as a religious law on unconverted men; I do not know what that means in Christianity, in the church of God. Could the early church have imposed it on the heathen? I believe it is a great mercy if civil law secure it, or the habits of society, even for the world; only there is the danger of self-righteousness. It is an external mercy, if the morality of the law, sabbath and all, be observed; for sin and contempt of God degrade, harden, and corrupt. As a Christian I rejoice to have one day, and the Lord's day, rescued from the world and the old creation for me a child of God; and I believe and have found that (not for visions, but for blessing and for joy) we may look to be in the Spirit on the Lord's day. But that is not law.

Yet I do not accept at all the taunt of those who bury, as they say, or abrogate the sabbath. I say, If I were on board ship, I should be positively sinning not to take due care of it on the sabbath, and give heed to the safety of all. On the other hand I have not a doubt the Christian ought to think of others, and (unless in cases where mercy does require it) not use cabs and the like on the Lord's day; and an easy rule is to be found—if he takes one in the name of the Lord Jesus, let him; if not, let him not take one.

Chapter 187

Spirituality

Gal. 6:1

Those who have received the Spirit are not for that reason spiritual as here meant— “Ye that are spiritual.” All the Galatians had received the Spirit, as we know from chapter 3, where the apostle asks them the question in verse 2, “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

They were being enticed back to the law after having the Spirit, which they did not receive by the works of law. It was retrogression, thus seeking perfection in the flesh. But they had the Spirit, and the way that they received Him was by the hearing of faith. What had Paul preached in the regions of Galatia?

Was it not Christ crucified which he had “set forth amongst them?” The Holy Ghost can testify to nothing else, in giving liberty and a sense of sonship, and by this truth, namely, “Christ crucified,” preached amongst them and believed, they had received the Spirit, and knew that they were sons. Blessing was by the hearing of faith, as curse by the law.

Yet were they not for that reason all spiritual—at least we may say when he wrote to them. The power and source of spirituality they had by receiving the Spirit. But some needed restoration, and it was not anyone who was able to restore such, even though they might not as yet have been overtaken in a fault themselves; they were in a feeble state of soul, and had not wisdom nor strength to assist others who had sunk below feebleness into a fault.

The spiritual only had ability to help; the Spirit could work deliverance and restoration for others through them, fit instruments for His work, when others were not. How, then, comes this, when all had received the Spirit as believers at the first? It is from this; that there was another power in them besides the Spirit, and other influences brought to bear upon them than what were from Him, the “Spirit of truth,” who testified of Christ. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; in order that ye may not do the things that ye would.” (Chap. 5:17.)

It is plain that thus the flesh had hindered. They had not “walked in the Spirit,” and, because they had not, the lusts of the flesh had been fulfilled. At first they had run well, but they had been hindered through having turned back to the flesh by the law, and thus manifested the flesh, and not the Spirit, in their state and ways. Hence the apostle has to make the selection. The spiritual alone could help when the general state was low, and some had been overtaken in a fault. These (the spiritual) had walked in the Spirit. He ungrieved not only dwelt in them, as He had sealed them, but ruled them, and was listened to; and the flesh was not yielded to: this made all the difference in their state, and thus, in this state only, they could help others who wore needy, and lift up those who were fallen. This is our individual resource, and the resource of the church, when things are low and in confusion. The Holy Ghost, though often grieved and discarded, has not returned to (heaven (and what a mercy and comfort this is, and an unfailing power available to us!)

leaving all to man's will and way.

Who, then, are the spiritual? I suppose that by their fruits we are to know them. Neither is this difficult, nor far to seek. The apostle had just before written, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law.” The law was on the side of the spiritual: though it had not made them to be so, yet it approved of them as such. The command to love God and our neighbor, given by the law, did not give the power to do it, and thus the law was weak through the flesh. The Spirit, working through faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, produces love by a new nature, which the law never gave. Now the moment that love is there, the law is fulfilled; for “love is the fulfilling of the law,” and we love God and our neighbor. Those who have the Spirit have this, and it is the bags of all. “We love him because he first loved us,” and “love worketh no ill to his neighbor.” The first three fruits mentioned are the individual state, and enjoyment of “the spiritual,” that which ought to continue in everyone without interruption. But it does not always, as we know. “Thou hast left thy first love,” as is said by the Lord. And here, in the Galatians, it had not continued, though they had started well, having received the Spirit.

The spiritual had gone on well, and the fruits had continued to be manifested in them. The power was with all, and they all ought to have gone on well, and might too. Alas, how often is this the case! We cannot guarantee spirituality always in any. Peter was spiritual on the day of Pentecost, as on many more occasions; but he was not “when certain came from James,” and he dissembled because of them, refusing to eat with the Gentile believers (as given in this same epistle), beloved Barnabas (that “good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith") being carried away also with their dissimulation. Paul, pre-eminently faithful, purposed in his own spirit to go to Jerusalem, and carried it out, though “the Spirit forbad him.” (Compare Acts 20:22; 21:4.) If then these, so eminent as servants, and in whom the Spirit wrought so mightily, thus (through nature and associations, with even true zeal for the Lord's glory, as Paul) failed to be ruled by that Holy Guide who dwelt in them, how much more we in these last days of evil, sorrow, and weakness! Solemn truth, that to have the Spirit is not necessarily always to be spiritual!

The apostle would not write thus to his beloved Thessalonians: “Ye that are spiritual,” for such they all were, as manifested in their “work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.” With joy of the Holy Ghost,” their faith to Godward was spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything.” The fruits of the Spirit in them were manifest to all. They were walking in the Spirit, to the praise of the Lord, and so were all spiritual. Neither in such a state did anyone need restoration. It was not so with the Galatians as a whole; and thus he falls back for restoration upon those through whom the Spirit could work, those Christ could use, in whom His voice had been listened to, who bore the fruits of the Spirit instead of the works of the flesh.

Love was their state, and “He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” (1 John 4:13-16.) Joy and peace, too, were the fruits of the Spirit, and the experience of the spiritual. They rejoiced in Christ Jesus, and had no confidence in the flesh. (Phil. 3:3.) They had His joy fulfilled in themselves (John 17:13), besides boasting in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Horn. v. 11.) They had peace with God; and “the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeping their

hearts and minds through Christ Jesus:" the "peace of Christ ruled in their hearts," for they had Christ before them. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Such were the spiritual personally; and, being such, they could be used, and they only, to bring others into the sphere in which they themselves lived and moved, or to bring back such as had fallen from it—to restore such.

Now the manner of this is shown next by what we may call the relative fruits of the Spirit, characteristic of the spiritual, those by which they are known, and the character of their operation towards others; for spirituality is ever active in lowly love for the blessing of others to God's glory.

Spirituality then is shown, first, in a passive form "long-suffering." What more needed in helping saints, or in the Lord's service towards the world, as in the daily walk of the saint, than long-suffering? God is "long-suffering and gracious;" so are they who have and walk in the Spirit. Difficulties are many, and the opposition great—the contradiction—of sinners, the waywardness of saints, the enmity of Satan, and the working of the flesh. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind." It must be patient endurance, the labor of love, and if the Spirit works in us it will be, for such are the spiritual. "The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus." As God is patient, and Christ also, so the spiritual are long-suffering and patient.

Next we have "gentleness." This is relative too. The spiritual are very careful to be considerate, not of and for themselves, but of others. Is overbearing, or abruptness, of Christ? Is harshness of Christ? The gentleness of a nurse cherishing her children is that by which Paul illustrates his manner of caring for and helping on the saints. "To the weak he became as weak," &c., and this to win. A stern or short way, which stuns or snubs, is not of the Spirit, but unspiritual.

"Goodness." As long-suffering is not stoical, things endured because they cannot be avoided, so gentleness is not assumed as an exterior polish, the fruit of education, and because roughness would be considered bad manners. Beneath both, and that which acts by both, is goodness—a "good and honest heart." There is a difference between a righteous man and a good man. The former is upright, strict, and scrupulous as to his obligations to others, but requires from them the same in return. He does his duty, but looks sharply after others that they do theirs. A good man will do much more, without expecting returns. A righteous man may be respected; a good man is loved. He is a truly philanthropic man in God's sense. For God's philanthropy has appeared to us in Christ. (Titus 3:4.)

A good man is like God in this, and is called to be His imitator. So Eph. 5 exhorts us to be "followers of God as dear children, walking in love." Such is the real thing at the bottom of the spiritual man's heart, and characterizing him; and this to all persons, evil and good, and in all circumstances, and thus he is "perfect, as his Father in heaven is perfect; who causeth his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." This goodness of the spiritual flows out to all, irrespective of circumstances or claims. Being reviled, he can bless; being persecuted, he can suffer it; being defamed, he can entreat; and though he be not loved, yet can he still love.

Then comes "faith," not for the soul's salvation, nor that by which they received the Spirit by believing the gospel of "Christ crucified," but trust, or reckoning in God by which they live, as it is

written, “The just shall live by faith;” and by this they stand. The spiritual man has been taught to cease from man, and to confide in God, who is above all circumstances. By this he is led to be active, or by it to be passive; standing still or going forward as this living precious faith connects him with God in everything. In their measure the spiritual walk in the path of Him who began and ended a perfect life of faith (Heb. 12:2); and they look to Him as the only perfect one in it, though a great cloud of testifiers there had been from the beginning who had trod that path. To faith difficulties are unknown, or, if felt, do but give occasion for its exercise. God hath delivered, doth deliver, and faith says that He will still deliver—yea, from all and every evil work. This confidence in God is a lever to remove mountains, to lift up and restore fallen saints. So the “spiritual” reckon.

Yet is there no ostentation. It is not demonstrative in the way of human strength. If faith brings in God, it shuts out man, and thus can afford to take a low place in His presence, and in the presence of man too, shown in “meekness.” The “spiritual” have not only come to Christ, who gave them rest when laboring from a guilty conscience, but they have “learned of him who was meek and lowly in heart;” and this in the face of “the contradiction of sinners against himself.” He did not cry nor strive; neither must the “servant of the Lord” strive, but meekly instruct those who oppose themselves, that thus peradventure God may give them repentance. We know one who lost his characteristic meekness, and said in haste, “Ye rebels, shall we bring water for you out of the rock?” and by it lost a place in the promised land. In the spiritual love abides, and “doth not vaunt itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked.” How these moral traits, as fruits of the Spirit, seen and manifested in the “spiritual,” dovetail one into the other! The links are one inseparable chain produced by the Holy Ghost in those who “walk in the Spirit.”

This divine power works thus in man, and produces what man was a stranger to, and what the world had never witnessed till the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, and made them all of one heart and one soul, leading them to meek and quiet testimony in the face of trial and persecution. Low thoughts of self the spiritual would have in the Lord's service towards others, seeking their profit in meekness, “in lowliness of mind, esteeming others better than themselves.” (Phil. 2) So, if any desired to oversee and look after the church (1 Tim. 3) “If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”

It is a good work to be occupied in the well-being of the saints; but there are qualifications needed, amongst which we find, “No striker but patient, not a brawler.” And why so? Because such will find in serving the saints that their patience is amazingly taxed, and, if not kept in the spirit of meekness, they soon become irritated, and striking or brawling is the result, when, instead of gaining any that may need restoration, they but make bad worse. So Titus 1:7, “Not self-willed, not soon angry, no striker.” Such were the bishops (overseers) to be, and if not such, how could they “take care of the church of God?” If not such, they were not “spiritual,” and could not help nor restore any. The Spirit did not act in them, but the flesh.

