BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 14

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 14, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

203 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume 14

On 1 Thessalonians 1

The coming of the Lord characterizes both these Epistles, which are the capital seat of that great truth. Of early date in the writings of the apostle, they bespeak simplicity, freshness and vigor in the saints addressed. They warmly, overflowingly, answer to their hearts in kindred tones, but so as to lead on and deepen them. Hence the informal manner, not didactic but practically interweaving that blessed hope with every topic, with every duty, with all sources or motives of joy and sorrow so as to imbue the inner man and outer ways of all the saints day by day.

Those of Thessalonica, it appears from Acts 17:6, 7, had from the first received strong impressions of the kingdom. But they needed instruction on that large and fruitful theme, which, like every other revealed truth, affords ample room not only for unintelligent mistake but also for baneful error. Both in time wrought among these saints; and as the first epistle supplied that which sprang from mere ignorance, the latter corrected what was unequivocally false and mischievous. In the two epistles the presence or coming of the Lord is carefully distinguished from the day of the Lord, their true characters set out distinctly, and their due relation to one another explained. The need for this is as urgent now as then; for though the error was then both recent and active, it is shown to be grounded in a certain preparedness of the heart for it, inasmuch as to this day there is the same propensity to stray similarly, and the same difficulty in appropriating the revelation of God. The commentators ancient and modern are dull in seizing the different sides of the truth as the Spirit has given them; and though it is only in our own day that the chief mistranslation (2 Thess. 2:2) has been set right, on all sides the truth which should have been cleared by the correction seems as little understood as ever. The course of things in Christendom, as in the old world before it assumed that new shape, indisposes the minds of those bound up with its interests to receive what is here taught. The coming of the Lord as a living and constant hope detaches the heart from everything as an object on earth: for He is coming, we know not how soon, but we do know, to receive us to Himself on high. As is the Heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly, and as this is the character in which Christ and the Christian stand correlatively, the hope exactly corresponds. It is independent of earthly events and is not a question of times or seasons. At a moment purposely unrevealed, that those who are His own might be truly and intelligently and always looking for Him, He will come for them that they may be with Him in His Father's house.

The day of the Lord, on the other hand, connects itself with earthly associations of a solemn kind, of which prophecy in the Old and the New Testaments alike speak; and this also has its Baited place in these epistles. It is indeed eminently adapted, as it is meant, to deal with the conscience; for that day will deal with the pride of man and the power of the world, with earthly religion and with lawlessness in every form. Further, it is a test in one sense for the affections, whether we do really love His appearing who will put down evil and establish all in order according to God.

But we turn to the apostle's words in their order and detail.

“Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus to the assembly of Thessalonians in God [the] Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace.” (Ver. 1.)

Such is the inscription, with its own marked and beautifully suited peculiarities. On the one hand there is the marked absence of relative or indeed of any official place in the address of the apostle or the association of his companions, who are graciously introduced like himself without form. On the other hand the Thessalonian assembly is said, here and in the opening of the second epistle, to be “in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” which is predicated of none other. What can harmonize so well with newborn saints, just delivered from the gods many and the lords many of heathenism, and brought into the conscious relationship of babes that know the Father? To us, Christians, there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him. But what an expression of tenderness and near relationship thus to speak of the assembly of Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! How sweet for them to be thus addressed as even corporately set in the fellowship of such love and light! But such is the principle in the manifestation of the divine ways of grace. So even in the comforting strains of the Jewish prophet it is written, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Those who are most needy receive special care and consolation.

For the infant assembly so characterized it was enough to say the brief but pregnant words, “Grace to you and peace.” To others a fuller form was becoming, here needless because of what went before.

“ We thank God always for you all, making mention at our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ before our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, your election; because our gospel came not unto you in word only but also in power and in [the] Holy Spirit and in much assurance; even as ye know what we were among you for your sake. And ye became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with joy of [the] Holy Spirit; so that ye became a pattern to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you hath sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith that is toward God hath gone out, so that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves report concerning us what sort of entrance we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to await his Son from the heavens whom he raised from the dead, Jesus that delivered us from the coming wrath.” (Vers. 8-10.)

The joy of the laborers' heart bursts forth in constant thanksgiving to God for them all, and this not vaguely but with special mention on the occasion of prayer. It answered to their joy who had so lately been brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of God; but it had the deep character of rising to the Blesser from the blessing, as the blessing itself savored of communion with that source of blessing. So had Paul wrought with God in Thessalonica, not merely with some of the Jews who wore persuaded and who consorted with him and Silas (or Silvanus), but especially with a great multitude of the devout Greeks: mighty and permanent work in no long time. Do we know such thanksgiving to God? Do we make like personal mention on like occasion? Do we unceasingly remember the fruit of the Spirit's blessing in the saints? We know what it is to pray for saints in sorrow, shame, danger, need: are we drawn out in joy before God at the working of His grace in those He has saved and gathered to the name of Jesus? Have not our hearts been straitened by the low and shattered and isolated circumstances of the once united saints? We are quick in putting out, cutting off, withdrawing, avoiding, and every form of repulsion; slow and

powerless in the grace that sees and enjoys grace in others, that wins, helps, welcomes, or restores. Not so the apostle and his companions. Doubtless great grace is needed to appreciate little grace. It is Christ-like.

Granted, that here among the Thessalonians, especially when the first epistle was written, there was as much power of life as there was simplicity with lack of knowledge. The three great spiritual elements, of which we often hear in the New Testament and notably in the apostle's writings, were manifest and in the fervent vigor of the Holy Spirit: not only faith, but the “work of faith;” not love only but “labor of love;” and hope of our Lord Jesus Christ in its patience or enduring constancy. And as Christ is the object of faith which exercises the heart and fixes it on things unseen, so does His grace call forth love, and the hope cheers along the way, and so much the more when all is in the light of God, “before our God and Father.” He is our Father, and if babes we know Him as such (1 John 2:13); but He is God, and in our life, in our ways, we are before Him, and would servo Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear. He, before whom the new life in Christ is thus exercised by motives which have their spring and power in Christ, is the God who chose the Thessalonians in His grace to be His children beloved by Him, as thus attested to the consciences and affections of those that serve Him, “Knowing, brethren beloved by God, your election.” What practical proof of our election can there be to others but in the manifested power of the life we have in Christ, maintained as it can only be by seeking to have in everything a conscience without offense toward God and men? To gather evidence for ourselves out of it is mere self-righteousness, as well as the unbelief that slights God's testimony to Christ and His work, the effete theology of Christendom hastening on to divine judgment.

But God has ever wrought blessing by the revelation of Himself. Hence it is of faith that it may be according to grace, as the law works wrath; for where no law is, neither is there transgression. But the glad tidings as preached by Paul and those with him, “our gospel,” is the full testimony of what is in Christ for the lost. This had been brought home to the Thessalonians in the energy of the Holy Ghost. “Because our gospel came not unto you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance; even as ye know what we were among you for your sake.” (Ver. 5.) This young but devoted, persecuted yet happy, assembly was the living testimony to God and His Christ. The gospel had come not in word only but in power, and as it was in the Holy Spirit not fleshly display, so was it in much assurance. The word was spoken with all boldness and certainty by men whose ways were its bright and genuine reflection in love. This produced corresponding effects in those who received it. For Paul and his companions were not like such as seem incapable of appreciating the glory of Christ in the gospel as in the church who are never weary of crying up one part of the truth to the disparagement of another, as if all did not center in our Lord: short-sighted and mischievous souls, who overlook the simplest elements of truth in self-admiration, and a broker-like pressure on others of the value of their own wares. If all were teachers, where were the evangelists? If there were none to awaken, souls, where the sheep to be fed and tended?

The Thessalonians too bore the impress of the power which wrought on their hearts and consciences. “And ye became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with joy of the Holy Spirit; so that ye became a pattern to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia.” (Vers. 6, 7.) They suffered bitterly for the truth which filled their hearts with joy; so Paul dying daily while he lived; so the Lord who died as no other, yet lived the perfect ensample

and fullness of joy in God His Father with utter rejection here below.

How different those in Thessalonica from their brethren in Corinth who soon followed, who slighted the weightier matters of practical grace as they gloried in the showier displays of sign-gifts and external power. And what a difference in the moral testimony! Never do we hear of the Corinthians as a pattern to any that believed in Macedonia or in Achaia. Yet did the apostle's heart yearn in love over his later children in the faith, untoward and unruly as they were, that God's unspeakable gift of grace might produce suited if late fruit in them also.

Nor was this all: the world was full of the strange tidings, and this beyond all Greece where the believers were impressed with the zeal and moral power of the Thessalonian assembly. “For from you hath sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith that is toward God hath gone out; so that we have no need to say anything.” Men were talking everywhere of the singular change and fact in that important entrepôt of trade which lay in the direct line between the West and the East. That a body of people should have abandoned their false gods, and be filled with the knowledge of the one true God in a joy which no sufferings could chill (as distinct from the Jews as from the heathen, and yet more distinguished in an all-absorbing life of faith, love, hope, never so seen there before), could not but strike minds so acute, speculative, and communicative as the Greek. The sound of it rang out like a trumpet's in all directions, not about miracles or tongues, but their faith Godward: surely a fine, admirable, and gracious testimony had gone out in the midst of idolaters. For it was wholly in contrast with the hard, proud legalism of the Jews, as decidedly as with the dark and indecent follies of the Gentile world. Indeed the effect was such that the apostle declares “we have no need to say anything.” Why preach that which the very world in a certain way preached? Preaching has for its aim to make known the unknown God and His Son, to rouse the slumberers, to gain the ear of the careless for God's good news. Here men's lips were full of this truly new thing in Thessalonica; and from this active center of commerce the report went out everywhere of a Macedonian assembly that renounced Zeus, Hera, Artemis, Apollo, and all the rest, without adopting circumcision or the institutions of Moses.

Nor was there anything vague or pretentious, but the sobriety of grace and truth. “For they themselves report concerning us what sort of entrance we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols to serve a living and true God and to await his Son from the heavens whom he raised from the dead, Jesus that delivered us from the coming wrath.” (Vera. 9, 10.) It is a grand object of Satan to combine the world with God, to allow the flesh while pretending to the Spirit, and thus really to fall under his own delusions while professing Christ. The reverse of all this Babylonish confusion is seen in the sort of entrance the apostle had among the Thessalonians, and the complete break made for their souls from all that is opposed to God known in light and love. They turned unto God from their idols instead of christening them and mocking Him; they served not forms or doctrines or institutions, but a living and true God; and they awaited His Son from the heavens, not as an awful and dreaded Judge, but as their Deliverer from the coming wrath, whom He raised from the dead, the pledge of their justification and the pattern of the new life of which they lived to God in the faith of Him.

On 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Such was the vivid and powerful effect of the Apostle's visit to Thessalonica. There was an unmistakable and deep impression produced by the conversion and walk of the saints there on those outside, around and everywhere. Their faith went forth as a living proclamation of the truth;" so that we need not to speak anything." How happy, when the work is in such power and freshness as to leave the workman free for other fields white already unto harvest! What glory to the Lord, when the very heathen aroused and amazed by the result in power before them cannot but talk of the true God and His Son!

Now, the Apostle draws a good sketch of his "entering in," as to its character and bearing on the saints themselves, an internal picture, as before we were told of its external effect.

"For yourselves know, brethren, our entrance unto you, that it hath not been vain. But having suffered before, and been outraged, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict. For our exhortation [is, or was] not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but even as we have been approved of God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God that proveth our hearts. For neither at any time were we with speech of flattery, as ye know, nor with a cloak of covetousness, God [is] witness; nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have been burdensome as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children; so yearning over you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye became beloved by us. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and our toil; working night and day that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye [are] witnesses, and God, how holily and righteously and blamelessly we behaved ourselves to you that believe; just as ye know how each one of you as a father his own children, we [were] exhorting you, and comforting, and testifying that ye should walk worthily of God that calleth you unto His own kingdom and glory" (ver. 1-12).

The apostle could confidently appeal to the inner consciousness of the brethren. The entering in of Paul and Silas, which they had to the Thessalonian saints, had not been empty. A divine purpose of grace, reality in pressing the truth on consciences, and energy of the Holy Spirit, had characterized their service, and produced corresponding results. And no wonder; for it was the love of Christ constraining to the love of perishing souls, which knew not God nor the power of His resurrection who had tasted death even for them. Assuredly too, it was neither an ostentatious show nor a holiday visit, but an errand so serious in the eyes of their visitors, that no object by the way or on the spot detained; "but having suffered before and been outraged, even as ye know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict" (ver. 2).

Their injurious treatment at the hands of the Gentiles in Philippi no more daunted their unconquerable faith and love than the subsequent persecution by Jewish spite and jealousy at Thessalonica. No experience of suffering can turn aside those whose mind is to endure all things both for Christ and for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ

Jesus with eternal glory. Hence their confidence “we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict.” If there was the assurance that the glad tidings were God's, they were emboldened in God to speak out, whatever the opposition or violence that environed them. So, if the apostle had now to exhort the saints in Thessalonica that no one might be moved by their affliction, it was not, as a dilettante divine, laying on the shoulders of others a burden which he would not move with his own finger. From the first he was called to suffer for Christ's name, as distinctly as to bear that name before both Gentiles and kings and sons of Israel, to open their eyes that they might turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they might receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among those that are sanctified by faith in Christ. And in this he wrought with burning earnestness, to which “much conflict” refers, rather than to mere external trouble on the one hand, or that wrestling for the saints against the wiles of the devil, of which we hear in Col. 2:1, on the other hand. He walked and served in the truth he taught.

“ For our exhortation [is, or was] not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but even as we have been approved of God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God that proveth our hearts” (ver. 3-4). There was as good a conscience as boldness and endurance. There was integrity of heart, the very reverse of playing a part, instead of becoming the victim of delusion and so misleading others. Error was as far from the exhortation as impurity, nor was there the least intent to deceive, which “guile” expresses; but the truth was pressed holily and sincerely; and so spoke these blessed laborers, as became those who knew they had been approved of God to have the gospel entrusted to them. Grace forms responsibility, as grace enjoyed in the soul maintains its force livingly. They had God before them, God that proveth the hearts, not men to please whose breath is in their nostrils: wherein is man to be accounted of?

This is a grave and abiding principle, as true and important now as when Paul thus spoke of himself and his companion in the service of Christ. One cannot serve two masters. Patrons and congregations are not the only snares. Desire of influence, dread of disfavor, party, ecclesiasticism, may interfere with allegiance to the Lord, and righteousness in that case will surely suffer, perhaps truth itself. So Satan works in Christendom to the dishonor of Christ. The attempt to serve more than one is fatal; for a man will either hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. If a laborer in faith regards himself as approved of God to be entrusted with the gospel, he will only the more take heed to himself that the ministration be not blamed, but in everything commend himself as God's minister. Only he will seek to hold fast liberty as much as responsibility in the Spirit, with the written word as his sole rule. An apostle had the same direct responsibility to the Lord as the least laborer in the gospel, and, as we see here, owned it for himself as he urged it on others. It is no question of right but on Christ's part; it is solely of responsibility on ours. This maintains His glory and our obedience. To us there is, and there is but, one Lord, Jesus Christ, to whom are all things, and we through Him; as there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him. May we be imitators of the apostle, as he was of Christ.

But there is the snare of mammon as well of a master rival to Christ; and we cannot servo God and mammon. Here, too, the apostle could appeal to the experience of the Thessalonian saints. “For neither at any time were we with speech of flattery, as ye know, nor with a cloak of covetousness, God [is] witness; nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have

been burdensome [or, stood on dignity] as apostles of Christ" (ver. 5, 6). Those with whom Paul and the others were conversant could bear witness whether his speech was that of flattery or words of truth and soberness. God was his witness whether covetousness was concealed under any pretext. But there are other ways in which the corruption of our nature is apt to indulge: and betray itself. Hence many a man who would not stoop to flattery and may not be covetous is vain or ambitious. How in these respects had Paul and his companions carried themselves? "Not seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have been burdensome as apostles of Christ." He sought their blessing in the testimony, of Christ, not theirs but them for God's glory; and, instead of claiming just consideration in carnal things as sent of the Lord on spiritual service, there was thorough self-denial in devotedness to Christ.

Now he turns to the positive side of their walk and work. "But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children" (ver. 7). The figure of a parent, even a mother, fails to convey the tender care of a love which has its spring in God Himself. Babes need a nurse, which all mothers are not; but a nurse cherishing her own children is the just figure here employed, not a hireling for another's offspring. "So yearning over you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye became beloved by us" (ver. 8). Where else is there anything to compare with this in unselfish love, unless it be in the persevering faithfulness of grace which watches over the same objects in their growth and difficulties and dangers afterward? "For ye remember, brethren, our labor and our toil: working night and day that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God" (ver. 9).

Paul wrought with his own hands in Thessalonica as in Corinth, whence he wrote to them, that he might be chargeable to none. Yet if anyone was entitled to say, like Nehemiah, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down," it was the apostle, who truly did in another sense come down, and so much the better did his great work, though never was there a greater mind than his who thus labored manually night and day during his brief stay among the Thessalonians. "Ye [are] witnesses, and God, how holily and righteously and blamelessly we behaved ourselves to you that believe." He sums up his appeal to the believers and to God Himself, as only one could do who exercised himself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men alway. "Just as ye know how each one of you as a father his own children, we [were] exhorting you, and comforting, and testifying that ye should walk worthily of God that calleth you unto His own kingdom and glory" (ver. 11, 12).

Love adapts itself to the wants of those loved. So did the apostle when the saints needed more than the food of babes. And what earthly father over made good his relation to his own children as Paul to his beloved Thessalonians? Each one and all were objects of unremitting and considerate vigilance. Exhortation, comfort, testimony never failed to stimulate, cheer, and direct in the ways that befit the God that calls unto His own kingdom and glory. There He will have His own with Christ soon and forever; in that hope, and worthily of it, He would have them now to walk. Such is the aim of a true workman of Christ; and no lovelier picture can anywhere be found than appears in the simple sketch here drawn by the apostle.

Chapter 3

On 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

Thus far for the ministry of Paul and his companions, Now he turns to the means God had used for the blessing of the saints by that ministry.

“ And for this cause we also thank God unceasingly that, when ye received [the] word of [the] report from us of God, ye accepted not men's word, but as it is truly God's word, which also worketh in you that believe. For ye, brethren, became imitators of the assemblies of God that are in Judaea in Christ Jesus; for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they also of the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and please not God, and [are] contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins alway; but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (Ver. 18-16).

Man as he is naturally lives without God, acted on by the things he sees around him, a prey to the desires of the flesh and of the mind. In order to a spiritual link with God he needs a revelation from Him; and God is now sending this in the glad tidings concerning His Son, that men may believe and be saved. Thus does the soul know God, and Jesus Christ whom He did send, and this is life eternal. By faith he begins to feel and think according to God; and faith is the reception of a divine testimony. Thereby he sets to his seal that God is true. The word of God mixed with faith puts into immediate association with God.

In apostolic days Paul, as here, was an instrument to convey God's word in his preaching; and this, by divine power, without admixture of error. So it is in the Scriptures, which as being inspired of God exclude mistake. Hence, while they are of the richest value as a medium of communicating the truth, they have their special and indeed unique function as being the divinely given standard to try every word and work.

Not only, then, had the Apostle labored in the power of the Holy Ghost and in a way suitable to the beginning and growth of those who were the objects of his ministry, but it was not in vain. There were sweet and manifest fruits in God's grace. “And for this cause we also thank God unceasingly, that, when ye received the word of the report from us of God, ye accepted not men's word, but as it is truly God's word, which also worketh in you that believe.” It is always a true effect of God's gracious power when souls in a hostile world receive His testimony, however perfectly His word meets the cravings of the heart and presents the blood of Christ to purify the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. There is a constant network for men to hold them fast in Satan's hand; and the truth, as being God's word, judges the thoughts and intents of the heart. It was yet more trying when the truth was as novel as it must ever be opposed to human will and reasoning. When many profess it, the reproach to a great extent disappears, though God does not fail to counteract Satan's wiles, who would thus destroy the power by making the form cheap and common. To the Thessalonians, as indeed to every Gentile then, the word reported was a new thing. But it was “of God,” and so they proved it. “Ye accepted not men's word, but as it is truly God's word.” The heart bowed to God, and the word also wrought by the Spirit of God its own divine effects in those subject to it by faith.