Lastly, “temperance” is given as a fruit of the Spirit. The spiritual would not act rashly or hastily.

He that believeth shall not make haste.” They would be preserved from excess. They, as to the feelings and judgment, would keep the mind evenly poised and unbiased. The loins of the mind being girded up, they would be sober. So Titus gives us, as needed for an overseer, “sober, temperate.”

Thus the “spiritual,” having the mind unbiased by temperance, have not the judgment warped. “He that is spiritual judgeth all things,” and this by the word, as in 1 Cor. 14:37, “If any man think himself to be spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that we write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” And thus are we preserved from error by the word. A person might suppose himself to be spiritual because he had by the Spirit a great gift; but this did not follow at all as a consequence, as we see at Corinth: the moral fruits of the Spirit were lacking there, and this because they were not walking in the Spirit, but walking as men, and carnal. It was not Christ and all in relation to Him, but man and things in relation to him. They were not spiritual, but carnal. The thing lacking was God's love working in them, as we see in chapter 13. Tongues might be there, prophesying there, the understanding of all mysteries; and all knowledge, and even faith to remove mountains; yet all was nothing if love were not there. “Knowledge puffeth up; love buildeth up.”

They had forgotten God's ways in grace by His Spirit, forming them morally like Himself, like Christ, who walked according to God here; they were using the power and knowledge which they had received for their own aggrandizement; they were puffed up, and had lost the sense of what God required in the place where His grace had put them. Spirituality, then, is not knowledge intellectually held, but is primarily a thing of the heart and affections, the Spirit of God forming these according to Christ. The believer, by grace, having God to dwell in him, and he in God, manifests it in every way, as Christ walked and manifested God in grace to man. The new man is also “renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.” (Col. 3:10.) And the mind is renewed, “that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Rom. 12)

Thus does the Spirit of God work still, and by these fruits are the spiritual ever known. The Holy Spirit is still here thus to work: may it be ours to know His working, and leading, and transforming power, through occupying us with Christ, having all that opposes set aside in our hearts and minds; and this for our own joy and strength, and for the lifting up and blessing of the saints of God, to His praise, who only worketh thus to His glory!

Chapter 188

Strength in Weakness

The apostle is nearing the end of his journey, and knowing that shortly he must put off this his tabernacle, as the Lord Jesus had shown him (John 21:16-18), after He had so thoroughly probed his heart to see whether any self-confidence was still left there. Precious faith and true love to the Lord there had always been since the day that his brother sought him, and brought him to Jesus, when He gave him his name and place in view of the assembly not yet built. (John 1:42). “And he brought him to Jesus; and when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone.” “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God; and when he had spoken thus, he saith unto him, Follow me.”

There had been much else besides faith and love in the heart of Simon, son of Jonas, and that much undetected by him. Man admires his natural character, his ardor, boldness, and self-reliance. A will not yet judged is not subjection to grace, and what Christ values is not nature, but the Spirit of God by grace working, and shown out in patient dependence and long-suffering for His name's sake. All this, so largely treated of in his first epistle, as that which is suited for all Christians, he had yet to learn. The key-note he gives us in 1 Peter 4 “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind, for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.” Christ did God's will, and suffered for it; so the believer arms himself with the same mind, that is, to walk in the path of suffering, and thus has done with sin. God's will guiding, the flesh does not act, and the lusts of men have no place. All this Peter had yet to learn when first called to follow the Lord.

Leaning on nature is ever the source of failure, and, if it does not lead to a thorough break-down, always leads to weakness and mistakes. To find out this was Simon's great lesson (as it is of all). The way he learned it may not be needed for all, nor always; nay, may we not say, that it was not absolutely needed for him? A low opinion of himself, dependence on God, and self-judgment, watchfulness and prayer, would have saved even Peter from his dreadful fall. But he must learn what he was as a natural man, and know the true source of strength for service, and for feeding the sheep of Christ; and, in Paul's words, have “the sentence of death in himself, not trust to in himself, but in God who raiseth the dead.” Here alone is strength for patient service and endurance in the conflict and sorrow, for Paul as well as Peter—yea, for all.

Satan is God's allowed instrument in Peter's case, and in passing through that fearful sifting of the adversary, there is much to get rid of. His practice failed lamentably, but Satan could not destroy that which the Lord had prayed might be preserved. “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Beneath all the rubbish which seemed to bury that “precious faith,” from the first it had been deposited in Simon's heart, unseen by man, and unindicated outwardly, yea, belied by oaths and

denial whilst in the hands of the adversary, yet at that moment proved to be there by the look of Him on whose heart this poor sifted disciple had been all the while. That look of the Lord broke down pride, self-will, and natural energy—deeper self-judgment following. “He went out, and wept bitterly.”

On the shore of the sea of Tiberias the Lord would make this work a thorough one in Peter's heart, testing the strength of his love. Was it love beyond the love of others? Peter had said, “If all forsake thee, yet will not I” —yea, though prison and death itself should be in the path. This was Simon's measure of his own love, compared with the love of others—too large a measure doubtless, when nature was there, and as the strength for executing it (though love there was too); for, when true love would use natural energy (and this is disallowed by the patient, lowly One, who was led as a Lamb to the slaughter) it suited nature to use the literal sword and fight for Christ, at all to suffer patiently, and endure in meekness. The weapons for the latter were not carnal. The wrath of man did not work the righteousness of God. Peter was warring after the flesh, and there needed a “casting down of his imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Cor. 10)

When Peter hears these words, “Put up thy sword again into its sheath,” what else had he to fall back upon in nature? The path of self-sacrifice was not of nature. Thus is there a complete collapse in heart and service—not patient endurance—where natural energy had wrought, impelled doubtless by true love to Him for whom in this way be was proving it. Going to prison and death was out of the question now for him. He was even more scared and crest-fallen than Elijah, who fled to Horeb from the face of Jezebel when she threatened his life. Will was working when the servants of the high priest challenged him as a disciple of Jesus; and what is it worth before death or danger?

The Lord would know from Peter's own lips whether he had now curtailed the measure of his love to Him, by Himself using it in its original dimensions. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” This is thrice repeated too.

How deeply probed was that heart, which, whilst now discarding the measuring of its own love, yet could not but plead the truth that love was there, though none but the Omniscient could give him credit for it! “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” Here then is one whose heart is fitted to feed the lambs and to feed the sheep; and that now, following in the path of patient suffering and self-sacrifice which the Good Shepherd Himself had trod, giving His life for the sheep.

Natural will and energy would at last be thoroughly dealt with, as expressed by the Lord's words immediately added. “When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God; and when he had spoken this, he said unto him, Follow me.”

Was it to end thus, and Peter to follow his Lord to death? Even so it was. What nature was not competent to do, grace would accomplish. He had become weak, and by it had gained divine strength. This then was Peter's own original measure of his love to Christ: was he to be privileged to do even as he had promised at the first? This was to be his privilege—self-emptied and passive,

he would when old stretch forth his hands for another to gird him, and carry him whither he would not. It was contrary to nature and will, but these were displaced, and, when thus, the spirit of his Master enabled him to follow Him thus. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh,” in order to hinder us from doing the things that we would. Now this strife was over. The Spirit predominates, and the flesh is set aside. As another could say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Blessed state, and unfailing strength for every saint as well as Peter and Paul!—to be strong in weakness, to live daily dying, to make ninny rich though in poverty; to know how to be abased, and how to abound; everywhere and in all things being instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” (Phil. 4) Who or what could disturb the repose of a heart in such a state of dependence and confidence in the Lord?

This, too, not only gives true rest and strength, but leaves the heart at leisure to be occupied with and for others. Having got rid of our own cares, we the more fully care for all saints; and, having judged our own will, we do God's will, or suffer for it. Thus Peter, knowing that shortly he must put off this his tabernacle as the Lord had shown him, with a true shepherd's heart and care thinks of the Lord's blood-bought sheep, and would now the more fully warn them, exhort them, put them in mind, that after he was gone they might have those things always in remembrance. Though they knew them, yet would he put them in mind, and press upon them what would sustain them, so leading them on in diligence, that they might have an abundant entrance administered unto them into the glory, and be kept from falling whilst here. Failure was not a necessity, though he had fallen; but they never would, did they but give diligence to do the things of which he speaks to them. G. R.

Chapter 189

Testimony for Christ: Part 1

Preaching is a testimony for Christ; but the more practical thing here referred to is different. There is a testimony which God secures, as in Ephesians “Unto angels, and principalities, and powers,” &c. Now the very existence of the church is this testimony in heavenly places. Whenever God acts, He necessarily testifies to Himself; but the church is that which comes in between the earthly dispensations, and set for a peculiar testimony, and the only right testimony we can bear must flow from knowing what Christ is in connection with us. If I acted as a righteous Jew, it would be no testimony to Christ as Head of the church. All other testimony would be idle, useless, and false. To the Jew it is said, This people have I formed for My praise. This only could be as they knew what God had done for them. So the Christian can only glorify Christ by this new kind of witness, which the church is made to be. Now that the Messiah is lifted up, it brings in altogether a new kind of witness. The witness down here is according to the place God has given it in Christ, bringing down into details before men the great principles in which we stand before God. As He said, “I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world.”

Another testimony is, that Christ has glorified the Father, and the testimony is to Christ not merely the scriptures, but a testimony according to scripture. We have it not in an apostolic manner, but He has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. This is the third species of testimony. Here we have the meaning and use of the word spoken, not merely the truth, but the testimony given to Christ. Another is, “The words which thou gavest me, I have given them.” Thus the church is the depositary of all that the Father gave to the Son. The Son, as a Prophet, gave them to the church, thus giving the church delight by association all that communion which was between the Father and the Son. “Now they have known all things.” Thus we see the church is brought into an intimacy with the counsels that existed before the world was, and out of which the whole creation came forth, though not as the greatest work, for the church is to show out His glory in a greater measure than all the creation besides. Jesus says, “I have given them the glory which thou hast given me.” This glory, into which the Son went back, was that glory which He had with the Father before the world was; its source, God Himself, before all creation.

Supposing the saint had apprehended this association with Christ, the practical results would be such as the question implies—announcement of the word. An ambassador cannot be one in his own country. The word is a present deposit given to the church— “I have given them thy word” —a commission before the world; the words given by Christ are another thing.

The salt of the earth—mark “of the earth,” but light of the world. The earth is that which may be in relationship with God, and have light and darkness all around it, and then there was to be the distinctive principle of preservation. There was the exclusive power of grace, not merely security. Light was a character of diffusive grace, and not distinctive grace—light of the world, where all is darkness. Whenever there is the profession of the name of Christ, there ought to be the distinctive manifestation of grace. Every sacrifice shall be salted with fire—all shall be brought under divine judgment. Light of the world, in a certain sense, is a happier thing; “God is light,” and He is so

called in the first manifestation to the Gentiles. Law was not light, it descended through men, and did not show what God was. There are three things in it: first, loving God and one's neighbor; secondly, prohibition of what one ought not to do; thirdly, ceremonies. We cannot speak of the second Man as light only, because He was the Life. Then, having communicated this to His disciples, it could be said, “Now ye are light.” The manifestation of what God is to man when in darkness.

The salt seems to be that which the saint essentially is from his heavenly nature. Fruit, in John 15, is something more than individual fruitfulness. The fruit that Christ bore is the living church of God. So much as the living power of Christ is in the church it would remain, and all thus gathered was living fruit to God. Christ was constantly occupied in putting the disciples in the same place as Himself; not only in individual grace, but in all the results of that grace.

As to the writing of the letter (2 Corinthians 3) the force of this seems not so much individual, but the assemblies of believers are specially the epistles. The church is the epistle of Christ, because the church is looked on as entrusted in everything by Christ (I speak not now of the church's failure). Ye are His epistle, a testimony of reconciliation. If there had been any doubt of Paul's testimony, the saints in every place who had been converted through him would be the epistle commendatory—the letter commending his ministry, recommending Christ as written in them, and that wherein the world is to read the character of Christ. The assemblies of the saints should be that which gives Christ's character to the world, and the fact is, Christ is so judged of by the world. Humbling as this is, infidels judge of Christ by what they see, though the Spirit of God, doubtless, works in sovereignty beyond this testimony. The only source of power in the church is the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, the ministration of the Spirit in contrast to the law—the present manifestation of God to the world. It shows what God is in grace, which a righteous law could not do. In the church Christ has commended His life, that it may become a living epistle, and the thing we have to inquire of ourselves is, Can men learn from us what Christ is? I speak of great principles, and if the church be not a living epistle for Christ, it is nothing and good for nothing—Christ revealed by the Holy Ghost, Christ in heaven. “We all beholding as in a glass,” &c. Another person cannot behold for me. I am to be changed into the same image by beholding Him.

Another may tell me of Him, and I may thus be brought to look on Him.

I cannot be changed by looking at ordinances. The practical part, peace and joy, go together; and if I am changed into the image of Christ, I am seen as the epistle, the expression, of the heavenly Man down on earth—the One in the glory who has put away my sin; and I can stand by and look at the glory, the Holy Ghost a witness to me of it. As in Stephen, Jesus was reflected on earth, for there was not a principle in his whole conduct which was not drawn from heaven. He might compassionate the multitude, but the compassion flowed from knowing the infinite care of the Good Shepherd. Morally we should be like what Stephen was actually. The church reflects the glory sent down from heaven, as connected with it. Walking with God implies, to my mind, communion. I can converse with the man I walk with. Walking before God involves more particularly responsibility to set the Lord before us as pleasing Him. We can never have privilege without responsibility.

But I suppose that being “in God the Father” refers to our place. Whatever we know of God we learn by fellowship with Him. He that loves is born of God, and knows God. He must have His

nature, which is love, to know Him who is love; as I must have the nature of a man to understand the things of a man. The Jews were not “in God the Father,” for the relationship had not been revealed to them. The church has its relationship to Christ, as well as affiliation to God. Looking to the conduct of the church, there is Lordship as well as perfection of the divine nature.

As to the distinction in the heavenly things, shown us in Hebrews, Colossians, and John, the expression, “heavenly calling,” is common with us, and a great deal has, I suppose, been mixed up with this. In the Hebrews, where the phrase is used, the Holy Ghost never rises to the highest glory of the church; it contrasts the Lord with Moses, showing that we have got a ground of confidence to go into the holiest place; but the set of thoughts is about God, and not about the Father. In Heb. 12, where the Father is mentioned, it is not as to privilege, but in the exercise of chastening.

There are two things for a Christian to look at in Christ: as a priest in the holiest, I can go through His blood, and in my failure can use His advocacy. But there is another thing which I learn—what I am as a child of God. It is a different thing, when I know that the Father loves me, from knowing that He hears, because I have an Advocate. Both are of the last importance for us to know, and a most blessed place there with the saint. The subject of the Epistle is requiring blood before a sinner can come—Christ between me and God. My union with Christ is another aspect. This does not separate me from the One Christ as Mediator, Advocate. In one sense I look on Christ as one with Him above, and in another His relation to me here below, Christ coming down in all the relations in which I need His grace and tenderness. Writing to the Hebrews, the subject of Mediatorship. The heavenly calling comes in as association with Christ as Mediator. The heavenly culling comes in because I learn my failure by what Christ is set up in heaven for me, and it is not the same thing as when Christ says, I go to my Father and yours.

The heavenly calling may be regarded as morally in contrast with earthly things, or I may look at it (though perhaps the phrase is not so used,) but I may think of my heavenly calling) as connected with my union with Christ.

Colossians teaches this union. All other mediation denies the union of the church with Christ. Whenever I put anything between me and Christ—men or angels, or ordinances—I deny the very existence of the church in union with Christ. Whenever we get back into ordinances, we get back into nature; it may be an amiable nature, but it is nature. The principle of the church is, “I am one with Christ.” The difference between Ephesians and Colossians is, that the Ephesians had not then failed in declining from the first love. The failure of holding the Head is supposed in Colossians, the privilege of the church in Ephesians. The Colossians had forgotten their Head, and Paul was obliged to speak of it; so that in Ephesians we get really more of heavenly relationship, not the approach to God as in Hebrews, but union with Christ above, the Head and the body, sitting not with, but in, Christ. This carries us up higher; all the affections of God thus rest upon the church. It is important not to confound the phrase, “heavenly calling,” with the sitting of the saints in Christ. What do I find the practical consequence in Hebrews? It is the earthly path of faith, by virtue of the blood shedding of Christ. The practical part in Ephesians flows from God dwelling in the church—not merely, Ye must walk by faith, but, Be ye imitators of God. In Ephesians the commonest things are spoken of as based upon our union with Christ, even to avoiding deceit, &c. He looks upon the church as one body; “Because ye are members one of

another.”

The heavenly calling in John's Epistle is the character of God's family. The whole Epistle draws down various principles from the family being partakers of the divine nature. They love, they keep His commandments, &c. From this the disciples ought to have seen that the Father was in Christ, and Christ was in Him. (John 14:14-20.) He afterward promises them the Holy Ghost, and then they shall know that Christ was in the Father, because they have the Holy Ghost, and thus are cognizant of their union with Jesus Christ, and know the Son to be one with the Father, and myself to be in Him. This is unfolded to us in the Epistle of John. The saint knows this in this world. All that is of the world is not of the Father. Why, the church is in the world! Yes, but God sees the church as a heavenly thing, and so shall I see it, if I love the church as I ought to love it. It is a fact: there is no such thing but being in Christ, or quite out of Him; either we are living in nature, or taking our standing in Christ. Christ lives in me now. If I am risen with Christ, I can come down, and judge all the circumstances of my life on earth; my place, if risen with Christ, is to seek those things that are above. Resurrection is shown out below, by being dead with Him to the rudiments of the world—not only to sin, but to the religiousness of human nature. The Jew was called to righteousness, and God cultivated it, but it brought not forth fruit, it produced wild grapes. Now men strive to cultivate the religiousness of human nature, and so introduce themselves into heaven by some other way than death.

Christ has taken His place where death and resurrection have placed Him, and there I am where Christ is. Supposing the saint to be united to the Head, it has its own world and sphere of affections. God does not look at the church in the world at all. “All that is in the world is not of the Father.” The new nature can be set on nothing down here. The church has no standing on earth, it is clearly in Christ before God. The things above are not merely a general tendency, but a positive line, brought down between earth and heaven. “Christ liveth in me.” Christ has gone up as a heavenly One, and there is our sphere of affections. Christ has taken our hearts, where death and resurrection have placed them. If Christ communicates this life to me, He gives this principle—that we are dead already. Resurrection life is manifestly walking through this world, without being actuated by the motives of this world. A Christian has new motives. Do you think that Christ in you would be seeking riches, or using power? Perplexity comes in by having some motives which are not drawn from heaven. There is always a tendency to decline from this singleness of eye. When we first receive this knowledge of life in Christ, we are absorbed in Him; but when decline comes in, we get old motives, and return. People say, What harm is there in this? No harm in the thing, but the thought about it shows that you are not absorbed in heavenly things. When the sense of grace is diminished, we decline in practice. Our motives must be in God. Some little thing begins to act, and then motives begin to act, and re-commencing of certain things that engage the attention, and the first love is left. Efforts are made to press conduct and practice, because full grace was preached before, it being felt. The conscience, if active, condemns things, or sometimes it is dead, and then what was approved before is considered legal. We may fall into two faults—preaching fruits, or getting at ease. We shall not get back by dwelling on the details, but it is a terrible thing to tamper with God, and we must rise up into the knowledge of resurrection in Christ to remedy the details.

The effect of walking in Christ is, I am sure, always to walk with reverence. The soul will not only be happy in God, but will bring the tone of that house with him, and the sense of his joy in God,

and the ten thousand anxieties which trouble others will disappear. No matter what the trouble is, we bring quietness of spirit into all circumstances while abiding in God. One will carry it about with him, the evidence of being risen with Christ—quietness. I have my portion elsewhere, and I go on. This connects itself with the fellowship of the Father and the Son—not only joy, but the thought of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost in us. The third person of the blessed Trinity is our power of entering with the affections into all these things of God. “The Father loveth the Son.” What a place this puts me into, to be so cognizant of the Father's feelings towards His beloved Son! I see the Son as Head of creation, &c., and we are enabled by the Holy Ghost to enter into the counsels of Him who made it. When thus our souls are taken out of the world, and into our place with Christ, we get our association with His counsels, &c.

The new thing, connected with Christ before the world was, makes this world looked as a bit not to be regarded. In our proper place we get our minds filled and associated with things that leave this world as a small thing, a little mite, in the vastness of that glory which was before the world was. How we are led by the Spirit is a practical question. Providential circumstances are not the guide of the Holy Ghost, though God is present everywhere, but the Holy Ghost is in the church. A spiritual man requires no spiritual actings of the Holy Ghost, because he has the mind of Christ, leading by the plainest motives possible all drawn from His own word. It is the Shepherd leading when the Holy Ghost has given us such a knowledge of God, that we walk in the liberty of communion with His thoughts and purposes. The Holy Ghost may lead, as He did Paul, “Go not to Bithynia,” or now by the plain revelation of the word.

Chapter 190

Testimony for Christ: Part 2

In the record of the actings of the Most High, can we trace a case to exhibit for Himself as Creator and God of providence; or is the testimony committed to the character of the Savior?

What is the bearing of this upon the preaching of the gospel, in the acts and on the scene, as shown us by prophecy? How far was and is that which is of nature or providence used of God in the church 7 Can we learn anything from our present horizon?