The Jewish matron was true to the instincts of humanity and the traditions of her race, when she saw the Messiah casting out demons and heard Him warning of a worse power of the enemy those who still sought a sign from heaven: out of the crowd she cried, “Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the breasts that Thou didst suck.” The gospel renders it plain and certain that it is no question of a relationship after the flesh, but of the authority and blessing of the divine word, and thus as open to the Gentile as to the Jew. To believe it is the obedience of faith. It is to be in living association with God.

The word wielded by the Spirit and received as of God thus separates to Him, and is indeed exactly what is called “sanctification of the Spirit” in 1 Peter 1:2: not in the practical sense (which follows in ver. 15, 16 as well as elsewhere), but in principle and absolutely, that setting apart to God from the beginning which constitutes a saint (see 1 Cor. 6:11). Hence it precedes the knowledge of forgiveness or the possession of peace with God; as Peter says, in (or by) sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Here nothing but prejudice would have hindered believers seeing that obedience is not merely faith-obedience, but practical. Now sanctification in the ordinary sense cannot be said to be for or “unto obedience,” seeing that it very largely consists of obedience, and cannot exist without it; but sanctification of the Spirit as here spoken of is for (ε■ς) obedience, and such as Christ's in contrast with a mere Israelite's. It is also for “sprinkling with His blood,” for the new life or divine nature in the saint wishes to obey God even before it knows the efficacy of His blood in a purged conscience; and hence the perfect order of the words in the phrase.

The want of seeing this has greatly embarrassed the commentators, and has even led to positive falsification, as in Ben's Latin Version and the Geneva English Version, which render the clause unto (■ν) sanctification of the Spirit through (ε■ς) obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ! This is to sacrifice, not grammar merely, but God's word to a defective system of theology, which only acknowledges the sanctification that is consequent on justification, and ignores that primary setting of the person apart to God by the Spirit, which is true of every saint from his conversion, when he may not yet rest by faith in Christ's blood. Erasmus, though perplexed, is nearer the truth than the Vulgate followed by the Rhemish, which yields no just sense whatever. Archbishop Leighton is one of the few who saw that sanctification here does not mean inherent, gradual, or practical holiness, but that work of the Spirit which from first to last separates from nature and the world to God (compare 2 Thess. 2:13).

The same spiritual cause produced kindred effects. All are not Israelites, neither are they Cretans; and the flesh in all, if unjudged, affords a ready occasion to the enemy who presents snares suited to beguile each. But the Holy Spirit forms by the image of Christ, presented in God's word, which is effectual not only to beget souls to God, but to clear, correct, instruct, reprove, and in every way discipline, as well as cheer on, the believer. Of this the Apostle reminds the Thessalonians. “For ye, brethren, became imitators of the assemblies of God that are in Judaea in Christ Jesus.” Difference of race, contrast as to previous habits of religion, cannot hinder the power of grace and truth. The Thessalonians followed in the same path of suffering and endurance as the Jewish assemblies in Christ Jesus. There the flame of persecution burnt fiercely against the companies that bore the name of Him whom they had crucified. It was not otherwise for the Thessalonian saints from their own countrymen.

There is no such hatred as that embittered by difference in religion, and especially where the claim is exclusive and divine. The gospel gave occasion to this in its most concentrated form; for it first bad to make its way where God had really given peculiar privileges, which it was quite right to maintain in all their value as long as He owned the people to whom He had given them. But the Jewish people slighted and abandoned them, killing the prophets who pressed their infidelity and apostasy on their consciences, as they crowned their guilt when outward forms seemed orderly, but real unbelief and enmity to God were laid bare, by the ignominious rejection and death of their own Messiah. But evil is insatiable; and even the cross only whetted their rancor against the witnesses of divine grace. They “drove us out.”

For the possessors of law are provoked to madness by the preaching of grace, which makes little of any earthly privileges whatever, and insists on the ruin of the Jew as much as of the Gentile. Hence the Jew's undying hatred of the gospel. It were bad enough to hear a testimony as much above and deeper than the law as Christ is greater than Moses, and the difference is really immeasurable. But to proclaim its incomparable blessings in Christ so as to obliterate all distinction, and to bring the believer, Jew or Gentile alike, into a new place of heavenly relationship and of everlasting favor, is intolerable. This, then, was necessarily the final dealing of God, as far as Israel's responsibility was concerned. All hope for the nation on the earth was buried in the grave of Christ. They had a last appeal from the Holy Ghost in the gospel witnessing of Christ exalted to heaven; but they refused the message as much or more than the Person, above all when they saw others, yea, Gentiles, entering into the good which they had spurned for themselves.

Thus they “please not God, and [are] contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, to fill up their sins always; but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” It might not yet be executed, but it impended, and no small part became their portion after the apostle passed away. Still it rests on the Jew, but it is not yet expended; and were the Jew to return to his land, to rebuild the city and the sanctuary, and to take possession as far as possible of his ancient heritage, it would be but a deadly delusion and a satanic snare, bringing on them first Antichrist, then the trouble from the Assyrian, and finally the Lord Himself in unsparing vengeance, however mercy may in the end rejoice against judgment. As, however, the Apostle does not lift the veil of the future, as in Rom. 11, from their prospects, but returns to the new relations of grace, the common joy of himself and the Thessalonian saints, we too follow the line of the Holy Spirit.

“ But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a little season [lit. of an hour], in person, not in heart, made more exceeding diligence to see your face with much desire. Wherefore we desired to come unto you, I, Paul, both once and twice, and Satan hindered us. For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying 2 [Are] not even ye before our Lord Jesus at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy” (ver. 17-19).

Doubtless, if Christianity gives the deepest importance to the individual with God, the assembly affords the largest scope to the affections of the members of Christ as His one body. And Satan hinders in all possible ways the happy interchange of what is so sweet and holy, the mind and love of heaven enjoyed among saints on earth. The presence of each other, above all of such an one as Paul, what a difference it makes! Still the Apostle had been introducing that which ought to

correct any undue moment given to bodily presence. Had he not been showing the all-importance of God's word, and how effective it is in the hand of grace? Absence, therefore, is in no way fatal to the saints' joy and blessing. Waiting but exercises faith, and should increase the longing desire, which after all was stronger in Paul than in his Thessalonian children; how much in Him whose patient, waiting is perfect as His love to us! Thus does he bind their hearts with his own (and may it be true of us also!) in the joy of Christ's presence at His coming. Then will be the true rest from labor, then the enjoyment of the fruits without alloy or danger. May we find ourselves habitually thus looking onward from present hindrances to that blessed and everlasting scene!

(To be continued)

Chapter 4

On 1 Thessalonians 3

Grace works by joints and bands in the body, which is so constituted by our Lord Jesus to this end. If Paul could not visit the Thessalonians, he sent Timothy. Love seeks not its own things, and can find resources according to Christ, whatever the hindrances which Satan puts in the way.

“Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought good to be left behind at Athens alone, and sent Timothy our brother and workfellow under God in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage concerning your faith, that no one might be moved by [lit. in] these afflictions. For yourselves know that for this we are set. For even when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction, even as it came to pass, and ye know. On this account I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest perhaps the tempter had tempted you and our labor should be in vain. But when Timothy came just now unto us from you and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us even as we also [to see] you; on this account we were comforted by you, brethren, in all our distress and tribulation through your faith; because now we live if ye stand fast in [the] Lord. For what thanksgiving can we render again to God for you for all the joy wherewith we rejoice on your account before our God, night and day beseeching exceedingly that we may see your face, and perfect what is lacking in your faith? Now our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus direct our way unto you; and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all, even as we also toward you; in order to establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints” (verses 1-13).

To the apostle visiting Athens it was no small trial to forego the companionship of his true and beloved child in faith. But his affectionate concern for the Thessalonians could not otherwise be satisfied. He knew that they were but babes spiritually, and that they were exposed to enemies, Jewish and Gentile, as subtle as determined and unscrupulous. He was himself about to brave Satan in a stronghold of his religious influence and of philosophic speculation where the name of Jesus had never yet been proclaimed, still less had he himself the fellowship of brethren in Christ with whom to pray and take counsel. A storm of popular fury, stirred up by Jewish instigation among the Gentile rabble, had burst out against Jason (Paul's host) and other brethren in Thessalonica, which led to the hurried leave of Paul and Silas that night after a sojourn of but few weeks. The same Jewish influence had stirred up the crowds at Berea, whither they had repaired, and where they found a yet readier reception of the word, and withal remarkable care in bringing what was preached to the test of the scriptures. There Silas and Timothy staid, while Paul was once more hurried off to Athens. But the heart of the apostle could not rest as to the Thessalonians, young as they were, and exposed to danger, suffering, and snares. “And we sent Timothy our brother and workfellow under God in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage concerning your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions. For yourselves know that for this we are set. For even when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer afflictions even as it came to pass, and ye know.” The Holy Spirit by the apostle, as the Lord

Jest's previously had given full warning of the special and constant troubles that await the saint in passing through the world—peace within beyond thought of man, peace in Christ, but tribulation in the world. Faith alone can enjoy the one and endure the other. Such is meant to be the experience, none other the expectation, of Christians while waiting for Christ. Even the youngest must thus learn, for the real enmity of the world and of its prince spares none; and so the apostle prepared the converts in Thessalonica to look for distress. Nor was this at all too soon. They had already the gravest reason to know the truth and wisdom of his warnings, but they had the witness of love in the visit of Timothy for their establishment and encouragement concerning their faith. Grace only could call into such a path; grace alone can sustain in it; but grace does not fail, Still the Lord works by means, as by Paul's sending, by Timothy's going and comforting the saints, and by their joy in the consolation, whatever might be the pressure of affliction. Flesh would weary, murmur, recant, and turn aside from the truth which entailed such sorrow. Faith sees Christ, gives God thanks, perseveres at all cost, and grows by the exercise, while the links of love are strengthened on all sides.

“On this account I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest perhaps the tempter had tempted you, and our labor should be in vain. But when Timothy came just now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us even as we [to see] you; on this account we were comforted in you, brethren, in all our distress and tribulation through your faith; because now we live if ye stand fast in [the] Lord.” The Second Epistle will afford ample evidence that the apostle might well dread that the tempter would avail himself of the circumstances to dishonor the Lord in those who bore His name at Thessalonica. For the present, however, the work stood in the vigor and freshness in which it began, and Timothy had such good news to bring back as cheered the fervent and affectionate heart of him that sent him, and changed his anxieties into thanksgiving that rose above all his own distress and affliction. Their faith shone, their love burned, they had always good remembrance of the stranger to whom they were indebted for hearing of the living and true God, and of His Son the Deliverer risen from the dead who is coming from the heavens. They longed to see again the messenger whom they recognized as bringing them unequivocally God's word, whatever the varied storms of trial it had brought on them from man, the very trials proving their sincerity and truth, for had they not been told before that so it was to be? It was strength as well as joy to the laborer, as he most energetically expresses it, “now we live if ye stand fast in [the] Lord.”

The joy of the apostle as it was of divine love, so was it holy; no vain proselyting zeal, but delight in the presence of God over that which was the fruit of His grace to the praise of Jesus; delight over that faith and love kept bright and firm, in young confessors of Christ left alone, notwithstanding the fierce hostility of Jews and Greeks. “For what thanksgiving can we render again to God for you for all the joy wherewith we rejoice on your account before our God, night and day beseeching exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?” If theirs was the love of Jonathan, his was certainly more than the love of David. It is the love of the divine nature in the power of that Spirit, which finds its ever-growing joy in the blessing of others, and especially of those already blessed, that what is wanting may be perfected in personal ministry. “Now our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you; and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all, even as we also toward you; in

order to establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.”

Such was the prayer dictated by the apostle's affection as the Holy Spirit brought their need before him in God's presence. And the way of the apostle was directed to the Thessalonians, but not before another epistle to them followed, and years of labor elsewhere intervened. What he meanwhile seeks for them is no loss important for ourselves and all saints—the increase and abounding of love in us one toward another, and toward all, in order to the establishing our hearts unblameable in holiness. This is God's way as surely as it is not man's; for be insists on holiness in order to love, whereas in truth love must work in order to holiness. It is a true principle from the gospel all the way through; for God's love it was that met and blessed us in sovereign grace when we were enemies, powerless and ungodly, in Christ's death for us; and this was the most powerful motive which wrought in us to holiness. So is it here among the saints, who are exhorted to love mutually as well as toward all, in order that their hearts should be confirmed in holiness without blame; even as Christ, in love to the church, first gave Himself, and then washes with the word, that He may present it to Himself glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

But there is another consideration of great weight and interest in this brief prayer. Not only does He join in a most striking unity our God and Father Himself with our Lord Jesus in His earnest prayer for the blessing of the saints by a renewed visit, but he desires that the Lord may confirm their hearts blameless in holiness “before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints” —not merely now before God, so that it should be real, but at the coming of the Lord with all that are His, without a break in thought till that day when the failure or faithfulness of each shall appear beyond controversy. For as it is a question of responsibility, it is not simply His coming that is here spoken of, but His coming with all His saints, that is, His day when they shall appear with Him in glory, and He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believed. How this brings the light of that day on the present hour I Even if one may not for the Lord's sake walk with all the saints now, it is not that the heart is alienated, but it anticipates that glorious scene in which they shall come forth with Him, the objects of our love because they are all of His.

(To be continued)

Chapter 5

On 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

The knowledge of Christ is inseparable from faith; yet is it pre-eminently a life of holiness and love, and not a mere creed, as the human mind tends to make it. We have seen how it wrought in the practical ways of those who first preached the gospel to the Thessalonians, in unselfish goodness and exposure to suffering (chaps. 1-2), as well as in deep feeling afterward for the young converts, so soon called to bear the brunt of affliction. For their abounding in love in order to holiness the apostle prayed the Lord (chap. 3). Now he proceeds to appeal to themselves:—

“Further, then, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that, as ye received from us how ye ought to walk and please God, even as also ye do walk, ye abound still more. For ye know what charges we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is [the] will of God, your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication; that each of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, even as also the Gentiles that know not God; that he should not over-reach and wrong his brother in the matter; because the Lord is an avenger in respect of all these things, even as we told you before and fully testified. For God called us not for uncleanness but in sanctification. Wherefore then he that disregardeth disregardeth not man but God that [also] gave His Holy Spirit unto you” (4:1-8).

It is an immense thing for those who were once mere men on earth, severed from God and in spirit from each other by sin, only united when united for objects of human will or glory, now as His children with one purpose of heart to walk so as to please God. Yet such is Christianity practically viewed; and it is worthless if not practical. It is true that there is in the light and truth which Christ has revealed by the Holy Ghost the richest material and the fullest scope for the renewed mind and heart. But there is in “the mystery” no breadth nor length, no height nor depth which does not bear on the state of the affections or the character of the walk and work; and no error more dishonors God or damages man than the divorce of theory from practice. Scripture binds them together indissolubly, warning us solemnly against those who would part them as evil, the sure enemies of God and man. No! truth is not merely to inform but to sanctify; and what we received from those divinely given to communicate it is “how we ought to walk and please God.” In that path the youngest believer walks from the first, slave or free, Greek or Scythian, learned or unlearned; from that path none can slip save into sin and shame. It is not, however, a mere defined direction, as in a law or ordinance. As a life is in question, the life of Christ, there is exercise and growth by the knowledge of God. On the state of the soul depends the discernment of God's will in His word, which is overlooked where levity marks the inner condition, or the will is active and unjudged. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” Then only is there surefootedness spiritually; and a deepening sense of the word in the intelligence issues in a fuller obedience. One knows God's mind better, and the heart is earnest in pleasing Him. We abound more and more.

This was no new solicitude of the apostle. They knew what charges he gave them through the Lord Jesus. Is not His will, His honor, concerned in a walk pleasing to God? He on earth could say, “I do always those things that please Him;” in heaven He is now occupied with those who are

following in the same path here below. We may fail; but is this our aim? He does not fail to help us by His word, as He would also by His grace if we looked to Him and leaned on Him. Do we hear His voice?

On one thing especially was the apostle urgent, the personal purity of those who bore the name of Jesus; and the more so as the Greeks utterly failed in it. Their habits and their literature, their statesmen and their philosophers, all helped on the evil; their very religion conduced to aggravate the defilement by consecrating that to which depraved nature is itself prone. Few can have any adequate notion of the moral horrors of the heathen world, or of the insensibility of men generally to pollutions so shameless. Christ changed all for those who believe in Him, leaving an example that they should follow His steps. “For this is God's will, your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that each of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, even as also the Gentiles that know not God; that no man over-reach and wrong his brother in the matter; because the Lord is an avenger of all these things, even as we told you before and fully testified.” Holiness, of course, goes far beyond freedom from sensuality. Still to stand clear of that which was everywhere sanctioned in ordinary life was no small thing. Nor is the apostle satisfied with the negative duty of abstinence, but calls on “each of them to know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,” instead of letting it drift loosely into sin and shame, not in passion of lust, even as the Gentiles also that know not God.” Acts 15 is proof positive on scripture testimony of that day, painfully confirmed by the disclosures of Pompeii and Herculaneum, to the moral degradation that pervaded even the most civilized portion of the heathen world. When God is dishonored, man is reprobate; and God, in forgiving and rescuing from the wrath to come through Christ's death and resurrection, gives also a new life in Christ on which the Holy Spirit acts by the word so as to produce fruits of righteousness by Him to God's glory.

Hence the exhortation further, “that he should not over-reach and wrong his brother in the matter, because the Lord is an avenger in respect of all these things, even as we told you before and fully testified.” There is no real ground to introduce a new topic here, confounding with Calvin and others τ■ πρ. with το■ς πρ., still less to suppose with Koppe τ■, enclitic = τινι, “any,” like our own Authorized Version (compare 2 Cor. 7:11). It is the apostle's delicate way of referring to the same uncleanness, especially in married circumstances where the rights of a brother were infringed. This demanded and receives special notice. For as the brotherhood of Christians casts them into free and happy and intimate intercourse, there would be peculiar danger in these very circumstances lest Satan should tempt where flesh was not kept by faith in the place of death, that love only should act in holy ways with Christ before their eyes. There is perhaps no danger more gravely pressed. They are the ways which bring wrath on the sons of disobedience, and all words which make light of the evil are vain; the Lord avenges all these things, and God will judge the guilty. It is not the true grace of God which spares the strongest and repeated warnings; for God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification. It is plain that there is no branching off to commercial dealings, or to dishonesty in the affairs of every-day life. Impurity in the social relations of the saints is the evil still in view; and the conclusion is, “Wherefore then he that disregardeth disregardeth not man but God, that also gave His Holy Spirit unto you.” Thus does grace, in calling to a moral duty, rise entirely above the mere weighing of such motives as act on men. It is not that delicate consideration of man is omitted: the apostle begins with the slighting of man in the matter,

but he forthwith brings in also the immense yet solemn privilege of the Christian, God's gift of the Holy Spirit. How would impurity affect Him who dwells in the saints, and makes the body God's temple?

Next follows a call to abound in brotherly love, in which the apostle does glide into the connected proprieties of daily labor animated by care for others. “Now concerning brotherly love ye have no need that we write to you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; for, indeed, ye do it toward all the brethren that are in the whole of Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound still more, and that ye make it your aim to be quiet and mind your own affairs and work with your own hands, even as we charged you, that ye may walk honorably toward those without, and may have need of nothing” (ver. 9-12). The possession of Christ does wonderfully bind hearts together; and as affection one toward another is a spiritual instinct, so all that is learned of Christ deepens it intelligently. Intercourse may test its reality sometimes, but as a whole develops it actively, and the more as sharing the same hostility from the world. Here, too, the apostle looks that it should abound more and more, and along with it the studious aim to be quiet and to mind their own affairs, which brotherly love would surely promote, the very reverse of that meddling disposition which flows from the assumption of superiority in knowledge or spirituality or faithfulness. Farther, he calls on them to work with their own hands, even as we charged you (and who could do it with so good a grace?), that they may walk honorably toward those without, and may have need of nothing [or none]. There is not such a thought as encouraging the needy to draw on the generosity of others. Let it be the ambition of those who love, and would keep the love of others, to spare themselves in nothing and avoid encroaching on the help of any, so as to cut off all suspicion from those without. Brotherly love would be questioned if heed were not paid to propriety; it flourishes and abounds where there is also self-denial.

Chapter 6

On 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Having thus exhorted the saints to personal purity, and connected divine love with the quiet discharge of daily duty, so often apt to be neglected on that very plea and the vain pretension to higher ways, the Apostle now turns to their immoderate sorrow and surprise at the death of some among them. So filled were they with the expectation of the presence of the Lord, that they had not conceived the possibility of any saints thus passing away. They looked only for His coming, and drew inferences which, not being of the Lord, exposed them, as all human reasonings do, to danger. The need then was to maintain the truth, but to guard from such a misuse; but grace vouchsafed fresh and fuller light for them and for us.

“But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those that fall asleep; that ye be not grieved even as the rest also that have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also those put to sleep through Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say to you in [the] word of [the] Lord, that we, the living that remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede those put to sleep; because the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout of command, with archangel's voice, and with trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living that remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet [the] Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. So then encourage one another with these words” (ver. 13-18).

The Thessalonian saints knew, as a settled certainty, of the Lord's coming and kingdom. They were waiting for Him, the Son of God, from heaven as a constant hope, the nearest hope of their hearts. They had never taken into account that He might tarry according to the will of God who would gather fresh souls to the fellowship of His love, while letting the world ripen in iniquity and lawlessness, whether in proud unbelief or in hollow profession, till the apostasy come and the man of sin be revealed. As to all this they lacked instruction, having enjoyed the teaching of the Apostle for but a short season, and no epistle being yet written. This is the first the Apostle Paul ever wrote; and while promoting the joy and growth of faith, of nothing does he write as a more necessary help than to supply a lack, which, if not filled up by divine revelation, laid active minds open to the enemy through speculations which he would soon suggest in order to undermine the truth already known, or their souls' confidence in God.

Their grief was excessive like the rest of men, Jews, or rather heathen, that have no hope. Why such extravagant sorrow about those who, if called hence, knew God's love and salvation in the Lord Jesus? Is life eternal a vain thing? Is remission of sins, or the possession of the Holy Spirit? Surely it must be only ignorance on their part, and not that any called of God to His kingdom and glory (not to speak of the church, Christ's body) could forfeit by dying, as they imagined, their blessedness when the Lord Jesus comes. And so it was for want of knowing better that they had yielded to thoughts which had plunged them in Christ-dishonoring sorrow.

Even here, however, it is remarkable that the Apostle does not unveil the state of the separate spirit, as we see done in Luke 23:43, Acts 7:59, 2 Cor. 5:8, and Phil. 1:23. He meets fully the error

that death in any way destroys or detracts from the blessed hope of the Christian. He would have the saints no longer ignorant concerning those who may most truly be said to fall asleep: if they do, it is but more evidently to have the portion of Him who died and rose, as we assuredly believe; for they will rise if they meanwhile die. And is such a resurrection a loss? “Even so those also put to sleep through Jesus,” as it is here beautifully described, “will God bring with Him.” They were laid to sleep by Jesus; and, far from forgetting or even postponing their joy and blessedness, God will bring them with Jesus in that day.

But how so, since they sleep in death, and He comes from heaven in power and glory? Hereon follows a most enlightening and fresh communication. “in the word of the Lord,” which clears up the difficulty by unfolding the order of events, and thus the way by which the sleeping saints are to come with Jesus. The Thessalonian believers had fancied that the departed would miss the blissful reunion, or at least come behind the living that remain. But it is not so. “For this we say to you in [the] word of [the] Lord, that we, the living that remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede those put to sleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout of command, with archangel's voice, and with trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living that remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in [the] air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. So then encourage one another with these words.” Such is the wondrous intimation in this striking episode which brings us up parenthetically to the introductory words which assured them that the Lord would come, and the saints, including those that sleep, along with Him. Here we learn how it can be: He first descends for them, and afterward brings them with Him.

But there are details. He shall Himself descend from heaven with “a shout of command.” The word employed, being peculiar in the New Testament to this passage, cannot but have special force. Outside Scripture it is used for a general's call to his soldiers, for an admiral's to his sailors, or sometimes more generally as a cry to incite or encourage. It seems most appropriate as conveying a word of command to those in immediate relationship. Not a hint drops of a shout for the world, for men at large, to bear. It is here for His own to join Him on high. “With archangel's voice,” brings in the highest of heavenly creature glory to attend the Lord on that transcendent occasion. If angels now minister to the saints, as we know they did to Him also, how suitable to hear of “archangel's voice” when they thus gather round Him! Nor is “God's trump” silent at such a moment, when all that is of mortal man in His own shall be swallowed up of life at the presence of Christ.

Accordingly “the dead in Christ rise first.” It is no question of the first man but of the Second; and all of that family who have slept “rise first.” So unfounded was the despairing sorrow of those in Thessalonica. So far they precede the living saints, in being the earliest to experience the power of life in the Son of God. The truth is, however, that the difference in time is but just appreciable; for “then we, the living that remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in [the] air.” The translation of all the changed saints is simultaneous. The grief of such as doubted the full blessedness of those meanwhile put to sleep was really ignorance and unbelief; for even if they could not anticipate the fresh revelation from the Lord, they ought, from their divinely given knowledge of His love and of His redemption, to have counted on His grace towards the dead saints no less than towards the living. They might have sought needed light as to the particulars from those raised up and given of the Lord to impart it. We can, however, readily conceive how

haste wrought injuriously in them as in ourselves. But what an unspeakable mercy, that grace met the need to the correction of the mistake then, and to the prevention of it afterward! So is it habitually in the Epistles especially, as in all Scripture.

It is important to note that “the general resurrection” is as foreign to this part of God's word as to every other. The faithful dead, the faithful living, are alone spoken of. Not that there will not be a resurrection of unjust as well as of just. But there is no such thing in scripture as a resurrection of all men together. Of all things resurrection separates most distinctly. Till then there may be more or less mixture of the evil with the good, though it be a dishonor to the Lord and an injury to His people. But appearances deceive, and absolute separateness is not found; and God uses the trial produced by it for blessing to those whose eye is single. But at His coming the severance will be complete, at His appearing it will be manifest. Hence, the resurrection of the sleeping saints is called a resurrection out of, or from among, the dead; which could not be said of the resurrection of the wicked, for they leave no more to be raised. Thus both classes are raised separately, and the traditional idea of one general resurrection of the dead—is fictitious. Dan. 12 speaks of a resuscitation of Israel, Matt. 25 of the Lord's judgment of the nations: neither refers to the literally dead.

But the moral consequence of the error is as positively bad as the truth sanctifies. For the action of a general resurrection connects itself with a general judgment; and thus vagueness is brought in on the spirit of the believer, who loses thereby the truth of salvation as a present thing, and the consciousness of possessing eternal life in Christ, in contrast with coming into judgment. Compare Heb. 9:27, 28, and John 5:24. One of the enemy's main efforts is to annul this solemn difference: he would shake, if he could, the believer's enjoyment of God's grace in Christ; he would lull to a fatal calm the unbeliever, indifferent alike to his sins and the Savior. The first resurrection of the saints, severed by at least a thousand years (Rev. 20) from that of the rest of the dead, the wicked who rise for judgment and the lake of fire, is the strongest possible disproof of the prevalent confusion: an immensely grave appeal to the conscience of the unbeliever, a most cheering solace to those who are content to suffer with Christ meanwhile.

Further, it is unquestionable that death is in no way the believer's hope, but Christ's coming, when every effort and trace of death shall be effaced from saints deceased, as well as the living Christians, who have mortality, as others, at work in them. Then shall it be swallowed up of life; for He comes to receive them to Himself, who is the resurrection and the life. Thus the believer on Him, though dead, shall live; and the living believer on Him shall never die. Death is not the Bridegroom, but merely a servant (for all things are ours) for ushering us, absent from the body, to be present with the Lord. But here it is no mere individual going after dying to Him, but His coming, the Conqueror of death, for us all, whether sleeping or waking, that we may be changed into His glorious image even in the body.

But there is another, and in itself far more precious, privilege signalized here. Thus shall we always be with Him. This last is the deepest joy of the separate state when a saint departs: it is to be with Christ, So even was it with the dying but believing robber: Christ assured him that he was to be that day with Himself in Paradise. Only such a state was but intermediate and imperfect, however blessed. It was not the body glorified; it was not all the saints gathered. At His coming all will be complete and perfect for the heavenly family; “and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” What

can lack, or what be added, to such words of infinite and everlasting joy? “So then encourage one another with these words.” The Holy Spirit says on this head no more. That which is perfect shall then be come.

Chapter 7

On 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

From the special side of the Lord's coming which consummates His grace to those waiting for Him by their translation to His presence in the air, the apostle now turns to the more general fact of "the day" when He deals with the world according to the concurrent testimony of the Old Testament and of the New. The gathering of the saints to Himself, asleep or alive changed into the image of His glory, is a new revelation, and is introduced here as such. Not so the appearing or day of the Lord, which had formed the burden of many prophecies, and, I think we may say, of all the prophets since time began. For it is an epoch and indeed period second to none in manifest importance, affecting every creature in heaven and earth, and displaying the immense change which God will then bring to pass in honour of His Son according to His word from the beginning.

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need to be written to. For yourselves know thoroughly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief at night. When they are saying peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh on them as the pain on her that is with child; and they shall in no wise escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief; for ye all are sons of light and sons of day: we are not of light nor of darkness. So, then, let us not sleep as [do] the rest, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep by night, and they that are drunk drink by night; but we being of day, let us be sober, putting on a breastplate of faith and love, and hope of salvation as helmet. Because God did not appoint us unto wrath, but unto obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we may live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another, and edify each other, even as also ye do." (Ver. 1-11.)

It will be remarked that there is no mention, no mixing up, of "the times and the seasons" with the presence of the Lord to gather His own to Himself on high. This, our hope, is wholly apart from the defined periods of which prophecy treats. Here where "the day of the Lord" is in question, they are expressly brought forward; for that day is the most momentous event embraced within this scope. It is not improbable from 2 Thess. 2:5 that the apostle had already taught them of it orally, as he certainly did of antecedent circumstances. But it is not necessary to assume that he had taught them as much could be known, nor even that he had ever by word of mouth gone into detail on the day of the Lord. There was really no need for this, because the Old Testament treats of no theme more largely and minutely. It was already, therefore, a matter of common and familiar knowledge among the saints. Yet the accuracy of their knowledge is here simply said of the sure and sudden and unwelcome coming of the day of the Lord. There was no need of writing anything now, for they knew perfectly that Jehovah's day so comes as a thief at night. The apostle may not have gone into particulars; but this great and solemn truth was part of their inward conscious assurance. (Ver. 1, 2.) They knew perfectly, not as some strangely say that the time of it is uncertain, but that its coming is certain, and no less terrible than unlooked for.

With this is contrasted the fatal self-deceiving security of men around them, of the world. "When they are saying peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh on them, as the pain on her

that is with child; and they shall in no wise escape" (ver. 3). In 2 Peter 3 it is rather such scoffing unbelief as is found among philosophers, who point to the substantial stability of all things visible in the midst of superficial change and development. Here it is rather inward quiet and outward exemption from danger, through confidence in the social and political state of mankind; yet not without uneasy qualms which betray the real unrest and underlying dread of those that know not God and His Christ. As it was with men when the flood came and swept those all away who despised God's warning by Noah; as it was when, after feebler and briefer warning still in the days of Lot, condign judgment fell on the polluted cities of the plain; so shall it be in the day when the Sun of man is revealed. Sudden destruction, indeed, impends on those who trust themselves and their own thought, rejecting the testimony of God. This is the judgment of the quick; and, it will be noticed, no trace accompanies it of a judgment of the dead, nor yet of a burning up of the earth, however surely both are to follow in their own due season. It is the end of the age, but not of the world materially. As a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of all the earth. And they shall in no wise escape, any more than the woman with child when her hour is come and the birth-pang is on her. It is unspiritual ignorance, not to say folly, to apply this to the destruction of Jerusalem or to death, as some have done and do. It is the day of the Lord yet to fall on the world.

The apostle, however, immediately and carefully declares how different is the lot of the faithful. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief; for ye all are sons of light and sons of day: we are not of light nor of darkness" (ver. 4, 5). He is not afraid that it would endanger the young believers in Thessalonica, or any others, to know how grace had distinguished them from the rest of mankind; his very aim here, as elsewhere, is to impress this distinction on them ineffaceably. He says, first, that they were not in darkness, that the day should surprise them as a thief; secondly, that they all were sons of light and sons of day. Not only were they unlike the world as in darkness and the objects of the Lord's judgment, but positive sharers of divine nature and blessedness. Indeed, such is the peculiar being of God's children generally, as he adds, "we are not of light nor of darkness." We are of God, who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all.

But privilege known and enjoyed by the believer is the very hinge and incentive of responsibility; and so the apostle proceeds to exhort— "So then let us not sleep as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober" (ver. 6). If children of God, it is a deep spring of joy in Christ and of thanksgiving to our Father; but how instant and inalienable the call to walk according to the relationship! So here, if sons of light and of day, sleep—indifference to the will of the Lord—becomes us not, but watchfulness and sobriety, as those who derive their life from Him who is the one true light, and will bring in the day, as free from excitement as from careless ease. The righteous shall then shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Then follows a brief but vivid picture of the slumbering world and of the wakeful Christian: "For those that sleep by night, and those that are drank drink by night; but we, as being of day, let us be sober, putting on a breastplate of faith and love, and as helmet hope of salvation" (ver. 7, 8). Sleep suits the night, and so does excess: men naturally do in the dark what they would not like to do in the light. It is the common and undeniable practice of men which is thus brought before the mind. To what is the Christian exhorted? It is not exactly, as in the Authorized Version after the Vulgate, &c., "Let us who are of the day," which would require the article, but let us as being of day be sober, having put on a breastplate of faith and love, and hope of salvation as helmet. Thus the

believer is called to be in arms as well as watchful and sober. But the arms here, as but young Christians were immediately addressed, are not offensive, but defensive only: the three characteristics of their life here below, faith, love, and hope. We have seen how they are used in chap. 1 of this epistle; here they re-appear in the last. Indeed they cannot be absent if we would speak of the motive principles of Christ, whether in truth or in practice; and hence they are more or less prominent in all the apostolic writings.

It must be understood that “salvation” here is used in the final or complete sense when the body will share the application of that gracious power which has already dealt with the soul. The believer has already life everlasting and redemption in the Son of God, and thus receives the end of his faith, soul-salvation; he is therefore looking for the salvation of his body (Phil. 21) at Christ's coming as Savior, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself. “Because God did not appoint us unto wrath, but unto obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.” These are plain words which trace up to God the sovereign grace which distinguishes the saints from the world from first to last, and makes Christ and His death the turning-point of all blessing for those who look to Him, as His wrath abides on such as are not subject to His Son. As lawyers, however, are apt to find in the law more difficulties and stumbling-blocks and evasions than any other class, so do theologians in the written word, to the dishonor of God and the injury of all who confide in them. Could any minds save those perverted by systematic divinity have ever allowed so low a thought as that physical waking or sleeping was here meant? Yet Dr. Whitby did thus think; and even Calvin says that we might not unsuitably interpret it as meaning ordinary sleep, and that it is doubtful what is now intended by sleeping and waking, for it might seem as if he meant life and death, and this meaning would be more complete. Assuredly this pious and learned man here gives a very uncertain sound with the trumpet. It were better to utter no opinion at all than to leave the realer under such a confusion of sounds. But even this is not the lowest depth, for there have not been wanting men who wish the apostle to teach that the words bear the same ethical force in ver. 10 as in 6, 7, the necessary inference from which would be that, whether we be spiritually watchful or slothful, we shall alike enjoy the portion of everlasting blessedness altogether with Christ. Does not this sound uncommonly like moral indifferentism?

Dean Alford, to take a recent case, seems in no small strait as to all this in his remarks on the passage (iii. 278, 279, ed. iv.): “In what sense? surely not in an ethical sense, as above: for they who sleep will be overtaken by Him as a thief, and His day will be to them darkness, not light. If not in an ethical sense, it must be in that of living or dying, and the sense as Rom. 14:8. [For we cannot adopt the trifling sense given by Whitby, al., —'whether He come in the night, and so find us taking our natural rest, or in the day when we are waking.'] Thus understood, however, it will be at the expense of perspicacity, seeing that γρηγορε■ν and καθε■δειν have been used ethically throughout this passage. If we wish to preserve the uniformity of the metaphor, we may [though I am not satisfied with this] interpret in this sense: that our Lord died for us, that whether we watch are of the number of the watchful, i.e. already Christians] or sleep [are of the number of the sleeping, i.e. unconverted] we should live, &c. Thus it would = ‘who died that all men might be saved:’ who came, not to call the righteous only, but sinners to life. There is to this interpretation the great objection that it confounds with the λοιπο■, the ■μ■ς who are definitely spoken of as set

by God not to wrath but to περιποη■ησιν σωτηρ■ας. So that the sense live or die must, I think, be accepted, and the want of perspicuity with it."

Of course Alford is right in accepting the sense of living or dying, but wrong and irreverent in imputing want of perspicuity to Scripture. He saw Paul, not the Holy Ghost perfectly guiding and guarding him, in what is written. Apply the Dean's reasoning to a kindred mode of speech in Matt. 8:21, 22. Was there want of perspicuity in the words of the Lord Jesus? or in 1 Cor. 8, does the unexpected but striking turn given to the word "edified" = "emboldened" in ver. 10 destroy perspicuity? It really gives force in every instance: it is only men's perception which is at fault, with the still worse fault of lack of faith in God's word. If they felt their own shortcoming but owned the perfection of Scripture, it would be the right attitude, and they would learn, instead of indulging an assumption which covers ignorance in themselves, injures others, and is a great disrespect to God. The verse is really the conclusion of the answer to the Thessalonian difficulty as to the dead; and the Holy Spirit seems to have boldly used the words γρ. and κ. ethically in 6 and 7, and metaphorically here, because He took for granted the mind of Christ in the saints, which could not misapprehend His different aims in the two cases. Christ died for us, that whether alive or dead, we should live together with Him. It is living along with Him where He is and as Ηε is, glorified on high. And as the Apostle called on the saints in 4:18 to comfort or encourage one another with these words, he repeats it here in ver. 11, with the added call to edify one the other; for the solemn judgment to fall on the world in the day of the Lord should the more build up believers consoled and rejoicing in their own proper hope at His coming.

Chapter 8

On 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

The apostle next turns to a need rarely if over out of season among the faithful, even where the stream of faith and love is yet fresh and strong, the due recognition of those that labor and take the lead on the part of their brethren.

“ Now we beseech you, brethren, to know those that labor among you and are over you in [the] Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them exceedingly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.” (Ver. 12, 18.)

It is commonly assumed that the persons indicated by, these expressions of spiritual toil, admonition, or presidency, were bishops or presbyters. But this is to lose the special instruction and value of what is here urged; as it is an oversight of the apostolic order as presented in the Scripture to take for granted that any were appointed in the Thessalonian assembly to the office of oversight during so brief a sojourn as the first visit, among converts, all of them as yet necessarily novices in the things of God, however bright, and fervent, and promising. To the careful reader of Acts 13-14 no argument is needed to prove that it was on a second visit, unless the first were of long continuance, that the apostles appointed or chose for the disciples elders in every assembly. The wisdom of this, if not the necessity for it, will be evident to any sober mind that reflects, even if we had not the positive prohibition to Timothy of any such persons from such a function. (1 Tim. 3:6.) For surely, whatever Popes may do, it would be harsh in the extreme to suppose that the apostle in his own choice of bishops neglected the principle which he so gravely charges on his true son in the faith.

Undoubtedly elders, or bishops, were to be honored, especially those that labored in word and teaching. (1 Tim. 5:17.) But the weighty lesson inculcated in the other Scriptures we are considering is that, before there was each an official relationship, those who labored among the saints, took the lead of them in the Lord, and admonished the saints, are held up by the apostle as entitled not only to recognition in their work, but to be regarded exceedingly in love on account of it. Very probably they were just the persons suited for an apostle, or an apostolic delegate like Titus, to appoint as presbyters; but meanwhile, and independently, this established a most important principle, and quite as wholesome for the saints themselves as for those who had no external title as yet: nothing more than a spiritual gift exercised in faith and love, with the simple-hearted desire of the Lord's glory in the healthful, happy, and holy condition of their brethren.

Nor is this state of things among the Thessalonians at all an exceptional case; in other places we may see what is analogous. Thus, among the saints at Rome, where (so far as Scripture teaches) no apostle had as yet Sojourned, we find gifts which they are encouraged in the Epistle to exercise, teaching, exhorting, presiding or ruling, &c. Apostolic appointment they had not yet; and accordingly we hear of no such officers as bishops or deacons. But it is a mistake to infer from this that there were or could be none otherwise taking the lead; for Rom. 12 explicitly exhorts such persons to exercise their gifts, even if they had no outward appointment.