The peculiar position the church of God assumes was vividly brought before the eyes. One thing rests on my mind—the entire distinction of the church of God from everything else besides, rejoicing in God Himself, and estimating His ways. “We have the mind of Christ.” When the prophet asked, “Who had been his counselor?” there was no response; the mind of Christ, the Holy Ghost, are in the church. This intelligence is such as there never was before. They were but servants. I may tell my wishes to my servant, but he had no participation in my thoughts. The first principle of the Jewish dispensation is marked by the veil, Jehovah dwelling in the darkness: they did not really know God, they had no access into the holiest; but when Christ came, it was impossible He should not be revealed; and how He could deal with His own Son but as what He was? We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God could lead David to say, “My soul panteth after God": we know Him now. When God said to Abraham, “I am thy shield,” &c., His “friend,” who in some respects stood higher than Old Testament saints, yet did not know God in the character as we do. “What wilt thou give me"? he asked. When God gives Himself as a reward, He necessarily brings out the heir. Abraham talking with God could look down on all things below.

To us is given all that God gives in and with Christ. The church is told everything. The scriptures are so exceedingly precious because we have all God's mind from beginning to end, even about the Jews, given to us. This assumes perfect reconciliation to God, the being brought into fellowship with the Father and the Son. It also implies perfect peace; for if I had any doubts about myself, how could I at all care to be inquiring about God's dealings with the Jews? The conduct and character of a child who has no doubt of his relationship is altogether different from a servant's, the moment I see the truth.

“For their sakes I sanctify myself,” said our Lord, going as Man on high. This is not a testimony against evil, but to get to the sanctification of the believer through the truth. Even before I saw the coming of Christ, I saw that the Spirit of prophecy condemns the world and its ways; but in the setting apart of the new man in Christ, I see what draws my affections and acts on the conscience. The setting apart of the church according to the model of Christ, the new Man, acts on the affections. God does not become what He reveals Himself to be, for that He effectually is. So as to creation, Christ travels across all dealings with the Jews and others, and says, Your Father gives rain to the just and unjust; go, and do likewise. Christ was God manifest in the flesh; not merely a perfect Jew, but the heavenly Man above all evil, and the conduct of man is to be based upon what God is in Himself—my Father, of whom ye say that He is your God—the Father of Jesus their God.

We say we trust in the living God, and this is the difference between a Christian and a man who talks about God. We trust not as in a dead God, who has given rules and leaves them, but in One who lives and watches over me, and I can walk through any danger with the fullest certainty of “Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father,” &c. You as a child are an object of all good; all providence was for them of every kind, because of their association with Christ. Thu church is not the sphere of providence as Israel was. The church has not its root in the systems of the world at all. When Israel is no longer His witness, when the world asserted its power uniting with the Jew to crucify the Messiah, then the church is brought out in connection with Him before the foundation of the world. Men may think they can do what was not done when Christ was here. “The world hath not known thee, but I have known thee.” The display of Himself is to the saint. The church is not the sphere of Providence, but the Jew was. In God's mind the church is not of the system of the world at all. Christ had glorified the Father on earth, and then closed by saying, “The world hath not known thee.” “The world seeth me no more, but ye see me.” Thus did He, sanctify His disciples. The church ought to have here another thing, because all power is given to Christ; so Christ has all power in heaven and earth. Hence, when the appeal is made, it is, “Kiss the Son.” The church ought to have been the witness of the same, of the power of Christ on earth, even the powers of the world to come, a testimony in the Spirit to the power Christ will exercise in the world to come (healing the sick, raising the dead, were powers of the world to come). Where shall I find creation put to rights but in Christ? There was a fresh testimony in man to the power of Christ over creation. When the spirits were cast out, He said, I saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven, a sample of the end, when all the powers of Satan will cease.

The church is not only a testimony to the grace of God, but to the power of God, in creation and providence. Full peace is a settled state of happiness, which people do not talk much about if walking in it, and engaging every thought, and feeling, and plan, and act of His, and as connected with it. The church had her own place in all the testimony she had to give. You that were her enemies are now able to enter into the power of the new life, to enter into all the hopes of redemption, &c. Miracles now are a different thing from what they were. Egyptians had been swallowed up, Dathan and Abiram, &c.; but miracles in the church were a sign of the power of the world to come. They confirm faith, but they are not to us in any sense the basis of faith; to the Israelites, in a certain sense, they were. Who brought you out of the land of Ham? Nicodemus speaks of miracles, but Christ stops him, and says, “Ye must be born again.” Adam had his garden taken away from him. The flood afterward came—then men's imagination made sticks and stones into gods. The prophet speaks of the folly of worshipping and warming themselves by a bit of wood; but the Spirit leads the saint behind the scenes, and he sees that the idolatry is not merely the folly that could be seen, but men worshipping demons.

When I come to the principle that God is Creator of heaven and earth, I see that Israel bound their idols with the very things the true God had given them. They would offer these gifts to the queen of heaven. Generally the Gentiles were given up to their own ways. God revealed as Jehovah was not only the Most High, Almighty to Abraham, but the Covenant-keeper to Israel. (Psa. 91) Whosoever dwells in the secret place of the Most High lodges under Almighty shelter. Jehovah was the revelation of the place of safety—Jehovah is the resting place. Satan tempted the Lord Jesus to take this up, not in obedience; but He said, No, I am come as a servant, and must take the place of obedience. In, spite of everything, Jesus will show Himself the possessor of earth. In

Isaiah, up to chapter 49, the Lord takes up Israel as the servant; but from that time Messiah is called the Servant, because Israel had been destroyed, and lost his standing.

No reclaiming power was of any use whilst the tree was bad. Man as a sinner may be polished, but he is a sinner still. The law was weak through the flesh. Man ever knows that precept is a sharp accuser, but a useless friend; there must be power. With all man's immense faculties—and I do not believe that they are half developed yet—he cannot please God; there is no good in acting on the old life, so God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

I could not speak to you, beloved friends, about these things, if I did not assume that you and I are enjoying perfect peace. We thus can contemplate all power in heaven and earth, and this in Christ. God, of course, never resigns any of His titles; but all power is given to Christ, and when He returns, all this power will be manifested, and the church its sharer with Him. Till the heavens are cleared, we have to do with principalities and powers in—heavenly places, but ours is power in suffering. I am to bear witness that there is salvation in Christ. Man is done with for the present. How does God deal with His title actually on the conscience? I find Christ will exercise this power on earth. When on earth Jesus continually said, “Fear not,” but after His resurrection He said,” Peace be unto you.” Now I see in Job that his friends thought that the things going on in the world were an adequate testimony to God. Job said many naughty things, but there was a craving of soul after God which his friends knew not. So a man may understand all doctrine, and yet not be in a state of mind God could meet, save to correct or judge. Job went on wrestling after something he could not find in himself—a better state than all mere doctrine—he was standing in need. We often find wants in heart which we should know how to apply to God for.

The church, being a heavenly thing, has her warfare there. Christ first clears the heavens, and the church takes with Him the seat of power. As has been said, the church was at first not only a saved thing, but the witness of the power of Christ as the possessor of heaven and earth. There are two ways in which God deals with man: firstly manifested to the Jews, so that every nation that came against them was punished; secondly, the testimony in rain and fruitful seasons. Now the church as a heavenly thing manifests God on earth, as we see in the deliverance of Peter. The Holy Ghost “convinces the world of sin,” &c., because they rejected Christ. The very presence of the Holy Ghost is the consequence of man's rejection of Christ and crucifying Him. The Holy Ghost down here virtually says, “I am here because you have rejected Christ, the Son of God.”

As to providence, Israel being God's earthly people, His providence, so to speak, rallied round them. I think the Jews were not finally rejected till the last chapter of Acts. As the Gospels are a transition from law to gospel, so the Acts are a transition from Judaism to Christianity. I find the Lord Jesus sanctioning the law, and giving in further light from the kingdom of heaven: so to speak, it is neither law nor gospel. In Acts there is the further proof that the ten thousand talents would be forgiven them; therefore, to the Israelites Jesus Christ risen was sent to every one of them, to turn to Him in repentance. By virtue of the resurrection of Christ, they were treated as having done it ignorantly, till Paul applies the words of Isaiah, “that their hearts were waxed gross,” &c. Then the truth was brought out, that every saint, whether Jew or Gentile, had his life hid with Christ in God. He was dealing with the Gentiles now, as intending to judge the world in righteousness by “that Man,” &c.; not “now,” but God having appointed a day. The testimony against the idols was that God will deal with this earth again.

Prophecy always acts on the judgment of the world. There cannot be prophecy about heaven, though it may describe heavenly things. In all that I read in Rev. 22 there is nothing about rest, but blessed activity, showing us God's governmental administration. All the proper prophetic part (not descriptive, which goes up to heaven), is on earth, the place of testimony on earth, but to hear what has been heard in heaven—God on the throne acting on earth. The church's testimony, on the other hand, is about heavenly things; not the Father is spoken of in Revelation, but the throne of God, the displayed, not the hidden, joy. The people walk in the light of the city. This great secret of government—God dwells in the midst—the seat of government is in heaven when Satan cast out.

How far may the things of nature and providence be used? There seems to me some confusion between man's using nature and God's using it, because man can never take God's place of sovereignty over evil. But I make an entire distinction between faculties and man's will. God may let Satan have this place of sovereignty, as He did with Job. God can use everything, even Satan. He can reverse the effect of evil in producing good. The church is placed altogether out of the place of using the things of nature and providence. As to man's faculties, God uses tongue, limbs, &c., but I make an entire distinction between faculties and man's will. The church enters into Christ's character of subserviency, it can never get out of the place of obedience. Faith, said a philosopher, is subject to man. Then said I, I am in the place of God. Faith alone places God in the right place. I have only to look up to Him, to trust in and depend on Him. Of course the Spirit works on my understanding—it is not as a brute that He communicates with me. Now I believe that nature is always used. When the talents were given, it was according to every man's ability, therefore I should not hesitate to say, with brother C., that twelve men with different faculties might be used for opposite purposes (mental faculties a step further), for I believe God's purposes are more exactly prepared than we think. God may have given man a capacity to speak, but does the man think about the capacity? When I find the apostle speaking in power, I find he says, “I was with you in weakness,” &c. When God acts in power, He suppresses the man, and so must I, if I am His faithful servant. The vessel is prepared, as Paul was a chosen vessel. It carries a gift, it reveals Christ. Faith always trusts in the living God. As much as the gift is occupied with Christ, it shows that it is an earthen vessel.