Similarly in the Epistles to the church in Corinth we find no trace of elders, rather the proof that they did not yet exist there. For if they did, would it not be strange to ignore them in the absence of godly discipline we see in 1 Cor. 6, and in the presence of such disorder as there dishonored the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11), not to speak of confusion in the assembly (1 Cor. 14), and heterodoxy germinating in their midst (1 Cor. 15)? If elders were not there, one could understand these evils hid directly at the door of the assembly without reference to any individuals appointed to rule. Their absence is readily accounted for: the Corinthian assembly was still young, however vigorous. It was usual to appoint on a later visit those of the brethren in whom the Lord gave the apostles to descry fitting qualifications for the office of a bishop. Yet, meanwhile, they were not destitute of those that devoted themselves, like the house of Stephanas, to the service of the saints (1 Cor. 16:15, 16); and the apostle enjoins subjection to each and to every one joined in the work and laboring.

At Ephesus there were, as we know from Acts 20, elders or bishops; but this did not hinder the free action of those who were gifts from the Lord, whether pastors or others (Eph. 4), who might not have the local charge of elders. The same remark applies to Philippi, where express mention is made of bishops and deacons, but as there might be, and no doubt was, the exercise of gifts in teaching or presiding before such officials appeared, so there was nothing in their presence to hinder the liberty of the Spirit in the assembly. Compare also Col. 2:19 with 4:17, Heb. 13:7, 17, 24. 1 Peter 4:11 illustrates and confirms the same principle: a golden one for us now, when we cannot have apostolic visits, or the then orderly appointment to local charge such as they were authorized to make. But we may and ought so much the more sedulously to own all that the Lord gives for the order and edifying of the assembly, as we hear the apostles exhorting the saints in so many places to do, where elders were not, and even where and when they were.

It might be asked, if there was as yet no official nomination of the chiefs at Thessalonica, how were the saints to know the right persons to own, honor, and love as such? The answer is, that the Spirit of God would give this, if not with the intelligence, and surely not with the authority of an apostle, but quite enough to guide the saints for all practical purposes. Therefore, says the apostle here, “We beseech you, brethren, to know those that labor among you,” &c. Here was the warrant of the word; the Holy Spirit would do the rest, unless self-will and pride or envy hindered. Even so such service of devoted labor and lowly taking the lead and faithful admonition would make itself known in the conscience, as it would yet more readily to the heart if the saints walked with God. Yet this is so novel among Christians, that even devout scholars find very great difficulty in discovering the meaning of ε■δ■ναι, whereas its force here is its constant use. If the saints can know a brother to love him, so they can know those whom God uses for their blessing and guidance, and, if right themselves before Him, will respect them the more for not slurring over what is wrong, though a pain at the moment. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be fall of light.” You cannot love as here exhorted unless you know them; just as it is to render brotherly love impossible if we cannot tell who are our brethren.

To be at peace among ourselves is of great moment in order to such recognition, as the recognition conduces to it. So it follows here.

But there is no countenance given to the unloving, careless thought that those who labor are to undertake the whole burden of the saints, especially that which draws on moral courage and

patience. This is enjoined, not as Chrysostom says here, on the rulers, but also on the brethren generally. “And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, comfort the faint-hearted, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all” (ver. 14). Love alone can thus work, looking at the saints as they are in God's sight, and grieved at the havoc Satan would make in that holy garden of the Lord, for whose will and glory it is jealous. Such is to be our way with our brethren.

Next follows a cluster of short, pithy exhortations almost to the end, which deal first of all with our spirit or state personally; next, in our more public walk.

“ See that none render to anyone evil for evil, but always pursue that which is good one toward another, and toward all. Rejoice always; pray unceasingly; in everything give thanks, for this [is] God's will in Christ Jesus toward you. Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophecies; but prove all things; hold fast that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.” (Ver. 15-22.)

Grace is the characteristic of the gospel; and as it is the spring in God Himself as shown in Christ, so would He have it in His children; not human justice, for the just against the unjust, but unselfish love doing good to the evil and suffering evil from them. Thus would He have us to be not overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. Such is Christianity in practice, above heathenism and Judaism alike. Such is it one with another and toward all, and so Peter no less than Paul: “If when ye do well and suffer, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable—grace—with God.”

Nor should the Christian give an ill impression of his God and Father or of the portion he even now possesses in His grace, any more than of his prospects. With what joy the disciples returned even from their Master departing to heave! And the Holy Spirit in due time came to make the joy unfailing. (John 4:14.) What has there been since to dry up the spring” “Rejoice always.”

But we are still in the body and in the world, as they we are. Therefore is the word “pray unceasingly;” just as we see those who returned with great joy from Olivet, all with one accord continuing steadfastly in prayer with Mary the mother of Jesus, not yet the abomination of prayer to her or to His brethren. But this due expression of increasing dependence on God should never be without thanksgiving; but as we are in everything, which otherwise might make us anxious, by prayer and supplication to let our requests be made known to God (1 Phil. 4:6), so are we here exhorted to “give thanks in everything.” And as a constant spirit of thanksgiving is the very reverse of nature's querulousness, because of manifold suffering and chagrin and disappointment, the apostle fortifies this call with a reason subjoined, “for this is God's will in Christ Jesus toward you.” Otherwise it would soon in the declension of Christendom have been counted levity and presumption. How truly does the apostle say in his second epistle, “all have not faith.”

Next we have terse but full exhortation as to our more public ways. It is not here the personal call of Eph. 4, “grieve not,” but “quench not the Spirit,” followed up by “despise not prophecies,” which serves to fix its true bearing. Both suppose the free action of the Holy Spirit in the assembly, where He must not be hindered in His general movement even by the least member of Christ, any more than despised in the highest form of dealing with souls, or “prophesying.” On the other hand the saints must not be imposed on by high or exclusive claims which are never needed by, and would be repulsive to, the truly spiritual. They were to prove all things, to hold fast the good, to abstain from every form of evil. By σ■δος translated “appearance” in the Authorized Version, is really

meant kind or form.

This brief but full exhortation is followed by a beautifully suited prayer. “Now the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit, and soul, and body be preserved entire without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful [is] He that calleth, who will also do [it]” (ver. 23, 24). Thus does the apostle commend his beloved children in the faith to the God of peace Himself, after so comprehensively urging their own responsibility; and this both generally and in detail, which is the reason of distinguishing the spirit, the soul, and the body, the entire man inner and outer, and even the inner divided into spirit and soul, that they might look for God to set them apart wholly, and every whit within as well as without to be preserved entire without blame at Christ's coming.

It may be well to add that “the soul” is the seat of personality, “the spirit” is rather the expression of capacity. Hence the soul, with its affections, is the responsible “I;” as the spirit is that higher faculty capable of knowing God, but also of unutterable woe in the rejection of Him. The God of peace Himself claims and sanctifies us wholly. For this should we pray, as the apostle for the saints in Thessalonica, that they might be preserved entire blamelessly, and in every respect, at the coming of our Lord. And for our comfort he adds that, as He who calls us is faithful, so also He will accomplish His purpose. Peace with God, the peace of God, the God of peace; such is the order of the soul's entrance into and experience of the blessing through our Lord Jesus, as the Holy Ghost is the person who effectuates this wonderful purpose of our Father, whether now in measure, or absolutely and perfectly at Christ's coming, a hope never separated in Scripture from any part of Christian life.

But there is another trait of that life to which the apostle invites the saints. “Brethren, pray for us.” What grace We can understand easily an Abraham praying for an Abimelech, and perhaps also a more faulty Abraham interceding for a faulty prince of the world who had done a wrong which he wist not fully. But how blessed that it is the privilege of the saints to pray for the most honored servant of the Lord, and that he seeks and values their prayers.

Then follows a warm expression of loving salutation to the brethren, to all the brethren.

But there is another word of marked significance introduced with peculiar solemnity. “I adjure you by the Lord that the letter be read to all the [holy] brethren.” We may conceive how proper and necessary this was when the apostle sent out his first epistle. It was a communication in the form of a letter, so characteristic of Christianity in its affectionate intimacy as well as in its simplicity. Depth of grace and truth it has in its nature, whatever the form in which it may be presented orally or in writing. But being a letter, and the first of the apostle's sending out, he will have the things he writes acknowledged as the commandments of the Lord, and read to all as concerning all in the Lord. For though he does not put forward his title of apostle, when he could only rejoice that its assertion was needless, he writes in the fullest consciousness of it (1 Thess. 2:6), and here implies its fullest authority, but withal would be in immediate contact with the least member of Christ's body, as he wishes finally that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ should be with them (ver. 28). It was not that he suspected the integrity of those that were over them in the Lord, but that he would impress on all the saints the solemnity of a fresh inspired communication. And truly, the more we reflect on the gracious interest of God in thus drawing out the heart of the apostle, guided and filled with suited truth for His children, the more will our value rise for such unerring words of divine

love.

Chapter 9

On 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4

The first Epistle to the Thessalonians dealt with a mistake of the saints there as to those who fall asleep in Christ. In their immature and absorbing occupation with the coming or presence of the Lord, they had too hastily affirmed that such saints as were not found alive and waiting for Him would lose their part, not of course in eternal life and salvation, but at that blessed moment of His advent. This error was dissipated, not only by bringing in the grand principle of a dead and risen Christ with whom we are associated, and of especial cheer to those who are put to sleep by Him, but by a special revelation which discloses the Lord descending to raise the dead in Christ, and change the believers surviving till His coming, in order to their all coming together along with Him.

In the second epistle, the delusion which false teachers sought to foist on the saints, and even with the claim of the Spirit, and a pretended letter of the apostle, concerned the living whom the enemy endeavored to shake and trouble under the apprehension of the presence of the day. All knew that the day of the Lord is to be ushered in by darkness and divine judgments, and these Satan sought to inflict on the saints so as to fill them with terror and distress. Clearly this is the natural expectation of a Jew, who, even if he fully confided in the faithfulness of God, cannot but look for an awful season of tribulation and of judicial dealings to precede the kingdom of glory for Israel on the earth. (Isa. ii.-iv. 13; Jer. 30; Joel 2 iii.; Amos 5; Zeph. 1-3) As the enemy is ever at work to draw back the heart of the Christian to the law, if he cannot entice him into lawlessness, so did he at Thessalonica, and ever since, put forth his wiles to judaize the hope, presenting the Lord as about to appear in judgment, instead of letting him rejoice in His coming as the Bridegroom for the bride. The deception is the more perilous, because the day of the Lord is a weighty truth in itself, and the revealed period of divine intervention and blessing for the ancient people of God. How the coming of the Savior, for us who now believe and wait for Him from heaven, would fit in with the prophetic testimony, must have been as yet vague, as there was no written word to define the matter or solve the difficulty. Hence the importance of this fresh communication. For the question was raised by Satan's attempt to pervert the saints from the enjoyment of their own proper hope. They were agitated under the false alarm that the day was actually come. This more or less completely obscured from their eyes their bright and longing expectation of the Savior's coming to receive them to Himself, and present them, perfectly like Him in glory, before the Father with exceeding joy.

As in the first epistle, the apostle does not immediately grapple with the error, but prepares the hearts of the saints gradually and on all sides so as to clench the truth and exclude the error once it is exposed. This is the way, of divine grace and wisdom; the heart is set right, and not the mere point of error or evil dealt with. The very snare is thus made the occasion of fresh and deeper blessing; and as all truth is consolidated, so the Lord is more enjoyed.

It will be found however that this new work of the devil was not without its effects on the saints, if we may judge by the apostle's manner of addressing them.

“ Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the assembly of the Thessalonians in God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace from Go [the] Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ.”

“ We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even as it is meet, because your faith increaseth exceedingly, and the love of each of you all toward one another aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the assemblies of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and the tribulations which ye are enduring.” (Ver. 1, 4).

It is impossible to accept as sound and satisfactory Chrysostom's remarks on the address to “the church” rather than to “the saints,” as in other epistles. (Field's ed. v. 314, Oxon. 1855.) It has nothing to do with comparative paucity of numbers, and their aggregation in a single company. For in no city perhaps were the saints more numerous than in Jerusalem, when we read of the church or assembly there (Acts 5:11; 8:1 • xi. 22; xv. 4, 22.) A similar remark applies to Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, or to any other place where we know the numbers were great comparatively, and there might be, as in Jerusalem, not a few houses where the saints met to break bread, but all composed “the assembly” there. Never, in short, whatever the number do we in Scripture hear of “assemblies” in a city (as of a province), but always of “the assembly.” No doubt the apostle addresses those at Ephesus and Colosse and Philippi and Rome as “saints"; but this, because of the truth he was communicating by the Spirit of God, and not because of their greater numbers. In fact, we read of “the assembly in Ephesus” (Rev. 2:1) after his epistle to “the saints” as well as before (Acts 20:17.) Nobody can deny that a long time had passed and the organization was complete, when John wrote to “the assembly” there; and therefore Chrysostom's reason is invalid. The true ground lies in the perfection of wisdom with which the Holy Spirit addresses according to the nature of that which He is making known.

Thus the apostle again associates with himself in the salutation those dear fellow-laborers whom the saints in Thessalonica knew already when the assembly was founded there; and he again characterizes the assembly as in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: the one severing them from Gentiles, as the other from Jews. Indeed at bottom both contrasted them with both. For what did a Jew more than a Gentile know of such a new, living, and intimate relationship with God as Father? And what knew a Gentile more than a Jew of a rejected but risen Lord and Savior in heaven? “Our” is added here, as compared with the opening formula in the first epistle. Is it not to rivet emphatically those saints, who, however well they walked in most respects, needed to be reminded more than ever of their common relationship with him who wrote, and with all saints, to Him whose grace is the source of all blessing?

Thanks as before he owns as due to God always for them, not simply because they were objects of His grace, but as was meet because their faith was greatly growing, and the love of each individually and of all mutually was abounding. This was much; but what of their joy of hope in the Holy Ghost? Of this he says nothing. And the absence is the more striking, because in the introduction to the first epistle he had spoken of remembering without ceasing, not only their work of faith and labor of love, but also their patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Here, to the close observer, there is an ominous silence on any such enduring constancy of hope. Yet there is nothing said to damp their hearts, but all he could say to encourage. The fact is that their hope of Christ was unconsciously but seriously undermined and clouded, not by undue excitement but by agitation and trouble of mind as if the awful day of the Lord were upon them. This brought in fear

which darkened their experience of persecution and of outwardly trying circumstances, though the apostle could boast in them among the assemblies of God for their patience and faith in all their persecutions, and the tribulations they were sustaining.

But patience and faith need the power of hope to sustain in freshness. There will and must be a lack when Christ is not personally before the heart as One who may at any moment come to receive His own to Himself But yet more, there cannot but be an exposure, as we shall find here, to the counter and disturbing influence of fear, which leaves the soul open to the positively delusive power of the enemy. Even in the first epistle the apostle was not without apprehension on that side; and therefore did he send Timothy to establish them and comfort them concerning their faith, that none might be moved by these afflictions; knowing as they did that hereunto we are appointed. For they had surely not forgotten that Paul, when with them, told them beforehand that we are to suffer affliction, even as, they knew full well, it came to pass. But this did not hinder, rather did it draw out, the solicitude of the apostle on their behalf, “lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.” (1 Thess. 3:5.)

For the enemy has, of course, no real good or blessing to hold out; but he can and does work most effectively through fear of evil, especially where the conscience is bad or gets troubled. Therein lies his great power in awakening terror, availing himself of God's own threatened judgments on a guilty world. He may deceive the unbeliever by flattering him with false peace and false hopes; from this the believer is freed by the gospel, but if not filled with the hope of Christ, he might easily be distressed by the pressure and the variety and the continuance of affliction, especially if Satan got him under the fear that they were judicial inflictions from God on the world in which he was involved like others. Where the heart is kept in peace and confidence before God, the mind can judge soundly. Fear unnerves the soul that is occupied with painful circumstances and throws all into confusion; for God and the word of His grace no longer guide, in the calm trust of a love that never fails, and that gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle, on the contrary, would have them take fresh courage from all their persecutions and the afflictions they were enduring; as he lets them know that he himself was boasting in them on that very account. So he bade the Philippians at a later day be in nothing affrighted by the adversaries, which is for such an evident token of perdition, as it is for the saints of salvation, and this from God; because it is a real privilege on the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His sake. It is part of the great conflict ever raging between Satan and those who are of Christ. This the Thessalonians had to learn more perfectly; and we shall see in what follows how skilfully the apostle sets their souls right on general grounds before he broaches the direct correction of the error in the second chapter.

Chapter 10

On 2 Thessalonians 1:5-8

IT would seem that the Thessalonian saints had been engrossed with the day of the Lord, as indeed it

occupies a large part, and is the grand issue, of Old Testament prophecy. If grace, righteousness, and

blessing characterize that day, there can be no doubt that darkness, trouble, change and judgments beyond all previous experience are to usher it in. Hence the apostle felt the need of preparing the way for his correction of this special error foisted on them, by a just determination of its true nature. This he proceeds to set before them that they might be clear in what was indisputable, and so the better able to judge the delusion.

Their endurance and faith in all their persecutions and the distresses they were then enduring had been already treated as to him and those likeminded an object of glorying in them among the assemblies of God. He adds now: a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, to the end that ye be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer; if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you, and to you that are troubled rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance on those that know not God and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” (ver. 5-8.)

This moral dealing with their troubles was of the deepest moment. For even saints easily miss their way in the prophetic word: but God abides and cannot deny Himself, as these saints ought not to have forgotten. Now they might be to the uttermost tried; and evil in unrighteousness, deceit, or oppression might prosper for awhile; but even so the faithful are called to trust confidently and rejoice exceedingly, reaping better blessings far than if all ran smoothly as the heart could wish. But the righteous judgment of God is unshaken, and faith rests on it without wavering, but with a solemn sense of what is at hand for violence no less than corruption, and especially for the hatred which cannot endure the objects of God's love in an evil world, where they, however unwelcome, are seen as lights, holding forth the word of life, not overcome of evil but overcoming it with good, and so much the more intolerable to the evil heart of unbelief which either rejects God or departs from Him.

Does God then regard with indifference His children's persecutions and distresses? On the contrary their patience and faith in all they are enduring is a demonstration of the just judgment of God; who, if He tries the righteous, loves righteousness, beholds the upright, and will surely rain fire and brimstone, and a tempest of burning on the wicked. If he sees mischief, it is to requite it with His own hand. But His children meanwhile are being disciplined in the ways of Christ; and as faith perseveres without a sign, it may be, so patience must have its perfect work, that they may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. And is it not well worth while? “To the end that ye be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which also ye suffer.” So it is His good and holy will:

through many tribulations we must enter into that kingdom. It was Christ's way; it is or should be ours. In that day the darkness will pass for the world. All will be plain that is now obscure: uncertainty and complication will be no more. For us the darkness passes away and the true light now shineth; and we who were once darkness are light in the Lord. Then for the world, and especially for that portion of it which is now darkest and most embittered, the light will have come and the glory of Jehovah be risen there.

But the very contrariety of the world now to God and to His children only the more proves that the righteous Lord will surely intervene and vindicate in that day all that looks tangled now. One understands easily that, if Satan is as God calls him the god of this age, it can only be in the age to come when the Lord Jesus governs publicly and in power, that as the rule the wicked shall be put down and the righteous prosper. The unbeliever is hardened at the sight of the just man perishing in his righteousness, and of a wicked man prolonging his life in his wickedness. The believer awaits the kingdom of God and suffers for its sake. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Unto the sons of God it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him but to suffer for Him. When the day comes all will be changed.

“ If so be [it is] a righteous thing, with God to recompense tribulation to those that trouble you, and to you that are troubled rest with us.” This none can dispute who believes that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those that seek Him out, and an avenger of all wrong against God and man. He is now dealing in grace; in that day He will judge the habitable world (and the dead also in due time) in righteousness by the Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance to all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead. In that day, as even a godly Jew did know, He will be merciful to His land and to His people, as surely as He will render vengeance to His enemies and reward them that hate Him. What then will be His attitude towards the persecutors of His children and to those of them who thus suffered? He will dispense to such as troubled them tribulation, and rest to His now troubled children—rest with Paul and His companions in loving service for their sakes.

The danger is of allowing in this day of grace a judicial spirit, and this not only in our own minds like the sons of Zebedee who would have called down fire from heaven to consume the adversaries, but also in our interpretation of God's dealings with others if not with ourselves: The apostle would have the saints bright in their severest troubles, joyfully anticipating the day of requital when the sufferings of the saints shall be swallowed up in the glorious rest of the saints, the rest of God we may add, while their troublers become the objects of His unsparing judgment. For it will be the day of God's righteous award, in reversal of this day when Satan blinds princes and peoples, as he did when they crucified the Lord of glory.

This being so, persecutions and trouble were no indications of the day of the Lord; rather were they proofs that that day had not yet dawned and that grace still calls and would arm the saints unto all endurance with joyfulness. How different it will be for saints and for sinners when that day of the Lord is really come! How solemn yet blessed the change when the wicked fall into the hands of the living God, who is not unrighteous to forget the work of faith and the labor of love on the part of His children mean while called as they are to endure a great fight of afflictions!

For in that day of righteous judgment it will be a “revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of His power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to those that know not God, and to those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

It will be observed that not a word here hints that this is the moment when the Lord comes to gather the saints to Himself. It is not the action of sovereign grace which translates the saints waiting for Him to heaven, but the display of judicial righteousness by the Lord when He appears in glory. Then, and not till then, will be the day of divinely apportioned trouble to the troublers, and of rest to the troubled who suffered for Christ's sake and for righteousness. How unsuitable to be revealed “in flaming fire with angels of power” to receive unto Himself the children of God, His bride, and to present them with Himself in the Father's house!

Here it is a question of rendering vengeance not to unbelievers distinguished by two marks, as Calvin says, but to two distinct objects of judgment, to those that know not God, the Gentiles, described thus expressly in 1 Thess. 4:5, and in substance throughout Scripture; and to those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus, as the Jews might well be regarded, who, outwardly owning the true God and boasting of His law, were now the most resolute, whether vehement or sullen, in disobeying the gospel.

God is never indifferent to good or evil, and His children learn this and bow to it in His word now, knowing that, if they suffer with Christ, they shall also reign together. Their adversaries despise, hate, and persecute His unwelcome witnesses of grace and truth who seek to adorn the teaching of their Savior God in all things. Is this day of grace to go on indefinitely? Not so; that day hastens when His judgment will be revealed, and as glory, honor and peace will be the portion of every soul that does goof, so tribulation and anguish upon every one that doeth evil, to Jew and Gentile, for there is no respect of persons: evil will be treated as nothing but evil when the Lord arises to judge, and this in the most manifest way before the universe.

Hence the importance, not only that sovereign grace should take to heaven the saints that are awaiting Him, but that righteous judgment should be displayed at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of His power in flaming fire. For the day will then have come to render vengeance to His and their enemies, whether they be Gentiles that know not God or they be Jews, who (if not so ignorant as the nations) cannot deny that they obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. As a man cannot shake off his responsibility according to what he once knew of God (Rom. 1:19-21) and his conscience also as well as the law (Rom. 2:12-15), so he must then be made to feel the guilt of his unbelief in his insubjection of God's glad tidings concerning his Son. And this suitably comes into manifestation before the world when Christ is no longer hidden in God but revealed in heaven, in order to bring out and display the government of God in power and righteousness and peace; as all the prophets bore witness from early days, and now the New Testament (so-called) sets its seal to the Old.

Thus was the balance of truth readjusted in the souls of the Thessalonians who had been led to fear that their grievous troubles were the beginning of the day of the Lord. They were now to learn that this could not possibly be true from the essential character of that day, as one of rest to the troubled saints and of retributive trouble to their foes; for as it will be the time of divine recompence, so infallibly the Judge of all the earth will do right. It is not that the saints might not individually go to be with Christ meanwhile, nor even that He might not previously come for our

gathering together unto Him; but there will be no public display of their righteously awarded rest and of vengeance on their adversaries till He is revealed thus in flaming fire. Such is the solemn fact, and this the distinctive principle therein, and the result of the revelation of the Lord from heaven, as here made known to the agitated saints in Thessalonica. The apostle too knew what tribulation was, and looked for this rest with them, as they were entitled to expect it with him, in that day which was still before them all; for as yet he and they were exposed to pass through trouble, and their persecutors were for the present in honor and ease and power without God. In that day the tables will be turned, His friends at rest and His enemies in trouble. It will be the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven in judgment of the quick.

On 2 Thessalonians 1:9-12

We have had the objects of the Lord's dealing at His revelation from heaven; and they are clearly His enemies, in no way or degree His friends. It. is His judgment of all the earth, who cannot fail to do right. This is made yet more apparent by the solemn description which follows:— “Who (οἵτινες, men of the class which) shall pay as penalty everlasting destruction from [the] presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all that believed) in that day. Whereunto we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of the calling and fulfill every good pleasure of goodness and work of faith with power; so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and [the] Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ver. 9-12).

Present tribulation then though persecutors differs essentially from the trouble of that day which shall fall not on saints but on those that hate and injure them. In that day their persecutors shall pay the penalty of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. Like Matt. 25:31-46, it is not the great white throne judgment of the wicked dead; it is the judgment of the quick; yet is it final. Their perdition is irretrievable, everlasting from His presence and from the glory of His power; the wicked here (like apostates in Israel, Dan. 12:2) are abandoned to shame and everlasting contempt.

On the other hand, the Lord shall have come at that time to be glorified in His saints and to be wondered at in all those that believed. Blessed prospect “in that day,” and comforting in this day for the Thessalonians to hear themselves included, among those to be thus a marvel to His praise; for this appears to be the gracious motive of the parenthesis, “because our testimony unto you was believed.” The saints in Thessalonica might have erred as to the dead, and been misled as to the living; yet the apostle quietly confirms their souls by the intimation that the divine testimony borne by himself and others had not been in vain, but had really taken effect upon them.

The careful reader will observe that the Lord is not said in that day to come for the saints and receive them to Himself, and present them in the Father's house, as in John 14. Here He will have come to be glorified in them, and to be marveled at in all those that believed. It is an evidently different and subsequent part of His advent: not the hidden scene, so near to the Lord's desire, that where He is, they also may be with Him, that they may behold His glory which the Father had given Him, but the outer display, Christ in them and the Father in Him, when they are in glory thus perfected in one, as we see in Rev. 21:23, 24, and the world will know thereby that the Father sent the Son and loved the saints, appearing with Him in glory, even as He loved Him. Compare John 17. The translation of His saints to heaven is one thing; quite another and subsequent is their appearing with Him in judgment.

Further, it is interesting to notice the accuracy of the preterite, “believed,” instead of the “believe” of the Received Text, in verse 10. The former is not only the reading in the Complutensian edition, but that of all the uncials, almost. all cursives, and the ancient versions and Fathers, unless a Latin copy or two. Erasmus seems to have misled Stephens, Beza, and others, and so our Authorized

translators. No doubt the present is much the most frequent; but when the aorist occurs, there is always a special propriety as here. For the glorious display, which is predicated of the saints, refers with this reading expressly to the past believers. The importance of this becomes the more impressive on our learning that the great harvest of blessing for man on earth follows, He and the glorified reigning over the world, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah (and of His glory, Hab. 2:14) as the waters cover the sea, Isa. 11:9. In that day it will be no longer a question of faith as now; and hence the monstrous error of the Peschito (not the Phloxenian) Syriac, &c., which connect the believing of our testimony with that day, and thus make it future, in flat contradiction of the Scripture before them. Whatever may be the dealings of grace in that day, the apostle carefully restricts the faith and the glorious reward here described to a reception of the testimony before the display of glory and of righteous judgment arrives.

Thus was the way gradually made plain for the more complete and decisive correction of the error which had been foisted in at Thessalonica. The true nature of God's intervention has been cleared. That day will be characterized by the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire. This it would be hard for the most resolute spiritualizer to apply to any such providential events as were then in progress, of which the enemy was taking advantage to mislead the saints. Nor had men gone so far in those early days as in later, when Macknight could say that, when the apostles wrote, there were, four comings of Christ to happen—three of them figurative, but the fourth a real and personal appearing; that these different comings are frequently spoken of in Scripture; and that, although the coming of Christ to destroy Jerusalem (1), and to establish His everlasting kingdom, be represented by His apostles as then at hand, no passage from their writings can be produced in which His personal appearance to judge the world is said or even insinuated to be at hand! The truth is that it is one and the same appearing of the Lord which shall overthrow the last head of Gentile power, destroy the man of sin, and display the saints in glory, as He will judge the world in righteousness in that day also. Nothing can be farther from the truth than that the Spirit does not speak of one and the same day, which is invariably declared to be at hand, not at a great distance. Moreover, the presence of the Lord to gather His own to be with Him on high is not distinct from the various aspects of His appearing we have just enumerated, but is necessarily anterior to them, for they follow Him out of heaven for that day and appear with Him in glory, instead of being just then caught up to meet Him. His coming for the saints is sovereign grace completing its work for us; His revelation from heaven, when rendering vengeance to His enemies and glorified in His saints, is righteous and retributive government in that day.

Now the apostle lets the saints know his prayer for them, of course in view of their existing circumstances and need. “Whereunto we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of the calling, and fulfill every good pleasure of goodness and work of faith in power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” He had already, while introducing the preliminary topic of their persecutions, sought to lift up their hearts by speaking of their endurance and faith in all such troubles. It was a manifest token of God's righteous judgment to the end of their being counted worthy of His kingdom, for which they too suffered, as the apostle might well remind them, instead of their tribulation being an indication that God's judgments were let loose upon them. So now he also prays always for them that God would count them worthy of the calling. Elsewhere we hear of

“His” calling, and of “your” calling, and again of “the calling wherewith ye are called.” Here it seems better to leave “the” in its own generality than to restrict it simply to “your.” The next clause is that He would bring to completion every good pleasure of goodness and work of faith in power. Certainly this could not be, if they were driven from their steadfastness by listening to the delusion of false teachers. Confidence in the Master's grace produces faithful service, and loves to own that, whatever purpose of goodness may be, whatever work of faith, it is only God that fulfills each and all in power; “so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” As He is not here in fact, nor yet reigning over the universe, the name of our Lord, the revelation of Himself, is given us that it may in the power of the Spirit be glorified in us, as we serve the true God and await His Son from heaven. It is a question of keeping His word and not denying His name, whatever the difficulty or discouragements.

But the apostle adds, “and ye in Him,” for his eye was ever on the bright day, and he would have theirs drawn from their troubles and every possible misconstruction of them to that manifestation of the glory of His might and righteousness. For as surely as His name is glorified in the saints now, still more fully, yea absolutely, in that day shall they be glorified in Him, as He is in them (ver. 10). It is no mere iteration of the previous intimation of the apostle, but fresh thoughts completing all, such as only the inspiring Spirit could furnish. To say “in it” for “in Him,” would be havoc with the truth in general, as well as the context; yet it has been said, doubtless through rage for novelty and lack of appreciating the truth. May we be kept walking surely in the truth according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, even as the apostle prayed for his dear Thessalonians. An admirable introduction, before directly touching the error by which they had been drawn aside from the freshness of hope into agitation and fear, the result of a misjudgment of the deep trials that were pressing on them.

It is needless to discuss here at length the true bearing of the last clause, which some, out of zeal for the divine glory of our Lord, would have to designate His person only. “of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.” But, though this is grammatically a quite possible construction, as it is dogmatically also true in itself, contextual suitability is another matter. That one article in the singular may in Greek designate even distinct persons, if the object be to express their union in a common category (as here in “grace"), ought to be known not only to scholars in general, but familiarly to all students of the later body of revelation in its original tongue. Supposing God the Father to be here meant, as well as the Lord Jesus Christ, the insertion of the Greek article was not at all required, though we need “the” before Lord Jesus Christ. On the contrary, its insertion in Greek would have been an intrusive error, if both were expressly to be united in a common object; for the repeated article would have had for its effect to present the persons as separate agents rather than as joined. And the nature of the case as well as the clearly revealed truth of Scripture shows abundantly that the joint agency of these blessed persons could not be, save in that which lies behind all, the unity of the divine nature.

Chapter 12

On 2 Thessalonians 2:1

THE apostle now enters on the correction of the error which, as we shall see, false teachers had foisted in among the Thessalonians. It cannot be doubted that the early believers, whether those directly addressed or others elsewhere who received the epistles, understood and profited by the instruction conveyed. But it seems demonstrable that too soon afterward the bare meaning of the apostle's words was lost, if we may judge from ancient versions and comments; and it is equally plain that modern translators and Christian writers in general have not recovered its real scope till this day. In the verse before us, asis sometimes the case, the misunderstanding of a single word is the cause and proof of confusion prolific and irremediable. For if Scripture, however unintentionally, be made to speak not alone ambiguously but in a way that misleads, the result, as far as it goes, is fatal. With the strongest desire to avoid exaggeration and, yet more, falsely accusing any soul, one is bound for the truth's sake to record the conviction that grave mischief is here done in the Revised Version, by the introduction of “touching” into their text, and “on behalf of” into their margin. It will be shown that neither suits the context. We are in no way limited to these re-flexions of the Greek, especially where connected with words of entreaty. The Authorized Version in the main point before us is substantially better; yet this misrendering has been considered by not a few as a decided improvement, because the aim or argument of the apostle is for the most part misapprehended.

In a comparatively minor detail of the verse that follows, the Revisers have shown better scholarship; for neither “by” nor any substitute for it has a right to stand in the last clause. The structure of the phrase not only requires no such insertion but absolutely precludes and condemns any supplement of the kind. Christ's coming and our gathering together unto Him are expressly bound together as closely associated events of the deepest moment to the saints. The older translation shows that those responsible for it paid no heed to this, the unequivocal import of the construction; for they have, on the contrary, interpolated a word which, however small, severs the objects, which the form of the original does and could not but intimate to be in the strictest union. The Revisers were therefore at liberty and indeed responsible as faithful translators to expunge the second “by.” They thereby present the coming of the Lord Jesus and our gathering together unto Him as the two parts of the joint idea brought before us by the Holy Spirit.

But the great question is, what is the real bearing, in this connection, of that joint object before the reader? and what in particular is the true force of the preposition employed by the Spirit of God? The Authorized Version says “by,” the Revisers give “touching” in the text, and in the margin they add “Gr. in behalf of.” The usage of ■περ, if we come to facts even in the New Testament alone, is pretty wide; but the context as ever has immense and distinct and decisive control in helping us to determine the intended import. There is the difficulty that 4pani;1, b7rEp is only found here, whereas ep. 7repi is of frequent occurrence and unquestioned meaning. Compare John 17 where it is found repeatedly, and can have but one force, to pray or make request for in the sense of” touching” or “concerning.” Is it critical, or reasonable that Of. l`nrp should mean the same? It appears to me beyond doubt that it is not. The Revisers themselves give us not only “in behalf of”

but “for the sake of,” or more briefly and far more commonly “for.” Now “in behalf of” renders no just sense in this context; but what of “for” or “for the sake of?” “Now we beseech you, brethren, for (or, for the sake of) the corning of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him,” &c.

Here we have a definite sense which fits in admirably with the connection. It is the bright object of hope and assured comfort whereby the apostle besought the saints not to be distracted by the agitating apprehension, spread by false teachers, that the day of the Lord had actually dawned. How far the Authorized translators may have so regarded the context, it is difficult to say; but the transition from “for the sake of,” or “for” to “by reason of” or “by” is easy, and in this case might perhaps be allowed to approximate. Even Bishop Ellicott, who adopted “touching” for want of duly appreciating the contextual bearing if not necessity, admits that an adjurative meaning is grammatically tenable: and certain it is that from the Vulgate to Erasmus, Zwingle, Calvin, Piscator, Beza, Estius, &c., a crowd of others hold to this as the true scope. Meyer first assumes that it is strange to the New Testament, and then argues against the reasonableness of the apostle's choosing for the object of adjuration the very point he is going to instruct them on. But this is an oversight. They are distinct and even contrasted objects.

I cannot but think therefore that while the Authorized Version in substance gives the sense, the Revisers have missed it completely, and substituted a meaning which tends to obscure and falsify the passage. The adjurative force “by” with a verb of entreaty is known from the earliest extant remains of classical Greek; and none can deny that the force of a motive or plea (“for the sake of” or “for”) abode to the last and nowhere more usual than in the Hellenistic Greek of the New Testament. So rendered, the phrase runs consistently, and the argument or ground of entreaty yields a meaning in perfect accordance with the verse that follows, and the entire paragraph. The blessed hope of being caught up to the Lord at His coming or presence is a most intelligible preservative against the false and disquieting rumor that the day of His judgment of the earth had come. Every one can understand, when it is brought before him, that such a consoling and transporting prospect, if always in view, is calculated to deliver from the agitation and fear created by the delusive cry that the terrible day of the Lord was there. And so the apostle conjures them, not by “the day of the Lord,” concerning which he was about to teach them (as he had been laying a ground for it in the previous chapter), but by “His presence” to gather them to Himself above, which was full of joyful association; as the subject-matter he treats of—the day—was full of terror, especially as misrepresented by some at Thessalonica.

But where is the propriety of the supposition that the apostle beseeches them touching the coming of the Lord and the gathering of the saints unto Him, &c?

Did not the Revisers, like others who have thur translated the clause, assume that the presence of coming of our Lord is identical with His day, and render verse here “touching,” either because they quite identified these events in their thoughts, or because they had no distinct notion of the context? Now if the coming of the Lord be treated as the same as His day, what is the force of beseeching them touching the same matter as is denied to be then present? If the day of the Lord be a source of disquiet and awful anxiety, nothing can be more appropriate than to beg them, for the sake of their most longed-for blessing in hope, not to be troubled by the false teaching that the dreaded epoch was come.

Further, it is incorrect that “the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him” is the subject-matter either before or after the entreaty in the verses before us. The reader has only to examine the preceding chapter i. in order to be satisfied that the apostle has been laying bare the character of the day of the Lord, when (not the hope of the saints shall be realized, but) the righteous judgment of God shall be manifested. It is for this last they are here exhorted to wait, in patience and faith enduring all present persecution and affliction. Then are the glorified saints to reign with Christ in the kingdom of God, for which they were yet suffering. Then, and not before, will God recompense affliction to those that afflict the saints, and on the other hand to the afflicted saints rest with Paul and his fellow-labourers, not when they are caught up to heaven, but when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with the angels of His power, rendering vengeance to those that know not God, and to those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. For then the day will have come for His and their enemies to suffer as punishment everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come, not to translate His saints to the Father's house, but to be glorified in them, and to be marveled at in all those that believed in that day. Such is the real matter in hand, not in a single phrase the coming of the Lord to have us changed into His glorious likeness and in the Father's presence, but our appearing with Him in glory to the confusion of His adversaries overthrown before the wondering world, the day of righteous award for both to God's glory. Hence, if the apostle had been beseeching the saints “touching” the subject in discussion, and as to which they needed rectification, it ought to have been the day of the Lord and of our reigning in the kingdom with Hun. The Revisers appear to have confounded the coming with the day of the Lord; whereas the one is the comfort against the fear of the other.

Equally plain is the bearing of what follows. For the apostle tells the saints that the day, of which the misleaders had falsely spoken as actually there, could not be, however men may beguile about it, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed; and of course therefore the power and person that restrains meanwhile must a fortiori be taken out of the way. For the mystery of lawlessness already works; not yet is the lawless one revealed till the restraint is gone. Once it is, the full display of Satan's power takes its course in the revelation of the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and bring to naught, not by His coming simply, but by “the manifestation of His coming.” Here again it is the day of the Lord, when righteous judgment, deals publicly with friends and adversaries, and not His coming, when He gathers His saints to Himself on high.

Can evidence then be asked more complete than what the context before and after furnishes that the apostle beseeches the saints for (or by) their inspiriting hope not to be upset in mind nor to be troubled about the day of the Lord as if come with its terrors? To beseech them touching that day, which he had himself painted in the most vivid colors, not to be uneasy as if it were now present, seems vapid and lame, as unlike the accustomed energy and precision of the apostle as can be conceived.

That there is a marked distinction between the Lord's coming and His day had already been laid before the Thessalonians in chapters iv. and v. of the First Epistle respectively. Verses 15-17 of chap. iv. explicitly show us the character and circumstances, the aim and consequences, of the coming of our Lord Jesus when the saints, dead or living, are gathered unto Him; as chap. v. 1-3 plainly opens out the dread effect of that day when it comes on the wicked. There is the strongest

contrast between them; and not a word intimates that they occur at the same moment, though, no doubt, when the day arrives, it is still the coming of the Lord, and indeed not this only, “but the manifestation of His coming,” and therefore, with the utmost suitability called His day. On the other hand, neither here nor in any part of Scripture is there a trace of the saints being caught up to meet the Lord in His day, which is a further and subsequent part of His presence, when it is not the consummation of His love to His own, but the outpouring of His just indignation on His enemies as well as the no less righteous display of His friends with Himself in the same glory

Chapter 13

On 2 Thessalonians 2:2

The misleaders at Thessalonica were not so infatuated as to imagine that the Lord had come, and by His presence gathered to Himself on high all the saints, whether departed, or alive and waiting for Him. Even they never dreamed that He had descended into the air, and translated all the once suffering children of God to be with Him glorified in heaven. Since it was patent to all eyes that the saints in Thessalonica, and their brethren throughout the world, were still on earth, they could hold no such suicidal thought as that the deceased saints were already raised from their graves, and that they themselves were left behind. The truth is that they were not thinking about the Lord's presence: their delusion was not on this score at all, but about “the day of the Lord,” as verse 2 makes clear and indisputable. They did conceive that this “day” was not merely “at hand,” which is true, but “present” which is false. Identify the coming with the day of the Lord, and all is confusion; distinguishing between them, you forthwith receive light, and need put no strain on the words, which are instructive in proportion to the discernment of their exact force.