What do I learn from the present horizon? It is useful in alarming the consciences of men, but never in awakening affections, unless to rescue something of value. Sometimes the fairest thing that appears turns out to be bad. If my horizon does not lead to heaven, it will keep back to earth. As to the growth of evil, which I recognize as much as any man, if my horizon does not lead me to heaven, it will to earth. The way evil works now is not by saying, Give up the name of Jesus, but use Jesus not as revealed by faith. So Aaron said, “To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah,” and then made a golden calf. Unless we recognize the union with Christ in the heavens, we have no security. Everything that is most amiable in Christ, and most excellent in man, will be connected together, and nothing can preserve a saint from gross denials of Christ, but seeing the church in union. There is a sentimental part in man which loves to take up something about Christ, but this is not what I learn by faith. One touch of Christ (as our brother Bellett said) does not dispel evil till the church is in heaven. There is no preaching acknowledgment of Christ but by the Holy Ghost. I must believe God as He has spoken in His word. There may seem faith, and great faith too, in approaching to God, as when man believed that Jehovah was in a calf. People talk about judging

the word, but I do say that nobody has received the word until it has judged him, and then he truly listens to it. The word judges you. I do not think we can trust ourselves to look at the horizon: we must take a Jeremiah's place to be able to do so, and God had, as it were, to frighten him into giving His word faithfully. If I look at the evil, it presses dreadfully on my spirit, and if I look on the church, I see evil where we ought to be looking for the beauty of holiness; when I do look at it, I must keep the ruin as in the back of my heart.

No man is fit to deal with evil till his heart is broken with it. When Jerusalem was prepared for blessing, it was occupied with the blessing by which they were to be drawn out, and be saved. I could not get on, and get my heart tender, when occupied with evil, though to have an understanding of what is going on is of great importance. How did the apostles act when they thought of the untoward generation? “Save yourselves from it.” Grace in Christ is the power that delivers the heart from the poor world, as in it. My heart would, I believe, be broken, if I looked at the horizon, rather than the power given of the present blessing.

Chapter 191

Unbelief on the Way

The Book of Numbers gives us the history of the journeying of the Israelites in the wilderness and of their continual rebellion. As the history of God's people, it is most encouraging, inasmuch as it exalts God and shows all His patience toward His people. Toward the end of the journey, God gives this judgment that He has not seen iniquity in Jacob.

Israel encamped at the commandment of the Lord; the ark of the covenant conducted them. God gave them in everything directions. After that the ark had directed them for three days, they complained of fatigue. It is the first time that Israel complains of the road, and the beginning of the action of unbelief, even in the hearts of the faithful. After having passed the Red Sea Israel sang the song of perfect deliverance. But when it is needful to march through a desert where there is no water nor road, and where one must depend for everything on God, flesh begins to get weary and regrets the enjoyments it had in Egypt.

We may be wearied, not of God but of what we are, and of carrying this treasure in earthen vessels; nor does this weariness estrange us from God. The Lord Jesus could say, How long shall I suffer you? The flesh, when it manifests itself in presence of God, does not complain of the weariness that it finds and from which it desires relief. Notwithstanding the difficulties and the flesh, as Christ is stronger than Satan, if we were ever in presence of God, we should discover in His sight all that which is in us, we should go forth strengthened by His grace, and the flesh would not manifest itself in an evil way. The more I am in the presence of God, the more will my heart be weary of evil. This will be a weariness and a sadness according to Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. God loves this weariness and relieves it: it proceeds from the love of Christ in us; it does not grow slack in the work nor does it yield in temptation. If I am faithful, impossible that I should not be weary of the sin that is in me.

The weariness which comes from the flesh, which does not resist, nor loves it, and yields to complaint, is not pleasing to God. (Ver. 1.) “And the LORD heard it, and his anger was kindled.” For this complaining was a rejection of Himself. They despised their Lord, though it took the form of weeping. (Ver. 20.) When the flesh is allowed activity in us, we are weary of the road and the Lord is set at naught. Such is what the flesh ever does. God takes care of everything, but the flesh finds weariness and breaks into complaint. Jehovah shows first His presence in burning fire, and consumed some in the uttermost part of the camp. It is thus Jehovah recalled them to His presence. Humiliation follows, and at Moses' intercession mercy resumes its course. There were among the people not a few whose hearts were yet in Egypt. For the journey we have need of but little; the lighter our baggage, the easier will be our march. God does not give us what would attach us to this world of sin, but what suffices for the journey toward Canaan. The worldly-minded cannot content themselves with this provision, because they have no hope of Canaan, which is not their inheritance. “And the children of Israel also wept again and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick. But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all,

beside this manna, before our eyes." (Vers. 4-6.)

They seek something else than God gave them as the suited food for the way. If God were to give His people some food which would bind them to the earth, it would be a misfortune. He gave them manna from heaven. "And the manna was as coriander seed, and the color thereof as the color of bdellium. And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it." (Vers. 7-9.) This is not our rest, nor is it here. The heart desires rest now after a fleshly sort; and the remembrance of worldly things comes up again. It is a remembrance, and not a hope. The manna that God gave day by day is the grace in Christ sufficient for the journey.

Israel do not recollect the bondage, and the bricks, and the blows in Egypt. Satan does not recall to us the miseries of the world; and God would not be satisfied in His love to us if He made us happy here below. He would not give us that which makes us forget that we are in the wilderness, traveling (not resting) here below. God would prove His grace sufficient for us. When He no longer suffices us, the activity of the flesh begins. Impossible in grace to make provision for to-morrow nor to rest on the grace of yesterday. There is no resting-place but God: absolute dependence on Himself is that which God desires. God remembers Israel every morning (allowing for the sabbath, which was no real exception) for forty years. The unbeliever may like to receive the gifts of God; the believer loves Him who gives them. If God had only given the manna once a month, He would have shown His love but once, and not every, day. God shows every moment how He loves us. To be filled with the mind of God, to depend constantly on Him, is to be in the joy of the faithful. If our eyes are not content with seeing the manna every morning, we despise the love of God. Are we happy to be wholly dependent on God?

Moses was justly displeased (ver. 10), but he failed in faith. "And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. 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." (Vers. 11-15.)

He forgets that the difficulty is before God, and that it concerns God. The disciples in the ship tossed by the tempest were afraid, as if with Jesus they could perish As God has bound up His glory with our interests, our unbelief separates our interests from the glory of God. It is the greatest chastening from God when He gives that which the flesh craves. "Say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and, ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?" (Vers.18-20.) He strikes at the same

time. “And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other aide, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp. And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was showed, the wrath of the Loan was kindled against the people, and the LORE emote the people with a very great plague. And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted.” (Vers. 31-34.) The Israelites at the sight of the quails ought to have confessed their sin and returned to the Lord. On the contrary they feasted on the quails to the satisfying of their lusts, and were punished.

Chapter 192

Varieties in the Coming Glory Answering to Christ's Titles

A very solemn subject; and I feel thoughtful as to its being brought before the mind, for if one attempts to grapple with the divine glory, there is no saying what danger we may be brought into, though in the liberty of the Spirit I may see all things. For there is liberty to those who are brought home to God, the contrast to the law. When we come to consider that the coming glory is not only ours, but the Lord's, we are like John, a little, in the Revelation, who found the book first sweet, and afterward bitter. Also Jeremiah said, “Thy words I found, and did eat them,” &c.; but he was soon found in a different way. Whenever there is a reception of God's truth, whilst talking of the church, instead of to the church, it is bitter. I see that there is a sadness in the knowledge of the future which some of us may not have counted upon. Jeremiah, prepared by sorrow, would so prophesy; and we shall find preparedness of mind for the future by sensibility with the sorrows of the church. If we let a trouble come in between us and God, we shall break down. If God comes in between us and the trouble, we get strength to sustain it and, like Paul, bear it. We suffer the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. The moon shines upon the earth, but there is always the sun, behind it, giving light to the moon. Paul found everything slipping away, as in bitterness of spirit, shown in the Epistle to Timothy, and he clings to Timothy always.

It is not surprising, then, that we should feel. Jeremiah feeling the sorrows was a fit vessel to wail over Jerusalem, as expressed in Lamentations. If there is not the energy of faith, there is not the support of faith. The first may fail, but the dependence of faith cannot be taken from us. In Psa. 42, concerning the affliction, “Where is thy God?” the word is, Hope in God—nothing else. He should praise Him for the help of His countenance; he knew it would shine again, and he could afterward say, He” is the health of my countenance.” Here God comes in between the soul and the trouble, and there is help. Hope was exercised when in the midst of affliction, knowing God would shine on him, and then he would reflect it. “To go up with those who keep holiday “was demonstration of joy. It is good for us to look out for the glory; a secret looking for it makes us more sensible of evil, but yet kept in communion. Anticipation of evil would deaden, it would unsanctify the heart, unless we could connect all with God. It is the contrivance of Satan to fill the mind with the evil; but if I look clear out of the evil into the glory, I get rest and peace. “Be not afraid with any amazement” — “be not afraid of their terror.” Satan seeks to give evil its power over the mind; and, looking at it, I get either insensibility or terror.

There is a blessing in meeting thus together. The world shut out for a season, we can have enjoyment of fellowship, each saying, “I will hear what the Lord will say.” Feeling as a man failure and sorrow, here is a certain concentration of life gathered up that has set on the heart with better application of what God sees. It is a sort of epitome of the state of things which has set the heart on the road of service the Lord would have us pursue.

I think we are apt as the general rule to lose sight of the distinct place of the state of the church. There is something very peculiar and special in the blessing of the church of God: more and more we should recognize the distinct place it has. The vast variety of the glory of Christ cannot he

grasped by the mind. The essential position of the church of God is knowledge by faith. We are associated with Christ in hope upon the throne, and as our brother spoke largely of Joseph, in the thought that Joseph's employment, before he had the strength of the throne, was to he that of an interpreter of dreams; so surely it is now the place of the church to interpret the purposes of Christ, for we have His mind. Joseph was the interpreter of God's mind, as Christ is the wisdom of God. When glory is displayed, it will not require this wisdom. A sample of that glory is named in Heb. 6— “Having tasted of the powers of the world to come.” Maintenance of unity will then be by power, not a principle.

Tradition did not see this; but God has made the distinction as wide as possible between His own inspired word and the writings of the Fathers. This had been permitted, I think (for nothing can be more unlike the pure word of God than their writings), to show the difference between the treasure and the interpretation. Thus we understand that the Spirit of God is that alone which the church is dependent on. The writings of the Fathers contain the greatest quantity of nonsensical trash, that could anywhere be found in like compass.

Men confound inspiration with gifts. The agency of the Holy Ghost in guiding may be quite as real as the apostles when they were inspired, but it is not of the same character. What business have I to speak in the church of God, but in virtue of the Holy Ghost? It is not a fresh revelation. We are stewards of the manifold grace of God to “speak as the oracles of God.”

One of our brethren spoke of Genesis having in view heavenly and earthly glory. I agree that it is prospective of the future, but cannot agree that it gives a full view of the future glory. In Genesis we get earth begun—not a word is disclosed to me of heaven. I hear afterward that the sons of God shouted for joy. The Christ of God is before all time. The Gospel of John is before Genesis; in it I get the genealogy of the Son—in Genesis the genealogy of the earth. In John I find everything that Christ is, from being Son of God, through every scene up to the future glory. There is only one point in which the world comes in here— “The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin (not the sins) of the world,” a relation founded on blood. John only talks of “Jews,” but as putting them aside. I find everything the Christ was from God, and afterward every name and title. Christ baptizes with the Holy Ghost, the only symptom of the church down here.