For the Authorized Version is here wholly astray, and even inconsistent with its own rendering of every occurrence of the word elsewhere. The reader can compare Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 3:22; 7:26; Gal. 1:4; 2 Tim. 3:1; and Heb. 9:9), which form the entire range of the word in the New Testament. Not only does it not convey “at hand” in any one of the other cases, but such a sense would be everywhere absurd and impossible. In the first two references “things present” (4veaTUr1a) are contrasted with “things to come.” This could not be if the word really bore the sense of “just coming, imminent, or at hand.” So again in the third instance the distress was actually “present,” not merely threatening but already come. Just as evidently in the fourth it is “the present age, evil as it is,” O aiisvv aTOS or O vuv abin, as the apostle calls it in Rom. 12:2 and 1 Tim. 6:17, contrasted with “that” or “the coming age” (Luke 8:20; 20:35; Heb. 6:5), which is the very reverse, being good, righteous, peaceful, and glorious. Nor should we wonder; since Satan shall no longer be the prince of the power of the air or god of the next age as he is of this (2 Cor. 4:4), but cast out and restrained, and the Lord reigning in displayed power and glory instead of being as now hid in God. So even the different and future form, e_VITT,o-ovTat in 2 Tim. 3:1, does not mean that difficult or grievous times “impend,” but shall actually “come.” “Shall be soon coming” would altogether enfeeble the sense and ruin its force. Not otherwise is it with the last reference, where the meaning beyond controversy is “for the present time.” One can hardly conceive any reasonable man construing the phrase of the time soon to come or at hand. The future will be regulated on distinct principles, as to which Scripture is not silent.

Thus, on the ground of the New Testament usage, the weightiest help of all for our guidance in translating a disputed word, there can be no hesitation that the Revised Version is justified, and the Authorized Version at fault, as to the very important word at the end of the verse, the hinge of all sound exposition of the passage. But what of its use in the Septuagint, of such approved and acknowledged value as being the Hellenistic forerunner of New Testament Greek? The first instance which Trom (Concord. Gr. in Sept. i. 529) cites from Theodotion's version of Dan. 7:5 is a ridiculous blunder, Eh' icalpovs evecmithi. The Aldine etas not so far wrong, yet reading 49

11,4)0in which is hardly intelligible, and it has the same error as to the verb. The Complutensian gave it rightly, EiS. pipos Ev itr-reiOv as in the Alexandrian and Vatican MSS. The Chisian copy of the true Septuagint gives 47ri TOa evos 7rXevpoi; eaTfiet. But this effaces the only instance save in the Apocryphal books; where Trom gives 3 Esdras 5, 72 [47], 9, 6, 1 Mac. xii. 44 • 2 Mac. 17; iv. 43; xii. 3, every one of which confirms the Revised Version in all respects, and the Authorized Version in every case save the unfounded “is at hand” before us.

It may be added that the word, at least in the perfect, is used in ordinary classical authors precisely as in the New Testament. See Herod. i. 83; Isoc. 82 B; Polyb. i. 71, 4; Plut. Lucull. 13; Dem. 255, 10, of 274, 6. The three instances, like the rest cited by Deans Liddell and Scott, in their admirable Lexicon(Aristoph. Nub. 779, Isaeus 88. 40, Dem. 896, 29), are of the usual import, not “imminent” but “present,” actually begun and going on. In each the suit was already begun, even if still pending. It is the same beyond doubt with O vbv evecnipciiisLycurg. 148, 32; TOO 6,ECIT. 14711/09, Phil. ap.Dem. 280. 12 means the present month, not one soon coming; and so does EVE07. MAE/LOS in Aesch. 35, 27. And xp(ivos dv means the present, not future tense; as vaey.taTa ev., Plat. Legg. 378 B, means wounds inflicted, not merely threatened; and Ta ev., or ev. 77-pc7,11,ara, Xen. Hell. 2. 1, 6; Polyb. 2. 26, 3, means present circumstances, in no case “at hand.” Not any instance has been produced where the word in the perfect can be shown to mean a state of things not yet commenced. The sense therefore, in writings as well profane as sacred, is “present,” not “at hand.”

This may suffice in a well-grounded way to assure the reader that the error so unscrupulously taught by fanatics in Thessalonica was, not that the day is “at hand” (for the apostle himself taught this expressly in Rom. 13:12), but that it had actually come. The mischievous men were probably of similar type as Hymenmus and Philetus, “who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:18). The resurrection could be only thus explained away as accomplished, by reducing it allegorically to some spiritual privilege already received. Some such attenuation by giving a present bearing is as easily understood, if not more so, as of the day of the Lord. For while that day can never be fulfilled in all its scope, till Jehovah executes judgment on the quick here below and brings in His own reign, when all things rejoice instead of groaning as now, yet judicial inflictions in God's ways on Israel or the heathen were designated by “that day” in the Old Testament. Take Isa. 3; 7 and still more evidently xiii., and xix.; and what can be clearer than that a then sweeping and exterminating judgment on a people and country, as then on Babylon or on Egypt, is called the “day of the Lord” on them, though no doubt there remained momentous elements as yet unfulfilled which await “the day” in the fullest sense at the end of the age?

Joel 1; 2, illustrates this same thing. The day of the Lord is similarly introduced and with similar characteristics. It is a day that comes as a destruction from the Almighty; a day of darkness and of gloominess; a day of cloud and of thick darkness; great and very terrible, and who can abide it? but a day which, however it might fall on any in a measure though Medes or Persians, though Greeks or Romans, looks onward to its completeness really when the Lord rises up to shake not the earth only but also heaven. Compare Zeph. 1:7-18 with iii. 8-20, Zech. 12-14

Now it is very intelligible that a misleader might avail himself of this germinant or partial application of the prophecies in ancient times to affirm that the sore troubles and persecution the

Thessalonians were then enduring along with external distress, and political convulsion, &c., were the proof (not indeed of Christ's presence, or that the saints were translated to heaven, which twofold event could not of course be pretended in any way to have taken place, for it is here pleaded as a self-evident guard against the error in circulation, but) that the day of the Lord's dealing with the living on earth had begun, and that the saints were involved in its terrors. So far in fact were any from so egregious a fancy as that Christ had come, that I must reiterate the apostle could entreat them by (or, for the sake of) His presence and our gathering together unto Him, that they should not credit the alarming rumor that His day was there. That is, every believer in his senses could not but know that Christ had not come, but sat in heaven still, and that the saints were still on earth instead of being caught up to Him above. Therefore the apostle does make this a ground of appeal why they should not receive the mischievous report, no matter how strongly in appearance commended, that His day had actually dawned. Christ's presence and our gathering unto Him on high must precede that day. That on the one hand so great a joy, so bright a hope, was not yet the portion of the saints, and that on the other while Christ was still absent they themselves and their brethren were as yet on earth, were obvious facts and irrefragable reasons why the day could not be come. They are to appear from heaven following Christ to bring in that day. See Rev. 17:14; 19:14. In order to this they must be translated there before and we see them symbolized as in heaven from Rev. 4 and onward.

The phraseology too, if scrutinized, will be found consistent only with this view, irreconcilable with the popular confusion which clouds these verses. For the apostle is beseeching the Thessalonians, as we have seen, “that ye be not quickly shaken in [lit.. from your] mind nor yet troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by letter as from [lit. by] us, as that, the day of the Lord is present.” As it is an offense against every sound exegetical principle to imagine that “the coming of the Lord” in verse l differs from that which had been so distinctly revealed in the first Epistle, ch. iv., so equally are we bound to interpret “the day of the Lord” here with what was laid down in ch. v. Providential or figurative applications are thus out of the question. The New Testament at least employs both terms in the full and final sense.

Those who in our day speak of a figurative coming of the Lord are on the same ground with the fabulists of Thessalonica who insinuated a figurative clay of the Lord, with this difference (it is true) that the former apply that coming to the future, the latter to the time then present. Consistency of interpretation refutes both. A partial moaning of either term is excluded from these epistles, which in all fairness cannot be allowed consistently to teach anything short of the complete events. The resurrection of the saints bound up with Christ's coming, and the awful depth and extent of the judgment to be executed on the apostate powers of evil and on all who, believing not the truth, had pleasure in unrighteousness, point unmistakably to the intervention of the Lord in person.

(Brown's Christ's Second Coming, sixth edition, pp. 4249, 425-433; Elliott's Horn Apocalyptim, fifth edition, 91 et sego., iv. 184-187.)

We are told by excellent and intelligent Christians that the apostle's object here was to calm down the toe ardent or wild anticipation of the Lord's immediate return. But as to this the prevalent confusion meets us. It took a stirring form, saysits champion, in the Thessalonian church. Their inexperienced minds and warm hearts were plied with the thrilling proclamation that the day of Christ [rather, “of the Lord"] was at hand or imminent [not so, for euffeTykce never means this but

“is present"]. Is it not passing strange that able Christian men who differ very widely as to Christ's advent and reign should coalesce in an evident misapprehension of what the apostle does say and mean? He “fearlessly crushed” the delusion that the day was come. He besought them by (or, for the sake of) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him not to be troubled by that false alarm. This was a powerful motive against believing the dreaded day to have arrived: but how could such a hope disprove the view that the day was “at hand,” oven if he did not himself so teach elsewhere? It is exactly a premillennialist who could most fully be expected to make or appreciate that entreaty. A post-millennialist does not even comprehend it as it stands, but instinctively slips off into false rendering and bad exegesis, and this from the necessity of a starting-point which effectually bars intelligence of the moaning. He therefore naturally and utterly mistakes both what the Thessalonians thought, and what the apostle says in opposition to their thought. Those alone are right who affirm that the apostle meant only to deny that the day of the Lord had begun or was actually present; and one may hope that the passage is on the way to be so understood, now that the Revisers have corrected this faulty verse.

The “long and complicated series of events” to be developed, the very commencement of which was retarded by an obstacle then in being while the apostle wrote, was to crush, not the waiting for Christ's coming as a proximate hope, but the false statement that the day of the Lord was there already. The designing men in question did not set themselves systematically to urge the nearness of His coming, which, all the New Testament does; their pretension to spiritual inspiration, their solemn utterance, their forgery of a letter under Paul's name, were all to give color and currency to the wholly distinct and false insinuation that the day of the Lord was come.

Hence it was not enthusiastic and feverish excitement associated with the expectation of Christ's coming and the fruition of the Christian's joy with Him in glory; it was the operation of dismay and terror, as if that day of unsparing judgment and of inevitable horror had set in on them. To be “shaken” from their [or, in] mind or “agitated” (0-racuo;jpai) is descriptive of the disquiet and perturbation caused by fear; still more plainly does it flow from the same source to be “frightened,” or “troubled” (0p060-0a,), which (less, if possible, than (7) suits the impatient and impetuous enthusiasm of a wrongly excited hope. It is in a quite different connection that we read in the last chapter of disorderly brethren who did not work as became them: spurious fear or hope might produce this result; but nothing of the kind is implied here in chapter ii.

It will be seen that all this warping of details, as well as false teaching as a whole, by men otherwise to be respected, turns on the erroneous assumption that the express subject of discourse is the second personal coming of our Lord; and that it is to guard against the notion that His personal coming was “at hand” or imminent. Not so: this is divine truth everywhere taught in the New Testament, and nowhere so constantly, clearly, and urgently as in these epistles. The apostle is really exposing and uprooting the delusion that the day of the Lord was now present. Do those confusing expositors aver that the Thessalonian dealers in judgment-day false alarm thought or pretended that the Lord Himself was come or present in power and glory? The fact is, that on the contrary the apostle begs the saints, by His coming which would gather them together to Him in perfect peace and endless joy, not to be troubled with the deceptive cry that the day so awe-inspiring had begun. This cry is nowhere imputed to a misconstruction of the apostle's words in the first epistle. Even if we punctuate with Lachmann, and Theile, &c., or with Webster and Wilkinson, the only real meaning is the claim of a spirit of communication, oral ministry, and a

letter, falsely attributed to the apostle; and it in no way emanated from really earnest Christians, but from fraudulent men who misled them. Tertulliau and Chrysostom are right, Whitby &c. quite wrong.

A Christian writer of late contends for a figurative sense here only to be given to the coming or presence of our Lord in verse 1, supplemented by verse 8, because, he rightly thinks, the destruction of Antichrist immediately precedes not the eternal state but the millennial reign. Hence, as he will not have the reign of our Lord to be personal, he construes His antecedent coming as a figure. Now the decisive answer is, not only that in other New Testament cases (and notably in these epistles, as he himself allows) the presence (vapovaia) of our Lord is invariably personal and in grace, and not merely providential and in judgment, but that His presence is inseparably joined to “our gathering together to Him.” Will he venture to say that the translation of the saints to heaven is here figurative? and why should both be literal in 1 Thess. 4 where they are also (though in another way) shown to be indissolubly bound as immediate cause and consequence? Such a figurative force given to our Lord's coming is overturned by our gathering together unto Him conjoined to it; as it would also nullify the apostle's appeal grounded) on that blessed hope not yet realized) against the imposture that the day of the Lord was come. The truth is that the post-millennial coming is a myth, not less certainly than the Thessalonian delusion about the day, and every form of the popular misinterpretation based on the false translation of these verses„ especially of e_ CT)/!GEV in verse 2. To argue on the π. of the man of sin in verse 9, as if it is assuredly to be impersonal, shows how prejudice can blind a usually vigorous reasoner to build one assumption on another, without one element of solid truth more than in the fabled piling of Ossa on Pelion. The coming of our Lord and our gathering to Him above; which all must have known to be yet future, is the motive to dispel the delusion that His day had arrived; and hence His coming is not identified with His day, the real subject in question (which would be senseless), but contra-distinguished from it. Never can there be an intelligent grasp of the Apostle's reasoning, never a comprehensive view of the context, till this distinction is seized, an immense help to the understanding of other scriptures.

Chapter 14

On 2 Thessalonians 2:3

It will have been observed that the subject-matter was no new revelation to the Thessalonians. It had particularly occupied the apostle's spirit when he had visited their city, not only in teaching the saints but even in the public preaching to the world. And his first epistle had set out carefully for all the saints, asleep or alive, the circumstances, order, character, and issue of the Lord's “coming” (especially since some misapprehension had sprung up in their minds touching the deceased); as he had not kept back the solemn nature of the judgment awaiting men in their unbelief when His “day” comes suddenly upon them. He had now applied His coming in all its joyful associations to dispel the fresh and alarming error that the “day” had arrived—an error for which its propagandists falsely alleged the highest authority, spirit, word, and letter even of the apostle himself. For it is sad to see that, when the truth is lost, those who depart from it are apt to be no longer truthful, and become the dupes of Satan by unscrupulous perversion to give zealous currency to their error. But the apostle entreats the saints by Christ's coming and their consequent gathering unto Him on high not to be shaken or troubled by any such dream as that His day was come. They must be with Him before it, in order to appear with Him in glory when that day comes for the judgment of the quick. When men are saying Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, so that they shall not escape. Nothing like this had happened as yet: rather the converse of trouble and persecution for the saints, and of ease for their troublers, which is to be exactly reversed when that day comes.

From verse 3 begins a new line of disproof, not a motive from their blessed hope, but a reason founded on the positive fact that the stupendous evil about to work in its successive steps must be developed and manifested in its last and ripened form, with which “the day of the Lord” is to deal according to the prophetic word.

“ Let none deceive you in any way; because [it will not be] except the falling away shall have come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” (Verse 3.)

Not a hint drops as to “the coming of the Lord.” Tyndale's Version of 1534 and Cranmer's of 1539 are therefore inexcusable in supplying the ellipse with the words, “for the Lord shall not come,” &c. Wiclif and the Rhemish avoid the matter by their usual adherence to the Vulgate, which literally reflects the incomplete structure of the Greek. The Geneva and Authorized Versions so far rightly cleave to “the day.” It is a question of “the” day of the Lord. His “coming” is kept apart from these predicted enormities, which must surely be fulfilled, each in its season, but both before that “day” come, in which the Lord is to punish them. But there is a careful reserve as to His coming, which is kept outside prophetic times and seasons as a constant hope, having only been introduced as a motive why the saints should not lend an ear to the unfounded and absurd rumor, whatever the authority claimed for it, that “the day” had come already. The Lord at any rate had clearly not come: else the saints had been at once gathered together unto Him. above. But His presence indisputably was not yet a fact; and it would, when fulfilled, preserve them from the overwhelming experiences of that day, as the hope of it in their souls would deliver them from those vain fables

and fears. His coming, or presence, is not the opening but precursor of the day of the Lord; His appearing does synchronize with that day.

But the saints were liable to be beguiled in other ways: hence the fresh warning, and the distinct instruction that the apostasy must come before that day, and the revelation of the man of sin. Let us consider both in the light of the word. They are assumed to be more or less known already. Scripture has furnished light as to both; and the apostle had not been silent as to either when personally with them.

Our Authorized translators have utterly weakened the sense by rendering ■ ■π. “a” falling away. Beyond doubt it is “the apostacy,” and there is no ground whatever for depriving the phrase of its intentionally definite force. Nobody can pretend that it is abstract: and a quality would not have the article in Greek more than in English; so that Archbishop Newcome was as wrong in the principle as in the particular case. In the New Testament the word occurs only in Acts 21:21, and there is anarthrous, which testifies to the emphasis here expressed. There however it means “apostacy,” though not “the apostacy” as here. This is better than softening it to falling away or forsaking. A verbal form occurs in 1 Tim. iv. 1, where “apostatize” should have been preserved both for the sake of consistency, and to maintain the definite expression of religious defection. For this it means, not corruption but abandonment, as politically it expresses revolt from authority. See the Septuagint for its use in both these ways.

Here then we have in this brief but expressive phrase the Holy Spirit's expression of that state of things which must precede the day of the Lord. (1) The apostacy must come first; and (2) the man of sin must be revealed, the son of perdition.

(1) In 1 Tim. 4 it is only some in later times who apostatize from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies branded in their own conscience, &c. It is an ascetic departure front the faith in the pretension to superior sanctity, but real denial of God's rights as Creator and grace as Savior. Here it is no such partial turning away, but the extreme and general defection from the gospel, which will boldly issue in the abandonment of all revealed truth and of what may be called natural religion, the testimony to the Godhead in creation and man's conscience. It is the revolt which the prophetic word declares shall characterize the end of this age, as is so largely and variedly revealed in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, in the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Revelation. Deut. 31; 32, Psa. 10—xiv., Isa. 65; 66, Dan. 7:8, 11, 25; 9:27, may suffice for the Old Testament. In the New one may cite Matt. 12:31, 32, 43-45, Luke 17:26-30; 18:8, 2 Tim. 4:4, besides 2 Thess. 2, 2 Peter 3, Jude, and Revelation throughout. These Scriptures warrant the awful expectation that both Jews and Christians will abandon their profession of the truth for which they are respectively responsible, and God be left publicly and in general without a witness of His truth and glory here below, save in the confession of a persecuted remnant and in the execution of His solemn and ever deepening strokes of judgment.

Sad to say, the graver men among Jews and Mohammedans (probably instructed indirectly by Old Testament prophecy) allow more of the ruin here below and the approaching apostasy than many Christians do. Even the Aeusstilmans own that the Jews are for the mass to abandon the law, themselves the Koran, and the Christians the gospel, before God sends Jesus to judge the world. Certain Christians, misguided alas by the infidel dream of progress, look for a gradual advance of

Christendom to extend itself over all the world, if they do not, like some beguiled yet more by human vanity, expect a state of semi-perfection here below. Scripture however, though it proclaims the gospel of the kingdom, never admits for one moment a kingdom of the gospel, the common delusion of Papists and Protestants. The truth is, that Christendom returns rapidly to that pride, self-will, contempt of the truth and of real godliness, with moral degradation, which characterized the world before the gospel; and 2 Timothy had already prepared us for it. But “the apostasy” goes farther still and supposes the general renunciation of the public profession of the truth here below.