I find Christians not connected with anything whatever, but before the world was. “Of his fullness have we all received.” The church is thus not connected with heaven and earth, but with Him who was before the world was. No wonder the church is displayed as having all grace in Jesus. I get the secret standing of the church. I do not yet see anything ever brought into that place of the union before the world was, and all the glory gathered round us. I distinguish this from all displays of power. Even in Abraham, I find him heir of certain things, but each a properly distinct thing. If God chooses to place His glory in the heavens, but a place of displayed glory, different from communion with Himself, I doubt not if the knowledge of the Trinity does not come in. The church is led into the knowledge of the very Godhead. This is unintelligible to a Jew, who has the earth for an abiding-place for man. The Spirit of God might show all to a Jew that is to happen in a covert way, it might have been shadowed imperfectly; but all this has nothing to do with our fellowship with the Father. The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of promise, but earth is not the home of the church, though she is displayed here. There is something superior even to the display of God in the church, the vessel of the power down here.; the place nearest to God with Christ is a mystery. The

more I shall understand what I am to God, I learn the lowest place here on earth is the one for the saint. I see this in Jesus: what distinguished Him from all other men was that He lived by every word of God, in unceasing unremitting dependence. Satan tempted Him to take the place of a Son, but He would not be tempted to depart from that of a servant. He would do nothing without a command.

Everything, therefore, is made to wait on this Man; as Man He is perfect in the fullness of glory. (Phil. 2) As we become emptied of self shall we become depositaries of power. The power of divine life is death to the creature; it is only when the church has been brought through death, she will be the depositary of power, morally now, actually by-and-by. Christ would not establish His relationship with earth, till death and the resurrection. Altogether a distinct thing is this from His communion with the Father. His relationship with this earth was unaccomplished till after His death. I do not believe that this is a dispensation at all; it may be a parenthesis, but it is the gathering out of the elect out of all, Jew or Gentile, into Him who is above all dispensations.

John's Gospel, beyond all others, comes out as revealing the divine person, &c. The fullness of the divine nature is brought out: two distinct things—what Christ was in Himself, and communion with God; also the place on earth and the place in glory. What dispensation was Christ in on the earth? No doubt He became a man and under law to accomplish redemption; but what was Christ in Himself? The church also can only be known by the knowledge of Himself. Incomprehensible, supposing the church all saints. Take it up in Ephesians: it is the body of the Head that looks down on all others. God's ways are suspended till the church is come in, and none can understand this but by the Spirit. The essential place of the church is above in the Son of God. If I were to own Christ as Messiah only, I should deny that I know Him to be in the Father or ascended on high. Our essential place is union with Christ, and all our difference in glory must flow from this.

I feel thoughtful about the subject before us. I am impressed with the thought that we should begin at the other end, even the love of God. Let us receive end believe the thoughts of God; but do not bring our thoughts to them, though the place it brings us into is the place of reciprocity. When we get into this as recipients, it is safe. I was endeavoring to show that the Gospel of John took the church higher than the creation; by the way in which the church is united to Christ, she is partaker of His fullness; but the moment I get into the Revelation the church passes, for 1 get into that which is anterior to creation. It is not “God created,” but “God was.” The mystery of the incarnation was not so much the glory given to Christ as the divine nature united to the human, and consequent on this, Christ passing sentence of death on all that was of man. We look up to be sharers with His glory which He had with the Father before the world was. We are brought into unity with Christ the Creator. The mystery of the church is God's association with it by being life—our union to Him in the power of this life in a double way—taking it up into the glory which Christ had before the world was. The moment it was Christ, the Head of the church, the Holy Ghost came down from, the Head, the necessary power of uniting. Christ says; Whom I will send to you from the Father, and therefore reveals the Father. Where He says, Whom the Father, He comes as a witness of all the work and power of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost is a demonstrator of the name in which it was shed. The Holy Ghost shed abroad in our hearts gives the power of divine love. To enjoy God as born of God, whether Jewish glory or heavenly, I cannot enter into the free-heartedness of that which is connected with God, not merely

as having a new nature, but the Holy Ghost is there. Throughout the varieties of glory there most be throughout a consciousness of God's love. There is no such thing as loving God unless one is born again; but it seems to me Rom. 5:5, this to speak of the love of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. There is here the truth that God the Holy Ghost is there according as His divine power hath given (2 Peter 1:3. δεδωρημ■νης translated actively);, (ver. 4, δεδ■ρηται translated passively): a sentence that cannot be translated, because God is the giver and the gilt; you cannot make grammar of this, for it is beyond the reach of human tongue. “He that loveth not knoweth not God.” You cannot separate God's love to you and having love to Him. If His love is shed abroad, it enables us to enjoy that love. It is only upon the principle of annihilation of self that we can go into the subject, for it is infinite. As the apostle says, “The breadth, and length and depth,” &e., and finished with saying it is past finding out. Inasmuch as the Holy Ghost comes down, and shows us Jesus in present various glories, He is Himself the very witness of these things.

Now in the confusion of tongues, instead of a servant using a gift responsibly, having the modesty to remain in his place, some take the place of a master, as we see in 1 Corinthians. When I see Christ in His various glories—not the display of the glories, but the fellowship with it—it is out of the displayed glory altogether, which He comes down to take. When I see the vastness of the glory to which the Holy Ghost witnesses, I see that there is something beyond the reach of all knowledge, even fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Son in subjection is equally the Son of the Father. I can traverse all this glory, see Him in the lowest humiliation, and follow Him as King of kings, &c., &c. till He at last give up the kingdom (and this never touches His fellowship with the Father); and wherever we are placed, it is because of His place in it. After traversing all the glory, I can never get higher than God Himself. God is love, and His glory cannot be greater than Himself. What says the apostle when he was in the third heavens, and beheld things unutterable?

We say, “the blessed Jesus,” and so on. When the Holy Ghost speaks of Him He never gives Him epithets; and this seems excellent, for, after all, they are only names, and cannot describe Him. The Holy Ghost, thus naming Jesus, leaves the results to be produced in people's hearts, to have our affections brought out to Him.

“The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands;” and the Son going down into the dust of death, He takes up the church with Him into the same place. In John 17 Christ takes everything as a recipient from His Father, and yet declares His own essential glory with Him. “Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” Now this goes up higher than the creation of the world, yet it leads the thoughts to this truth, that Jesus was ever the object of the Father's love. In Matt. 11, “I thank thee, O Father,” &c. Here was counsel, “It seemed good in thy sight.” He thanked the Father for the very thing that broke His heart. He submitted to all that was in obedience to God. None could know His own being but the Father, and none but He could reveal the Father. He was so bright that none but the Father could fully know Him. We get into the very height (when the eon reveals the Father). Then, “Come to me, all ye that are weary,” &c. He is Himself the nearest to the heart that comes to Him.

I see in John 17 that there was a glory He had “before the foundation of the world,” yet as Man it was given to Him. When Jesus was upon the earth, He said, “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” But when He speaks of their having the Holy Ghost, He says, “Ye shall know that I am in my Father, ye in me, and I in you.” The unity He had with the church, the

like unity there was between Himself and the Father. John 17 is a conversation, and in the presence of the church, between the Father and the Son respecting the church. I get now more insight into the occupation of thought between the Father and the Son. He takes the creature up into. the glory wherewith He had glorified the Father, and gives Him all the words the Father had given Him. He has come to me, not only with a message of the Father's love, but He has taken me up to hear what the Father says. The Father was seen in Christ when on earth, but Christ could not say, Ye are in Him, because they had not the Holy Ghost. He came necessarily in a different character after the resurrection of Christ. The church is brought up into unity with the Father on the ground of unity with Christ: After Christ goes down into death He takes us up with Him. This is not Messiah's glory, but all that God had communicated to Christ. I am brought into this apprehension; I am brought near enough to hear what He said to the Father. Christ closes the chapter by saying, “The glory thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one.” The delicacy of our Lord's love is shown in the tenderest manner, that “the world may know [not that I have loved them, but] that the Father loved them as he loved the Son.”

I do not see in this chapter the Lord speaks beyond those who heard Him and those who believe on Him through their word. He stops at the church (though I do not speak now as a teacher). The brethren should stop short and learn. I cannot reason from our element, but only believe. I regret all inferences from scripture, I cannot have faith in an inference, I can only have faith in revelation. Inferences may be true, and I am thankful to receive them as leading to farther examination. In Ephesians it is, “In ages to come we shall show the extraordinary riches of his grace” to others, who will then learn the exceeding riches of His grace. Ephesians is occupied with the glory as displayed. There are certain things down here of which I am not capable. Paul heard things which it was not lawful for a man to utter. But do not let us confine our souls. Do I get nothing? A great deal. I know there are things of which a man is incapable. My soul enters into a state of expectancy. Every word of revelation corresponds with former truth; whereas man's thoughts always lead, sooner or later, from Christ. Whatever the Holy Ghost reveals, He never takes me from the revealed Christ.

It is remarkable the subject Peter was employed to write upon never required him to use the word Son of God, though fully believing and implying it; because his service was to declare that a Man had been raised from the dead, and that glory had been given. This is a just answer to the prayer in Ephesians, “The God of our Lord Jesus Christ;” that is, Jesus Christ looked on as a man—one raised by the power of God. The grand subject and great truth is man raised from the dead, and received to glory. This is founded on God, the Father of glory. It is a question of the glory of the inheritance.

In chapter 2 we are seen upon earth “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Now I get the union of Jew and Gentile for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Now what is the prayer? It is that Christ may dwell in their hearts, &c. Here it is not merely inheritance, but state: “To him be glory in the church,” &c. Mark here what is said. Men quote this text, leaving out the great truth, “that it is according to his power which worketh in us.” What do we find, having unfolded this high calling? what is the exhortation that flows out? Why, that I should be lowly. As Paul says, “I, as prisoner, beseech you,” &c. God necessarily identifies Himself with His own unity in which He dwells. Christ cannot have two bodies.

I find two characters in this place—the bride and children. “Christ loved the church.” Whenever I find gifts, they are not for the display of power to the world, but gifts for the edifying of the body. There I get, “He gave himself for us, that he might present unto himself a glorious church.” Inasmuch as He presents this church to Himself, it is surely at the commencement of the millennium. And who will be the witnesses? Surely the saints in the millennium. They do not find their place in the bride. What God's intention is about them, that He does reveal. The Holy Ghost snaps everything that is of man, and then brings in something new. The association the Holy Ghost gave the apostle Paul to the Thessalonians, “Ye are my crown,” differed from that where He speaks about his “sister's son.”

The soul can enter into God's presence but by the blood of the Lamb.

As to the Epistle to the Galatians I cannot see anything further than that they are the children, and have the inheritance, but I see nothing to show that there is a higher glory. What I dread is, saying that because they are sons they are to have all the same glory. I throw out these hints: Paul says, “That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” It is plain that the saints who lived before the coming of Christ were adopted as sons, though they had not the Spirit of adoption. There is the difficulty, the sons having the glory; the curse taken by Christ, that we should have the adoption of sons. God had been forbearing up to that time.