(2) Nor is this all; for the abandonment of the Christian faith leads to another and worse development of evil: the revelation of “the man of sin, the son of perdition.” He is to be the evident and personal contrast of Christ, the Man of righteousness, the Savior of the lost. He will concentrate in himself the wickedness of man and the destructive power which Satan wields, the antagonist of the Lord in a fullness which Judas Iscariot had only in measure, though both are designated alike by the same tremendous name (John 17:12) which points to a doom most signal.

Of this personage also Scripture speaks in both the Old Testament and the New. Without citing types in the Law, there is a wicked one within (not merely an enemy outside) who is everywhere prominent in the Psalms. Isa. 11:4 (formally in view of the Holy Spirit in our chapter 8) identifies him with the man of sin; and xxx 33, lvii. 9, describe him as “the king,” the usurper of His throne whose right it is, Dan. 11:36-39 yet more fully. The Lord speaks of him in John 5:43, as the Epistles of John call him “the Antichrist,” and Rev. 13 the second beast from the earth and false prophet who in Rev. 19 perishes with the last head of the fourth empire revived, or first beast from the sea.

Irreligious as he is, he none the less is a religious power, and is indeed such distinctively as compared with the then Emperor, the great political head of the West, as he is the religious chief in the East. Though he is a king, his main and marked influence is not as a secular power but in a religious way. None can doubt this who weighs the various passages of holy writ here brought together, or even this one capital revelation in our chapter. No doubt he is really as infidel as the secular power in the West, his wicked ally; but his characteristic is spiritual, backed by every sort of power and signs and wonders of falsehood according to the working of Satan, and by every sort of deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish.

It is notorious that unbelief has wrought in divers ways to divert this prophecy from its true object and real scope. Thus a little before and at and since the Reformation those who struggled against the papacy applied freely the man of sin to that corrupt hierarchy; as the later Greeks understood the apostacy of many oriental churches which fell into Islamism, and the man of sin to be Mohammed. So, when the French revolution broke out, and Napoleon Bonaparte rose on its fall, many applied the chapter to those stirring events; just as earlier men like Grotins, Wetstein, Whitby, &c., had applied it to the evils of the Jews and the destruction of their city and temple. But there remains the undeniable fact that the oldest extant interpretation, which survived for centuries among the ever darkening fathers Greek and Latin, recognized the yet future apostacy just before the close, and the personal Antichrist to be overthrown by the Lord Jesus returning for judgment. I attach no authority whatever to the statements of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus, of Tertullian and Lactantius. But even such as Jerome and Augustine, Cyril of Jerusalem and

Chrysostom, held firmly to a personal Antichrist to be destroyed by Christ appearing from heaven. As an expositor no ancient writer excels the eloquent Archbishop of Constantinople in simplicity and perhaps understanding of Scripture. Here is his comment on the verse before us: “Concerning the Antichrist, he discourses here and reveals great mysteries. What is the apostacy? Him he calls apostacy, as about to destroy many, and cause them to revolt so that, He says, if possible, the very elect should be stumbled. And he calls him man of sin; for he shall work countless things, and provide things dreadful. And he calls him son of perdition because of his being destroyed himself. Who is he then? Satan? By no means, but a man receiving all his energy; for he is a man.” (S. Io. Chrys. in loco, v. 465, 466, Field, Oxon. 1865.) This confusion of the apostacy with the man of sin is not intelligent; but the main statement is correct, and the personality of the Antichrist evident, as in the mind of the fathers generally.

Bellarmine and other Romish advocates, who would parry the application to the papacy by the argument that “the man of sin,” the son of perdition, &c., necessarily means an individual, not a succession or class, some excellent men of what is called the Protestant school essay to meet by quoting “the” priest, “the” king, &c., as sufficiently establishing a class, not an individual. But these are words of office, and so differ from the very definite and singular description in our chapter; and assuredly as “many antichrists” elsewhere, so “many deceivers,” cannot swamp the unity of “the deceiver and the antichrist” in 2 John. It is in vain also to urge “the one that hinders, or restrains,” and “that which restrains” in our chapter, which may be well, and I believe is really, meant to express one who is both a person and a power, as may be shown in its place.

And though it be true that “the king of the north” and “the king of the south” are in Dan. 11 applied to several kings of Syria and of Egypt, yet is neither used vaguely for a line of kings there, as this argument would insinuate and require; but in each several instance circumstances are connected so as to mark off one king from another, and make every one individually recognizable. Next, after the full account of Antiochus Epiphanes from verses 21 to 32, closing with a transition (in 33-35) where we hear of neither the north nor the south, a break occurs which carries us down “to the time of the end.” Then with notable abruptness we are confronted from verse 36 with the king that shall do according to his will, &c. That is, the analogy of the chapter is dead against the desired succession or class; for, to warrant it in 36-39, a class ought. to be intended in each of verses 5, 6, 7, and so on. But the truth is that each speaks of a distinct king of the south: in verse 5 meaning Ptolemy Soter; in 6 the daughter of Ptolemy Philadephus; in 7 Ptolemy Euergetes. On the same principle which had applied uniformly elsewhere in the chapter, verses 36-39 ought to describe a single individual, and not a class, even if a king of the north or of the south had been intended. The. fact is, however, that here “in the time of the end” culminates the main interest of all the previous series; and we have a king characteristically different from all else, who becomes in a future day the object of attack to the king of the north and the king of the south “in the land,” i.e., of Palestine, which lies between them, and thus becomes in that day once more the battle-ground of nations. And, what makes this absolutely conclusive, this very king in “the land” is described by the prophet in terms which the apostle so applies to the man of sin as to prove that they both mean the precisely same object; and this, not a succession of men, but. a single individual, yet to appear and oppose the Lord Jesus, and to be destroyed by the manifestation of His coming. In this way light is cast mutually on these remarkable passages of Old and New Testament scripture; and certainly, if the reader of 2 Thessalonians derives help from comparing the epistle with the

prophecy, he who studies the bearing of Dan. 11:36-39 may and ought to receive yet fuller light from the later writing of the apostle.

There is also a simple and complete answer to the unbelieving cavil of a late Oxford Essayist, to the effect that there is “not only minute description of Antiochus' reign, but a stoppage of such description at the precise date 169 B.C.” For we are conducted step by step down to that which exactly gives the general description of the Jewish state, which will reappear at the time of the end. Then suddenly is brought before us, in that time of the end, a lawless king in Judea, setting himself up above every god, and speaking words against the God of gods; regarding neither Jehovah nor Messiah, yet, while magnifying himself above all, honoring a god of his own. Had there not been a stoppage at that point, the prophecy could not have been stamped with its actual perfection. The same Spirit gives minute predictions of the contending Lagidae and Seleucidae for centuries after the prophet's day, stopped at the only just point, and resumes with at least equal minuteness the solemn crisis in the land, with the kings of north and south once more joining in that strife, which only closes in the day of blessing for the land and the earth and man to God's glory which shall not pass away. Are we content to become fools that we may be wise? “None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.”

On 2 Thessalonians 2:4

But there is further light from God cast on the man of sin, the son of perdition, (ominous as are these indications of evil beyond precedent and measure,) who is to be revealed before the day come which is to be his destruction. “He that opposeth and exalteth himself exceedingly against every one called god, or object of veneration; so that he sitteth down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” (ver. 4). There is no sufficient warrant for the words “as God” in the Received Text as in our Authorized Version. They rather soften the force; where the true text leaves the assumption in its unmitigated arrogance.

Scripture in its various notices of this future head of evil brings into prominence different characteristics which are to meet in him distinctively. He is to come in his own name, the impersonation of self-sufficiency as of independence of God. This will suit the then spirit of the age. Men, the Jews in particular, will be ripe for it and hail it gladly. It will gratify and crown their selfishness. Of old they would not have the One who came in His Father's name. It was irksome to their proud spirits to see and hear One who was here only to do the will of Him that sent Him, only to manifest the Father's name, only to make known His love and glory. They admired a bold and free spirit, daring, and self assertive. The lowly mind was as far from their ideal of man as abhorrent to them practically. “I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things.” Such servant-like humility and devotedness was hateful in their eyes, as it could only condemn their ways and words. Had they known the glory of Him who there spoke, that He was the Son, the Word, the Creator of all, it would have increased their amazement and forced them to own themselves at deadly issue with that only and true God, of whose testimony they considered themselves the exclusive and faithful guardians. Faith in Christ would have broken them down in utter self-abasement and self-judgment; and they would have seen the Father, by and in the Son, wholly different from all their thoughts. The Jews then rejecting their Messiah, the Son of God come in the infinite humiliation of divine grace, were manifestly of the devil as father, not of Abraham whose seed they were, still less of God whose name they claimed only for pride; and as they had no standing in the truth, so they were more and more developing into lawless violence like him who from the beginning was a murderer and a liar. By and by the Jews will take the further step of receiving one to come in his own name, and this as their Messiah. This will be no doubt the depth of moral darkness; for Scripture is not silent as to the righteous and holy character of Jehovah's Anointed. Psa. 16; 22; 40; 69; 62; 75; 91; 101; 102; Prov. 8; Isa. 9; 11; 12; 25; 42; 49; 1; 52; 53 lix., lx., lxi., lxiii., are ample testimonies from a small part of Scripture. But indeed space fails to merely cite the barest references in the Old Testament to the moral perfectness of Jehovah-Messiah and His future reign. So that, as the Jews were without excuse when they failed to discern the true and divine Messiah, so will they be yet more after rejecting Him to receive the full and final representative of selfishness, which Satan will bring before them in the Antichrist of the latter day. “Him” said the Savior, “ye will receive.” This awaits “the many” in the land, and the time hastens.

John brings out other features of their coming leader. “Who is the (not “a") liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is the antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. (chap. ii. 22.) Here we learn that there are two steps: the denial of the Jewish confession that Jesus is the Christ or Messiah, which is the fatal unbelief of that nation, the denial of the Father and the Son, which is the equally fatal repudiation of the Christian confession. The antichrist will be the chief expression of the twofold blasphemous infidelity. The spirit of apostacy not only among the Jews, but of Christendom. He will be the Head of both; and that the unbelieving Jews and Christians can and will have a common head is enough to show how complete must be the apostacy. The denial of the Father and the Son is the rejection of the fullest revelation of grace and truth from God to man; and this is now going on in Christendom, not ignorance only of such infinite love in the person of the Lord Jesus, but heart-opposition and unbelieving dislike and defamation. Into this outward professors are gradually falling from a mere creed-confession; from it nothing will truly preserve, but the living faith of God's elect according to His power who saved and called us with a holy calling, not according to our work, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began—the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.

But the lie of Satan will go farther than the denial of that especial display of grace and truth, of the Father and the Son; for it will, as we have seen, reject even the Messiahship of Jesus, and thus pave the way for that awful amalgam of unbelieving Jews and Christians who will accept the antichrist as their one head. “For many deceivers,” as John says in his Second Epistle, “are gone out into the world, those that confess not Jesus coming in flesh,—this is the deceiver and the antichrist.” If they refused the highest and deepest revelation, it might be supposed that they would allow the least. But no; the hour approaches when the work of deceivers will be complete, and Christendom, proud and effete, will fall under the power of the lie to the utmost, along with the blinded Jews. And this gives distinctness to the sitting in the temple of God spoken of in the end; and disposes of all need to soften it into any figure whatever. Where else would the apostate head of Jews and Christians sit but there?

But the intimation in our chapter, if it convey not the personal depth and immense scope of John, gives particulars of the greatest weight and interest. The man of sin is further described as “he that opposeth and exalteth himself exceedingly against every one called god or object of veneration.” Here appears antagonism and arrogant self exaltation against every Divine or even reverent claim. How humbling and awful to know from God that such is to be the issue of not the law only but the gospel, in the hands of men prone and skilful to corrupt all, And to make of the best thing the worst corruption! The evil will not be only an apostate state, embracing all, even the mbst opposed, but it will have a head, and this a religious head.

There will be a worldly head also; and many have confounded the two, because they play each into the other's hands. The political chief will own the religious head, as the latter will uphold the former. Indeed they are so closely bound together in their policy and doings and issue, that one need not be surprised that in ancient as in modem times many have mixed them up, attributing to the one what is properly true of the other, an error equally true of historicalists as of futurists. Thus of old as now not a few think of the seven-headed and two-horned beast out of the sea (Rev. 13:1-10) where they read of the man of sin; whereas in truth the second beast out of the earth, or the false prophet (Rev. 13:11-18), is the evil power which is here before us. He imitates Christ's power as King and Prophet ("two horns like a lamb"), but his utterance is of Satan (“he spake as a

dragon"), a religious or irreligious much more than a merely secular potentate. So the antichrist in 1 and 2 John is clearly he who supplants and denies the blessed One held out in hope throughout the Old Testament, and no less the same One revealed in the New Testament, as already come to give communion with the Father, and with Himself, the Son of the Father in truth and in love.

Here it is not otherwise: it is the antagonist of God we have, not the conqueror of kings or captains. He opposes and exalts himself exceedingly against every one called God or object of veneration. It is deliberate and unspeakable arrogance in putting down all rivalry; yet it is not the mere negation of God, but this in every shape, in order to deify self after the most open way, and the most exorbitant degree. We see the first evil aim proposed to man by the serpent carried out at length defiantly, man taking the place of the only true God to the exclusion and denial of all above himself. “So that he sitteth down in the temple of God showing himself that he is God.”

It will be observed that it is not in the sphere of the world, but “in the temple of God” that he is said to sit. This gives a peculiarly daring and awful character to the opposition and self-glorification of the man of sin. “The king of Babylon,” type of the last holder of the imperial power which began with that Gentile empire, said in his heart (as we are told in Isa. 14:13, 14), “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the north; I will be like the Most High.” This might seem so aspiring as to leave no room for a higher flight. But mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King, is not such an encroachment on divine prerogative as to sit in the sanctuary, showing himself that he is God. This audacious assumption is not that of the world-power or first beast, but of the second, when he takes the exclusive place of the God of Israel in His temple. A figurative sense of the temple, whether of the believer's body or of the church as God's habitation through the Spirit, is here out of the question. The revealed character of the person, and the antecedent apostasy, forbid any such application. It was in the temple of Jerusalem that the glory of God was once enthroned above the mercy-seat; it was in that temple that He who will yet be the glory of Israel, and of the earth, as He is of heaven, presented Himself in grace and healed those blind and lame who were of old the hated of David's soul.

There will this sad contrast of the man of righteousness and Savior of the lost take His seat, not like God or as God,” (which words of the Received Text disappear as wanting adequate authority), but showing himself that he is God. He is no vicar, no earthly representive. He claims to be the true God of Israel, and this in His temple. It might seem past belief that any creature could so deceive himself or at least hope to deceive others into a pretension so egregiously profane and in a place so unspeakably aggravating his wickedness. But we must remember on the one hand that God will give up men in Christendom to a judicial blindness, and on the other, that Satan will be permitted for a little to display his evil power unchecked. Of both the man of sin will avail himself to the uttermost; and one may conceive how the blessed truth of the Incarnate Word may be perverted to the damnable lie of Satan at the end of the age, and this in Jerusalem, where the latter glory of this house will be awaited once more to surpass the former, by the same unbelieving generation which saw no beauty in the true Son of David why they should desire Him. Those who despised God become man are morally prepared in due time to adore man assuming to be God. Grace is hateful in their eyes, which greedily accept self-glorification. And if it be in general the hour of high looks and words of blasphemy, we can understand the power of darkness culminating in the chief who assumes supreme Godhead in God's temple.

Thus is the man of sin the unspeakably evil counterpart of the blessed Lord; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it a matter of grasping (or robbery) to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, coming in likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, death of the cross. Wherefore also God exceedingly exalted Him—the very word which the Spirit uses to describe the son of perdition in his self-inflation. God, on the contrary, highly exalted the Savior, and gave Him the name that is above every name. Here we have two parts deeply distinguished: His emptying Himself as the divine Son, His humbling Himself as man. Not that He ever ceased to be either. He was intrinsically and eternally God; it could therefore be no matter of seizing such dignity, as did in principle the first Adam, who was a mere man, and as will fully do this son of perdition in his own time, to become the slave and dupe and victim of Satan, disobedient unto death, yea unto divine and eternal judgment, as antichrist is to be beyond doubt.

Indeed it is notable that our Lord, even when found in figure as a man, humbled Himself in becoming obedient as far as death, for it had no claim on Him who knew no sin, had He not deigned to be the willing Victim, whom God made sin for us, as He emptied Himself in taking a bondman's form. The highest creature, Michael, is but a servant, as the Son emptied. Himself to become one. What a testimony to His deity! What a contrast with him who being the vilest of men vaunts himself God in the temple of God! What will this last and worst usurper he in the hand of Him that blasts him with the breath of His lips, and consigns him to the lake of fire! For this impious adversary of the God of Israel, with all the deeper guilt of denying Him as alone fully revealed in the Son, as Christians know Him, it will be a question of the earth only. He denies the unseen and eternal; heaven is nothing to him any more than hell, and therefore he daringly assumes to be God on earth where the glory of Jehovah was once displayed. But he will be manifestly a man and no God when the Lord Jesus from heaven smites him with the rod of His mouth; for then His lips are full of indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire.

Chapter 16

On 2 Thessalonians 2:5-7

IT appears from ver. 5 that the apostle had in no way kept back these solemn truths as to the apostacy and the man of sin during his first visit to Thessalonica. Reserve is the reverse of the truth in Christianity, which if veiled is veiled in those that are lost, in whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ should not dawn on them. Reserve is the more strikingly false, as the time the apostle spent there was short, and the saints had been only just brought to God: yet did he not withhold either the coming of the Lord or His day when He introduces the kingdom, nor the awful defection from the gospel and the manifestation of the lawless one which His day is to judge.

“ Remember ye not that, being yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness already worketh: only [there is] one that restraineth now until he be out of the way” (ver. 5-7).

Had the Thessalonians only borne in mind the oral testimony, they would have resisted more effectually the inroad of error. But they, as we, should learn even from that failure the incalculable value of the written word. Even a primitive tradition is unreliable, and as it needs, so it receives the correcting hand of the Holy Spirit. The inference from the Lord's word in John 21:22 seemed to the early brethren inevitable; but the disciple whom Jesus loved lived long enough to prove by inspiration the danger of inferential reasoning from an oral report, and the all-importance of the written word. How easy it is to let slip the words of the Lord, or what the apostle used to say!

There is no real ground of course for such a solecism as taking vi)v with TO K. like Macknight and others. It is simply resumptive with Kai, a particle of transition and not temporal, which is the less necessary as we have subsequently.; apTi. Even if “now” were used temporally as to the Thessalonians, it would not imply that there was a time coming when they would cease to know, which is ridiculous, but a contrast of present knowledge with past ignorance. And the logical force of the adverb here, as determined by the order of the words and the context or coherence, does not suppose, more than the false construction, any undue knowledge of God's ways by His saints.

But the apostle does not say that he when with them had explained the restraint of which he here speaks. They knew, he says, that there is that which restrains the revelation of the man of sin till the fit and destined moment come. That he had told them what it was is more than is intimated; and there is no reason therefore to suppose this an unwritten tradition. All he says is that the Thessalonians knew the fact; and there he leaves it mysteriously for others, as it appears to me with perfectly given wisdom from on high. For the form of the restraining power might change in God's providential government; and that which the Thessalonians knew as then standing in the way of the lawless one's manifestation might give place to another hindrance later. Thus other and better reasons might lead the apostle to be reticent, than the prudent fear which the Fathers imputed to him of offending the Roman Empire, the one barrier in the eyes of most. If the man of sin be not yet revealed, it is clear that the breaking up of the Empire then did not bring an Antichrist, as Tertullian expected. Yet their idea is perhaps rather defective than false. For the

powers that be are ordained of God, and do act as a bulwark against that spirit of lawlessness to which the corruption of Christianity gives an immensely increased impetus. It matters not whether we look at the clerical party or at the radical, they both help on self-will, and are each unfriendly to civil government when it opposes either. Outside both, yet in the bosom of Christendom, rise up ever increasing masses of men whom it would be unjust to class with either churchism or dissent; men perhaps baptized, certainly animated with hatred of all restraint, yet notwithstanding their irreligion or infidelity skilful and eager to avail themselves of Scriptural words, facts, and principles in order to overthrow not only all recognition and honor of God, but all reality of human government. This is among the premonitions of the approaching apostasy, and the man of sin. But as yet there is “that which restraineth that he may be revealed in his own season.” God is meanwhile gathering out His children, the members of Christ's body, as He is sending His gospel to the ends of the earth. The empire is gone; divided kingdoms of more or less constitutional character have followed the downfall of feudalism. The energy of the Spirit of God has wrought as yet, during each and all, to hinder the outbreak of the apostacy, and the manifestation of the lawless one before his appointed hour. But the Roman Empire is to rise again, ordained of Satan, not of God; when its active re-existence will operate as the main support, and be the manifest sign, if sign be wanted, of Antichrist in his opposition and self-exaltation against every one called god or object of veneration. The beast, or fourth empire revived, and the false prophet, as they work together in evil, so must they perish together, as Scripture plainly shows. The patristic scheme was therefore defective, to say the least.