The subject in the Epistle to the Hebrews is priesthood, not Jew and Gentile in the unity of the church. In Hebrews, properly speaking, it is His official glory. I do not rise to the truth that the Father loved the Son, and gave all things into His hands. No mention of the Father in Hebrews or Rev. 1 find promises to Abraham—blessed promises—and accomplished in his Son; but I find no mention of unity with the Father and the Son. I am not carried on to the place John takes me, where it is important we should feel our own place in God's love. As to the point in Hebrews, that “without us they should not be made perfect,” this is according to the whole Epistle. I do not see the perfection goes beyond the Epistle. Where are we come to? Not the Father, but Mount Zion—spirits of just men made perfect—general assembly—the church of the first-born—but not brought into fellowship with the Father, though I do not doubt this. As regards the place we are set in, it is in heaven.

A brother asked how far the living creatures had the character of the church. It is assumed to be the church because of Rev. 4; 5, where also we get the four heads of creation. I cannot admit this; but that the church, by associating with Christ, may be put ministeringly in that place in a much higher way than the angels. All this rises to the throne, but surely not into fellowship with the Father and the Son. We must not look at them absolutely as the church, though there is intelligence and glory, but relatively the church may fulfill this office in service.

The variety of glory would launch itself in all that Christ is. The Son of man shall come in His own glory, the glory of the Father and the holy angels; He is glorified in the church, also the Man set over all. These are glories which are merely dispensational as Son of David, for instance in Zion, city of God. In Psa. 132 the temple was then far away. He brings up the ark there. “The Lord hath chosen Zion. This is my rest forever.” Zion became the center of the earthly dominion. Christ's glory is of a general double character— “First-born from the dead,” Head of creation, Head of the church, and all fullness in Him. The church, in that part of the vision, shall see Christ as He is, the

secret delight of the Father.

What was the hidden manna? That which was laid up as a memorial for Israel to know how God had fed them in the wilderness—a memorial of the ways of grace; and I see none will partake of this but the saint, who has been feeding on the manna that came down from heaven. On such a subject as this we may say, The half has not been told us, as the queen of Sheba did, and the danger is of dragging it down, rather than getting into the height. There are a thousand rays of God, and we cannot enter into all at once. “The Father loved us” is the special place.

As to the varieties of glory, I see some subordinate. We turn to Revelation, and see the living creatures and twenty-four elders settled in their places round the throne: God there shines out without veil; and, further, certain persons who praise God day and night. Secondly, some are on the sea of glass—a certain position each set in, which seem to show different places in the glory. I see two things: the work df Christ, whereby we are all brought into common acceptance in Him; but I also find Jesus appointing their places, to some one thing—to some another; for He takes the place of a servant. We must not meddle with God's counsels. Christ says,” It is not mine to give.” The right and left hand He gives to those for whom it is prepared, to Paul one place, and to Peter another. Also the work of the Spirit of Christ in me prepare. In one case the talents are given absolutely; in another, the possession according to their ability. One is connected with God's sovereignty, the other with man's responsibility. The talents brought out, in Matthew, exclusively God's sovereignty forming the vessel. In the other Gospel the pounds give responsibility. The twelve apostles are to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. I, as a Gentile, have nothing to do with this—it is a special arrangement. Whilst the principles of grace hold, the Lord can say, After all, I do what I will with mine own. As to the hundred and forty-four thousand, I cannot help seeing they are such as are faithful followers of the Lamb, who are not of the church. They are near enough to catch the song of heaven, but are not in heaven; the harvest follows, and those on the sea of glass. Three classes are in Rev. 20. Then begins earth's blessing under the reign of Christ and the glorified; not only of the Jews here below, but the spared of the nations.

“I saw the new Jerusalem descending from heaven,” (Rev. 21:2). This is the eternal scene. When repeated in verses 10, 11, it is the millennial retrospect; and it is described as “having the glory of God” —His glory put upon the church. There was what it was which came down from heaven, had its character from God. He could not clothe it with less than His own glory in hope of which we boast. The nearer we are, the more humble we shall be. The nations walk in the light of the city; the world will know that we have the same glory as Christ. Holy energies connected with this, but not affections. All this description of the heavenly city is so wonderful as almost to exhaust my mind in contemplating the splendor; but splendor is not rest. I have my mind on the stretch in Revelation—power, service, golden streets; but I do not find what gives my soul rest. It is another class of blessing, a most blessed display, but it is not rest. I find God on the throne, but I do not find the Trinity; I find the seven Spirits, and Jesus coming forth, but I should say it is altogether dispensational, something that governs and brings blessings on the earth. I have all the intelligence of the throne, and, last, Christ manifested as King of kings. I find all connected with dispensation, but no connection as between Father and Son, as in John 17.

In the Gospels we get Christ acting down here in Acts another part, the last dealings of the Son of God with Israel, while He hangs over them. It is remarkable, in Peter's sermon (Acts 3), he tells the

Jews, “Ye are children of the fathers.” There he says, If they repent, Christ will come back.

In the Epistle of Peter I find the house modeled, sustained, guided; in Revelation the dread of worldliness, and looking into the world, in Jude, warning that all was going down. I see the Holy Ghost sometimes addressing the church about the church, but the converse of this in Daniel. This is a vast difference. Daniel was not a prophet, addressing Israel, but gives a long story about them. The church is the depositary of all.

Chapter 193

Women's Work

The part that women take in all Christ's history is very instructive, especially to them. The activity of public service, that which may be called “work,” belongs naturally to men (all that appertains to what is generally termed ministry), although women share a very precious activity in private. But there is another side of Christian life which is particularly theirs, and that is personal and loving devotedness to Christ. It is a woman, who anointed the Lord while the disciples murmured; women, who were at the cross, when all except John had forsaken Him; women, who came to the sepulcher, and who were sent to announce the truth to the apostles who had gone after all to their own home; as women before ministered to the Lord's need. And indeed this goes farther. Devotedness in service is perhaps the part of man; but the instinct of affection, that which enters more intimately into Christ's position, and is thus more immediately in connection with His sentiments, in closer communion with the sufferings of His heart—this is the part of woman: assuredly a happy part. The activity of service for Christ puts man a little out of this position, at least if the Christian is not watchful. Everything has, however, its place. I speak of that which is characteristic; for there are women who have served much, and men who have felt much. Note also here, what I believe I have remarked, that this clinging of heart to Jesus is the position where the communications of true knowledge are received. The first full gospel is announced to the poor woman that was a sinner who washed His feet, the embalming for His death to Mary, our highest position to Mary Magdalene, as the communion Peter desired was to John who leaned in His bosom. And here the women have a large share.

Chapter 194

The Elements of the World

The institutions of the law were adapted to man in the flesh. A magnificent temple, beautiful vestments, a God present to the senses upon earth, though man was not permitted to draw near to Him, trumpets, visible sacrifices; all these things were ordained that man in the flesh might be in relationship with God, according to the elements of the world, which are suited to man in the flesh. Christians are a heavenly people, they see not the objects they adore, except by faith. God is worshipped in spirit and in truth, not with bulls and goats. The Spirit reveals to them that which they see not; they know that Christ is ascended into heaven, having finished the work which the Father gave Him to do; and the heart rises up into the heavenly temple, by the grace of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, there to adore God.

Thus before redemption and the gift of the Spirit the heirs themselves were as children, bound to accomplish an external worship, to offer beasts. The cleansing was an external purifying of the body by water, the sacrifices—types for the time then present—could not purify the conscience from sin; they were not offerings of praise, and thanksgiving, and adoration, founded upon the accomplished sacrifice of Christ. It was all “the elements of the” world,” which were adapted to man in this world.

Every religion accomplished in external ceremonies, and composed of such things, is but “the elements of the world,” and resembles heathen worship. The favor of God is sought by means which an unconverted man can use, quite as well as, or even better than, one that is converted; for his conscience does not make him feel that these things cannot cleanse the soul. Those who seek to obtain righteousness by works are greatly irritated against those who have peace with God through faith, for this declares all their labor to be in vain. There was but one city where the Gentiles persecuted Paul in which the Jews did not stir them up to do it. They boasted in what man could do, and maintained their own glory; they were not willing to see it trampled under foot. But faith gives the glory of salvation to God, and seeks in a new life, the spring of which is love, to glorify Him by obedience and the fulfillment of his will.

The law was, then, a schoolmaster until Christ, the promised Seed. In its forms and in its ceremonies it resembled the religion of the Gentiles. God, while ever maintaining the perfect rule for the conduct of man and the unity of the Godhead, yet condescended to adapt Himself, in the worship He ordained, to the ways of the spirit of man, coming near to him, in order to make manifest whether it were possible for man in the flesh to walk with God. Man has not kept God's rule, but he has clung to the ceremonies, in order to make out by them a righteousness of his own—a way that is morally easy, since he can pursue it without governing his passions, but which becomes, if conscience is aroused, an insupportable yoke. Alas! it is always thus, even in our own day.

But when the fullness of time was come—praise be to God!—after man had shown himself to be wholly corrupt and without restraint when he had no law, and, when he possessed it with all its accompanying privileges, had broken it, not being able to keep it, even while desiring to do

it—then, in the sovereign love of God, the promised Seed came: God sent His only-begotten Son, the second Man, the last Adam, the Word who was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

Marvelous grace! God Himself was manifest in flesh, that He might give Himself, and might, after having been raised from the dead, become Head and source of a new spiritual race, instead of the evil and perverse race. He becomes the life of all believers; they are redeemed to enjoy the glory with Him. Old Testament believers will, without doubt, enjoy the glory, partaking in the result of the redemption wrought by Christ, although they formed no part of His body upon earth, for the thing itself was not come. The promise had been given, as we have seen; now it was accomplished, not fully, but nevertheless accomplished as to the resurrection of Christ, when life and incorruptibility were, brought to light, and were preached through the gospel. For the gospel announced, not the promise, but the fulfillment of the promise, in the advent of Christ, come down to accomplish the work of redemption.

God sent His Son, who came and took the form of a man down here. Born of a woman, under the law, He took His place in the world in two relationships: with man, through the woman; with the Jews, as born under the law; and every one, when converted, puts himself under it, unless, indeed, he be already there in spirit. This is very useful to the soul, as it thus learns its weakness. Redemption places all, that is, all who believe in Christ and in His work, under the benefit of that work. Whether they be Jews or Gentiles, they are redeemed before God, who has accepted the work of His Son, according to His own righteousness, even as He gave Him in His love, in order that those who were under the law might be delivered from it, and might receive the adoption.

Christ has obtained for the one and the other His own place before God. When He rose from the dead, He said to Mary Magdalene, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” Precious and marvelous words, which had never been uttered before His resurrection. But now all was accomplished: their sins had been borne and put away; God, in all that He is, had been glorified; their persons were redeemed; and, according to the sure purpose of God, Christ had acquired glory for His own through His sufferings. He could announce it to them, though the time was not yet, come for glorifying those whom He had already introduced into the position in which He Himself stood, as Man and as Son of God, before His Father. What a word Brethren of the Son of God! If God was His Father, He was their Father; if He was His God, He was their God. They were not only pardoned and justified—already an immense blessing—but introduced into the relationship with God in which He Himself stood.

Was He any longer under the law? No surely. Under the law He had died, had borne its curse, had fully glorified God upon the dreadful cross; but that was all passed, and now He was risen, to bring His own redeemed ones, who were made partakers of the life in which He stood in the presence of God, into the glory in which He soon would be, but for which they must wait till He should return to take them there, where they would be forever with Him? made perfectly like Himself. All that gave them the right to enjoy these privileges was now finished; and though the time had not yet come for entering there, the Spirit could be given so that they could enjoy the privileges in their hearts, and understand the position to which they belonged. The privileges could be announced, and this is what the apostle does. He could not, it is true, unfold them all, for their subjection to the law had dimmed their eyes to the understanding of divine things; but he could at least make their position

clear, that they might be able to understand them.

Faith, then, places the believers in the position of sons with God, according to the value and efficacy of the redemption wrought by Christ Jesus; and because they were sons, God had sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Thus the believer is no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Under the law believers, although born of God, were but as servants in position; now Jews and Gentiles together are sons, according to the position of Him who has redeemed them. The elements of the world were adapted to man in the flesh: the Spirit puts us in communion with the Father in heaven as His sons, united to Him who is risen from the dead. As Jews they were dead to the law by the death of Christ. The Gentiles, redeemed by His death, took up that yoke only when it had been broken for the Jews, and that by the death of Christ.

But the apostle takes up a still stronger ground. The Galatians were Gentiles, and had been as heathen under these same elements of the world. Not knowing God, they did service to them who by nature were no gods. Their worship was necessarily according to the, elements of the world—what man in the flesh could offer: they could not conceive of anything else but a ceremonial worship, the observance of days and the offering of beasts. The true God condescended to place Himself upon this ground in His relations with man, as has been said. He drew near to man where man was. Nevertheless upon this footing He did not reveal Himself. He hid Himself behind the veil, though He made a covenant with man; He gave a law which was to be observed, while He remained behind the veil; and He ordained sacrifices, most beautiful and instructive types of the true sacrifice of Christ, which is of eternal value.

Everything was made according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount, and was thus a type of the heavenly things; but the things themselves were only earthly things, worldly elements, suited to mortal man, and which mortal man, converted or unconverted, could accomplish—principles of the world according to the need of the human heart, and that which man could offer in the hope of propitiating his God. God suited Himself to man, while hiding Himself, and proposing to man that he should accomplish human righteousness; but He put an end to the whole of this system when He sent His Son, and more especially by His death.

The law came in to prove whether man in the flesh was able to please God: but the law was broken, never observed. Moreover, the promise was despised, and the promised One rejected. The cross ended the system which put God in relation with man in the flesh, or rather which showed such a relationship to be impossible; and, the work of redemption being accomplished, God began with the Second Adam, risen from among the dead, spiritual relationships by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. In His sovereign grace He places those who believe in the same position as His own Son. Marvelous, and for us how blessed a testimony to the value of the redemption He has accomplished!

Yet these poor Christians now desire to return to the weak and beggarly elements from which, when heathens, they had been delivered, through the knowledge of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! Mark well that all their ceremonies are but the same thing as paganism, the elements of the world, and their practices are heathen practices. We learn this here as doctrine; but the history of the church shows it to us as a fact. Holy days and holy places were taken from the heathen, who had holy places and holy days on which they held festivals in honor of deified men, such as

Theseus, Hercules, and others. The names of saints were afterward attached to these places and days, and the saints were celebrated instead of the demi-gods.

Saint Augustine has told us what was done, and how it began. He sought to put an end to these evil habits, not to the days, but to what was practiced upon them, for they got drunk in the churches. This occurred in Africa, and the same thing was done elsewhere. The feast of the Nativity was the worst of all the pagan festivals, and it is still celebrated among the heathen in the East. Not being able to prevent those who, emerging from paganism, called themselves Christians, from continuing the disorder practiced at this festival, the leaders of the church decided to put in its place the Nativity of Christ.

Augustine also says, respecting the memory of the saints who took the place of Theseus, &c., that the church thought it better for people to get drunk in honor of a saint than in honor of a demon. It is certain that Christ was not born in December. The time at which Mary went to visit Elizabeth proves this, if compared with the order of the twenty-four courses of the priests. Zacharias' was the eighth course.

In taking up again from the Jews these elements of the world, the Galatians were returning to their former heathen practices. Until the coming of Christ these things had an important meaning; they were figures of that of which Christ has been, or is now, the reality: moreover they tested man, and showed that he cannot walk with God as man in the flesh. But when once Christ was come, the substance was there, and the figures had no more ground of existence, the test had been already applied. What is done in fulfillment of the law is but the denial of the fulfillment of all in Christ, heathen elements of the world, in which the Galatians walked when they lived as heathen in the world.

Chapter 195

Ye Serve the Lord Christ

Two things give character to all true service in the present day. One is, the world has rejected Christ; the other, God has rejected the world. (John 12:31.)

These two facts, if practically acted upon, would materially alter the character of that which professes to be the service of God, as well as the labors of many who render true service of God in some respects, but whose chief efforts are now misdirected. “In every good work doing the will of God.” A work may be good in itself, but if it is not according to the will of God for the present moment, then it loses its savor to Him, and is deprived of its true value.

In Rom. 12 we have a complete summary of different characters of service. It embraces every member of the assembly of God, assigning to each his proper sphere of service. All are first exhorted to present their bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is their intelligent service. (Chap. 5:1.) This gives the positive side; placing ourselves absolutely in the hands of another, which is the first requisite of a true servant—intelligent but absolute obedience. In verse 2 we have the negative side, “not conformed to this world;” and, as the certain result of devotion to good on the one side and separation from evil on the other, a practical acquaintance with the Master's will is obtained “proving what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” To admire a truth is not enough; it is only in practice that one proves its reality. “He that doeth the will of God shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.”

In 2 Sam. 4 17, 19 we find three classes of servants, each rendering to David in the day of his rejection intelligent and acceptable service, and illustrating the New Testament truths that “all members have not the same office,” and “there are gifts differing according to the grace given to each” —truths practically ignored in this day of one-man ministry, when all the gifts are assumed to be possessed by one individual, who is not supposed to receive them from their true source—an ascended Christ—but by humanly ordained and appointed means, frequently “of man,” as well as “by man.”

lst.—Ittai, the Gittite (chap. 15:20), a stranger and an exile, has his heart attracted to the person of David, who tests the professed devotion of his servant by putting before him his own portion as that of his followers, warning him that an outcast and a wanderer in this scene is the only prospect before him. In spirit he says, “The world hateth me and it will also hate you.” How beautifully this test brings out the depth of Ittai's devotion, as he replies, “As Jehovah liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in life or in death, even there also will thy servant be.” Practically he put his life in his hands, and this self-abnegation is the first grand requisite of a true servant. It is this the apostle speaks of when he says, “We who live are always delivered unto death.... and are made the off-scouring of the world.” He is willing to leave Jerusalem with all its attractions to be a servant, and a homeless wanderer.

God in His sovereignty called out, in a distinct manner, certain men to be in the wilderness with Christ and for Christ. Home, friends, wealth, position, ambition, all that man as pan values most,

most be relinquished when there is a distinct call from God. We have a striking example of this in Saul of Tarsus. Peter, too, must leave his nets, boats and fishes at the call of Christ. Obedience to such a call will never be accompanied by ease and comfort after a worldly sort. Alas! the spurious servant of the present day seeks to find a lodgment in the widespreading branches of the mustard tree of profession. The “minister” must wait on “his ministry,” “the teacher” on his teaching, “the exhorter” on exhortation: that is to say, the Lord's service is to be the distinct business of his life—all other things being subservient to this one end. He may make tents, though tent-making is not his object. This is important to notice, for some imagine that a trite servant ought not at any time to be engaged in a worldly calling. The example of him who was “not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles” teaches otherwise. “These hands,” he could honorably say, “have ministered to my necessities and to those who are with me.”

In closing the first list of gifts and class of servants (Rom. 12:6-8), he adds (ver. 9), “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good,” in other words telling us that a “loving heart,” a “separated path,” and a “devoted walk,” are grand moral requisites for a true servant.

2nd.—But not only has God called out some distinctly to be His servants here, by leaving everything that would in the least interfere with his service, but we read of others, who in the exercise of “brotherly love” are “not to be slothful in business, or in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.” Zeal, fervency, patience, joy and dependence are to be exhibited in service towards those who belong to God, the circle of Christ's affections, the members of His body, the church, which He loved, and for which He died and now lives. This will call forth service of a very varied character.

The action of Shobi, Machir and Barzillai, in 2 Sam. 17:27-29, furnishes a beautiful illustration of the second class of servants. Their service is as grateful in its way and season as that of Ittai, though differing in its nature and character. They do not go out, leaving everything to follow a rejected king; but they place their wealth, their beds, their basins and their food, at the disposal of David and those who shared his rejection. “The people,” say they, “are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.”

This carries our thoughts to the faithful Gains of New Testament days, and to the devoted women who

ministered to the Lord of their substance. A cup of cold water given in the name of Christ is treasured up by Him in sweet remembrance until that day when “Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of one of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me” will recall many a long-forgotten act of “brotherly love.”

This, beloved, has a very practical application. It may be I cannot evangelize, teach or exhort, but this I can and ought to do—hold all that I have in this world absolutely at the command, control and disposal of my Master, reckoning neither wealth, home, nor comfort as my own, but as a “good steward of the manifold grace of God” using all for Christ. Experience proves that nothing conduces more to the well-being of saints in any locality than the practical activities of that love that looks not upon its, own things, but the things of others.

3rd.—But some may say, “I have no special gifts wherewith to serve the Lord, nor house nor means to place at the disposal of those that are His.” I reply that the Lord Himself in Luke 12 distinguishes between a “waiting” servant (ver. 37) and a “working” servant. (Ver. 43.) He serves the former, and rewards the latter; but both are equally termed servants. Paul in writing to Timothy says, of the crown of righteousness, that it is for those who love the appearing of their Lord. The heart that is freed from itself can “weep with those that weep,” and if done in communion with the Master's mind, it is a service of a very grateful and acceptable kind to His heart. What He desires is that our bodies should be the lamps through which the light of companionship with a rejected Lord is seen.

Such service is beautifully exemplified in the demeanor and conduct of Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 19:24, &c.), during the absence of his beloved though rejected king. He had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes from the day the king departed until the day when he came again in peace. During the whole term of David's exile, this devoted servant, unable to follow him in his place of rejection and reproach, or to minister to him of his substance, was the standing witness to the fact that, though actually present in Jerusalem, his heart was “in the wilderness” with his beloved master. His body was the practical expression of this truth.

Let me ask, beloved, is it so with us? Do our bodies express the fact that we are dead and risen with Christ, and that our only desire is to be with Him where He is? Mephibosheth might have cultivated the favor of the usurper on the throne, but he cared for neither position, appearance, nor ridicule. Wealth too was disregarded by him, for in verse 30 he can afford to say, “Let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.” Let us test our ways, beloved. Are we “like unto men that wait for their Lord"? May we each earnestly desire and ask.

Lord, awaken in our hearts the desire to be Thine, only Thine, wholly Thine; to use all that we have and are in Thy service, and to wait for Thy coming again.

H. N.

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