It is quite erroneous to confound “the apostacy” with “the mystery of lawlessness.” The apostacy is future, and only just precedes the revelation of the man of sin, both of which must be before the day of the Lord. But here (ver. 7) we are expressly told that “the mystery of lawlessness doth already, work.” The apostacy will be an open abandonment of all revelation, after that the coming and work of the Lord Jesus, and the consequent presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, had made divine truth manifest in the richest grace to man on earth. When the unfaithfulness of Christendom has corrupted the testimony and made the church utterly and hopelessly despicable, to the shame of the Lord Jesus, men will rise up in rebellion, not merely against the faithless church, but yet more against the holy revelation itself, spurning God's grace and hating the truth, and resolved on nothing so much as their own will and way. “The mystery of lawlessness” is the hidden energy of Satan meanwhile in mingling error with truth under Christ's name, either swamping grace by legalism or prostituting it to license. Even then this lawlessness was secretly at work in apostolic days soon to rot inwardly and foul contagion spread, as we see in Acts 20:29, 30, in these Epistles, and almost all the others especially those called catholic where the evil germinating from the first is no longer a matter of prediction, but of fact and denunciation in the darkest colours and the most solemn notes of sure judgment. It is lawlessness secretly at work, and so called its “mystery,” in contrast with the revelation of the lawless one when the resisting power no longer acts, and his own season is arrived.

It is also a mistake that civolit'a, lawlessness, is never in the New Testament the condition of one living without law, but always the condition or deed of one who acts contrary to law; for this would be rapavoaia (as the verb in Acts 23:3 and the noun in 2 Peter 2:16). The usual term for such a violation or transgression of law is vapitfinats (Rom. 2:23; 4:13; 5:14 &c.) The truth is that aveitla is both a wider and a deeper word, as we may learn from 1 John 3:4, where the Revisers have at

length vindicated the mind of God from the darkening cloud with which theology had too long veiled the truth. Sin is not transgression of law but lawlessness, and lawlessness is sin. It is a convertible or reciprocating proposition, the subject being identified with the predicate. Hence it is exactly where there is no law, that eivo,uia (properly speaking) is found. For, the apostle declares (Rom. 2), as many as sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as sinned under law shall be judged by law. The Gentile was a sinner and lawless, the Jew a transgressor of the law. It is wholly to miss the truth therefore to say that the Gentiles sinning without law might be charged with sin, but could not be charged with avolda. For this is precisely the designation of their state; and besides, as a universal principle 7) afizapria eff7;1,?) AVOILIC I. Had it been said that they could not be truly called “transgressors,” it would have been correct. For where no law is, neither is there transgression; but if there be sin, as there is, there cannot but be lawlessness. Hence, says the apostle in 1 Cor. 9:20, 21, “To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them under law, as under law, not being myself under law, that I might gain those under law; to those without law, as without law, not being without law to God but under law to Christ, that I might gain those without law.” Theology is but a blind guide in the truth of God.

How then comes “lawlessness” to be appropriate in this ease? Just because it is the abuse of grace in Christendom. For every Christian ought to know himself dead with Christ, not to sin only but to law (Rom. 6; 7), but for this very reason sin not having dominion over him as under grace, not law. Flesh (man in his natural state) may profess the name of the Lord, but either would be justified by law and so is fallen away from grace, or avails itself licentiously of the notion of grace to live lawlessly. Thus the flesh, which used to oppose and persecute, learned to corrupt and pervert the truth; as its idea of grace was the utter relaxation of law for self-indulgence or self-will. In those only who are in Christ Jesus, possessed of new life in Him and resting on His sacrifice for sin, is fulfilled the righteous import of the law, for they walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4). Thus lawlessness had been from early days secretly working within the circle of Christian profession, as it will be developed openly in the lawless one ere long; when as the gospel will be flouted as worse than heathenism, so the law will be discarded as putting an unworthy restraint on the will of man that owns no superior on earth, and looks for heaven and hell as being nowhere. Not “wickedness” or “iniquity,” or “unrighteousness,” still less “transgression of the law,” is the true reflection, but “lawlessness.”

The rendering of ver. 7 in the older English Versions is singularly perplexing. Wiclif simply reproduces the Vulgate's error of “hold” twice, for “withhold” which both the Vulgate and Wiclif gave rightly in ver. 6. The Rhemish follows suite with its usual servility. I confess inability even to conjecture W. Tyndale's meaning, if he meant what is printed; or to correct the misprint if he did not mean it. “For the mistery of that iniquity doeth he all roadie worke which only loketh, untill it be taken out of the way.” (Ed. 1534.) That of Crammer (1539) resembles the rendering of Alford and Ellicott, save that “only” with thew precedes “until:” “tyll he which now only letteth be taken out of the waye.” Geneva led the way in substance for the Authorized Version. The Revisers appear to me justified in their Version, save that “taken” goes too far. “Till he withdraw” is perhaps unobjectionable, or “be out of the way.”

But this last and very important clause has of late been questioned, though happily by few. It might have been thought that the last words of ver. 7 were to plain to be misconstrued. Nor are they in any version at all known, not even in G. Wakefield's, or in Gr. Penn's. The Vulgate takes it, as all

the English from Wiclif to the Revised, to indicate the removal of the restrainer, leaving (as the Bishop of Gloucester says) the manner of the removal wholly undefined. So does the Memphitic; so the Pesch. and the Philox. Syriac Versions; so the Arabic and the Aethiopic of Walton's Polygott. Alford and Meyer may be adventurous, but here abide with the unbroken column of translators everywhere. Here then is a bold suggestion: “For the mystery of wickedness is already working (only there is at present one that restraineth) until it becomes developed out of the midst &c. That is, even when abandoning the old “holding fast” for the sense here intended of “restraint,” he dislocates the sentence in order to avoid the truth of its withdrawal, when it will no longer be the secret working of lawlessness as now, but the lawless one displayed, with whom the Lord Jesus will then deal. There is nothing, says he, in the words etc peao0 to signify removal or taking away! which he argues is “derived entirely” from the connected ciprisraf, arpw, erCpx. (Acts 23:10 Cor. 5:9; 2 Cor. 6:17); whereas eyht. has not at all the sense of removal, but rather of origin or of existence. Now, waiving the “half” in Thuc. iv. 133, and “in common” in Aristides ii.120 (Jebb), Herodotus over and over again refutes the statement that it is only the connected verb that gives, though of course it may strengthen, the notion of keeping aloof or neutral, a wholly different idea from development (iii. 83, iv. 118, viii. 22, 73 twice). The most fanciful cannot attribute movement to grcereat or KaKjailat, to sit or sit down; yet Wesseling, a competent scholar, properly interprets the phrase, seceders e medio. The truth is precisely opposed to this objector, for it is,KT. 11,. which lends the force of secession to the verb. Compare Eur. Electra 797, where Paley takes gK. ft. as meaning apart from the company; but it is probably abruptly or in the midst. Wetstein 311) long ago cited Anton. viii. 12,,uttcpciv, Ka; Teevtitca, Kai vaur' etc plesov, I am dead, and all gone. Let me add Dion C who in his H. R. says of Lucullus (ed. Sturz. i. 188) that he kept aloof from both, EK liE070 (1,407y, and similarly of others (i. 686, ii. 48, 768), save that in the last the connected word is 4117(19, which is akin to 71v. In i. 388 Nepos is said to have withdrawn himself 4K T. a. away. Now we need not dwell on passages like that of Demosth. de Cor. (Reiske i. 323) where aveXcivras is connected with etc pecov, “putting away,” or laying aside; or again yet earlier, di'. eK p. in his Fourth Philippians (i. 141) “if we remove or take out of the way.” But two passages of later Hellenistic Greek are the more decisive, as we have the precise phrase contested. Plutarch says of Timoleon (Ed. Bryan 109) tyvm KCIO' ZallTial, 4K /1140'0V 7€1,0110109, he decided to live by himself away from all. Achilles Tatius, ii. 27 (ed. Boden, 186) has 74;9 lOtetok 4K pecrov yevo pew, submotaClione, “if Clio be removed.” Is it not plain then that the scholarship which could deny to 4,c p. 7. the force of removal is as bad as attributing the spurious sense of development to a phrase which never bears it in one single instance, nor I believe could bear it? The ordinary version is unquestionably correct.

Thus far I had written when a third modification from the same source meets me, somewhat more sober, and mainly brought about by a passage in Aeschines' Epist. xii. (Reiske iii. 695), where is another instance, EK pb7011 Iff:1,011411.1,, referring to men dead or exiled. In either case they were “gone away.” H. Stephens need not be summoned to inform us that yev4pfpos cannot be rendered “taken away” (sublatus), though this sense he unhesitatingly gives to the whole phrase. Every scholar knows the wide range of meanings derives from prepositional phrases attached to it as here. It is uncritical to cite texts like.Ex. 24:16, and Deut. 18:18, in view of a wholly different construction. For in all the Septuagint appears no instance of the phrase used absolutely as here with 7. But even so, calling “out of the midst” of the cloud, or raising up a Prophet “from among” (though here it is probably 6, only) their brethren, is in no way development. Removal, destroying,

taking, sending, or going out, are among the frequent associations in the Greek Bible.

Take however Amos 6:4 as one not so common, where it is a question of eating, and 4IC represents “out of” and eIC p. “out of the midst of.” Development is never the connection there. Does it not then seem strange to extract that idea for the latter phrase from Matt. 21:19, Mark 1:11; 9:7, Luke 3:22; 9:25, Gal. 4:4, 1 Tim. 6:4, Heb. 9:3; when not one has eic p. 7. but only 7.eK, which last nobody disputes may mean development? And why cite the identification by Hederich of erc p. ry. (at least in Eur. Iph. in Aul. 342) with 41, p.; its regular inverse? It is hard to conceive, if it be not to bring doubt or darkness into the question. Even there is it not meant that A. would secure to himself the object of his ambition “apart from others"? In general the one means “in the way,” &c., the other, “out of the way,” &c., somewhat like the stronger t7piroitZt, and EK.VattIV. That mind must be singularly constituted which could regard a—. or KaeJr. in Herod. as giving the meaning of “secession"! quite as much as ai'pto in Col. 2:14 gives “removal.” If the author had said “session,” it would be true but irrelevant. But it is true that the idea of secession from party really does come from ex p. and not from the verbs, which mark inaction rather. The passage from Aeschines' supposititious letter must be added to those from Plutarch and Achilles Tatius, clearly proving that the secession implied in the phrase is intrinsic, not contextual, and due to eK ft. rather than to the associated verb, here the very same as in the clause in dispute.

Again, the inspiring Spirit had the best grounds for avoiding eipei here, though Chrysostom, who applied it to the Roman empire, so paraphrases it; and he surely knew his own tongue. Besides, the preceding clause implies only a present constraint, so that its future withdrawal is the natural sequel; whereas the device of enclosing the central clause of verse 7 in parenthesis is not only harsh and uncalled for, but cuts the thread of the truth. And then, what an insignificant parenthesis when you have made it! If the Thessalonians knew that which restrains, did they not know that there is one restraining now? Tautology might be truly said to attach to the desired parenthesis. One would think that the mystery of lawlessness must have been “developed out of the midst,” in order to be already at work. In short the idea is at all points unfounded.

On 2 Thessalonians 2:8

The withdrawal of the obstacle, of him who restrains, leaves the door open for the man of sin to make his appearance in Satan's power.

“ And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall destroy with the breath of His mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming” (verse 8).

It will be no longer the mystery or secret of lawlessness, but his own time for the son of perdition to be revealed (6). The restrainer gone is the signal for the revelation of the lawless one. We are not here to look for the steps or stages by which he is led of Satan to his bad pre-eminence: this belongs rather to the details of the prophetic word, which is far from silent in the Old Testament or in the New. Here it was of urgent moment for the young believers in Thessalonica to be delivered from the perturbation and even terror caused by the false gloss that the day of the Lord was actually come. The apostle was inspired of God to correct the error by casting a flood of light on that which still seems hidden from most, though clearly revealed in the instructive words of the Holy Spirit to the Thessalonians—the relation between the coming, and the day, of the Lord. So far are they from being identical or inseparable, though surely and nearly connected, that wherever the popular confusion prevails it renders the apostolic handling of the matter unintelligible, and Paul is made as vague in his argument as most of his commentators in expounding it. For if the coming and the day be practically the same thing, where is the propriety of the apostle's beseeching them for the sake of (or “by") the Lord's coming not to be troubled by the cry that His day had arrived? The balance, beauty, and force of truth are restored when we know that he entreats them, for their blessed hope which was surely future, not to be alarmed as if the dreaded day which follows it were come; and then he proceeds to show that not Christ, but) that day with its judicial terrors could not come till the evil, now veiled and as its worst development suppressed, break fully out into its most audacious contempt and lawless defiance of God. When, by the departure of the actual and mighty hindrance, it shall reach this climax in the assumption of supreme divine honor here below, the Lord Jesus as it were accepts the challenge, and displays Himself to the destruction of His enemy. This will be “the day” not the coming or presence merely, but His appearing.

Hence the reader will do well to take note of the striking precision in the inspired language, and of the marked change from verse 1 to verse 8. It is not that a mere dealing in providence can be seriously entertained as the sense of verse 7. “The coming of the Lord” is demonstrably His personal presence, in ver. i. inseparably bound up with the gathering to Himself of the saints deceased or then alive. It is now admitted by all expositors of the least weight, however opposed to premillennialism, that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ here spoken of can admit of no figurative or secondary sense, but points simply, unmistakably, and exclusively to His future advent in person. This clears away at once the darkening cloud of prEeterists, such as Grotius, Wetstein, Hammond, Whitby, le Clerc, Schottgen, Hardouin, &c,. who, though differing in details, agreed in interpreting the Lord's coming of Jerusalem's destruction.

It is well known that the late G. S. Faber in his Sacred Calendar of Prophecy (iii. 434, &c.) sets himself to disprove what he calls the identicality of the coming of Christ in the two Epistles. He allowed of course, as all must, that in 1 Thess. 4:11-18 it is Christ's personal advent from heaven, but he denied that there is anything that can warrant the thought that the Apostle Paul in the second Epistle refers to the advent which he had mentioned in the first Epistle! He reasoned on the spurious letter as the sole source of any speedy expectation of Christ! But he really overlooked the egregious violence of his own assumption. For the first Epistle gave no little light from God, both as to Christ's coming for the joy of the saints (4:13-18), and as to His day for the surprise and judicial destruction of the world (5:1-3). How unnatural to suppose a change of meaning for either in the second Epistle! For these are the very topics which he resumes in exposing the fraud of false teachers. How monstrous to suppose them used in any other sense than in the First! Such inconsistency would be unworthy of a human author, still less of inspiration. The truth is that the apostle applies them with fresh light to expose the imposture of those who in that spurious letter misused the day as if already come (in some figurative way doubtless), so as to alarm all who heeded them. And most strengthening it is to see that, after explaining in chap. i. that the revelation of the Lord in that day will be to the punishment of His foes and the display of His friends in glory with Himself, He beseeches them by (or for the sake of) His coming, which is to gather all the saints to be with Him on high, not to credit the false rumor that His day had arrived below, adding the most solemn changes and developed evils, which must be (not before His “coming” but) before “the day” which is to judge those evils. How can any unbiased person fail to see that the coming in 2 Thess. 2:1 is self-evidently identical with the same terms in 1 Thess. 4? The spurious epistle made out that the day of the Lord was present. The apostle first appeals (verses 1, 2) to the necessary translation of the saints to Christ at His coming as refuting this; and then he shows (verses 3 et seqq.) what appalling events must come to pass before that day, not only the utter and general renunciation a Christianity, but the open antagonism of the man of sin to God. For, as he explains, it is secret lawlessness which already works, kept down for the present by God's power whilst He is calling out His own for heaven; once the restraint is withdrawn, the revelation of the lawless one follows, and the Lord shines forth from heaven in overwhelming judgment.

Dr. D. Brown differs but is no less unsatisfactory. For he separates verse 8 from verse 1, argues from such scriptures as Isa. 13:6-19; 19:1; 30:27-33, Mic. 1:3-5, Joel 2:30, 31, compared with Acts 2:16-20, Matt. 10:23, Rev. 3:3, that “a bright coming of Christ” (!) to destroy the AntiChristian power points to a figurative providential coming, rather than to His personal advent.

The great defect in both is the common fault from early days to our own times. Neither Mr. F. nor Dr. B. understood the precise nature of the error combated, nor consequently the real correction of the Holy Spirit. Both imagined, as one of them expressly says, that the time of Christ's personal advent was what excited and unsettled the Thessalonians. But it is not so: they were shaken and troubled by the pretense that (not His advent but) His day was come, which delusion could only have been by insinuating some such figurative notion of that day as Dr. B. pleads far, The apostle dispels it by recalling them to their bright hope of Christ's personal coming to gather His own to Himself, which all know is not yet the fact: a connection and motive quite lost sight of by both to the ruin of the apostle's reasoning, and to the obscuring of the truth in question. To confound two objects, not only distinct but in contrast, is the surest way to spoil the proper character of each.

The day of the Lord is a further step of His advent, not merely His coming, but the appearing or manifestation of His coming, as the phrase in verse 8 really means. This would naturally admit of a striking difference. His presence to gather His own to Himself is never so called. He comes to translate the saints dead or living to heaven. It is not merely His coming, but the appearing or manifestation of it which destroys the lawless one, This last is, or coalesces with, His day; which therefore could not be, till the lawlessness that brings down the swift and final judgment of the Lord is fully revealed. “A bright coming” is weak and vague, though no one doubts its awful and penetrating brightness. Probably “illustration” in the Vulgate helped on looseness of interpretation; which first found expression in Wiclif and last in the Authorized Version, all the intervening English versions being correct like the Revised Version.

We are told that the one object of the apostle expressed by himself as plainly as possible was to dissipate the notion that “the day of Christ was at hand” or “imminent.” Strange mistake, we must repeat, on the part of scholars—hardly possible if they were not also held in the meshes of tradition. It was really to deliver from the false cry that the day of the Lord “was actually there.” The errorists said nothing about the Lord's coming to gather the saints on high. The apostle first beseeches them by it not to believe so unfounded a rumor. Then he tells them of what must be, not before the Lord's coming, but before the manifestation of it in judgment of Antichrist. The subject in discussion is not His coming, but His day; and the light given on what must be developed before that day (not before His coming) is a most necessary part of the truth revealed in order to disabuse them thoroughly.

There is another impression which has to be guarded against in much that is taught about His day. Who has not heard of the effort to persuade souls that the destructive judgment of the lawless one is to be gradual rather than immediate, the result of many blows rather than of one? Hence stress is laid on “consume" as well as “destroy” in Dan. 2:44; 7:26, and here also in our verse, as indicating the successive steps by which the extermination of the Antichrist is to be effected. And Macknight, like others, tells us that by “spirit, or breath, of His mouth” are predicted the preaching of true doctrine, and its efficacy in destroying the man of sin. Now one has only to compare Isa. 30:33 with 11:4 to expose the unsoundness of such an explanation. The gospel, the truth preached, is in no way like “a stream of brimstone,” as the prophet explains himself; and smiting the earth or slaying the wicked is not Christ's speech in the Scriptures, nor is it a mere “rendering ineffectual the vile arts of a corrupt priesthood.” It is instant and extreme judgment executed by the Lord in person; the truth of which is confirmed, if anything were needed to confirm it, not only by the explicit phrase, manifestation of His coming, but by the critical addition of “Jesus,” the Lord Jesus, on the authority of ■ A D F G L, some cursives, all the ancient versions, and abundant early citations.

The importance of all this is that, if it be, as we are assured, the same coming of the Lord throughout both Epistles, followed by the further stage of its “manifestation” or that “day,” there is no room for the kingdom or millennial reign till after the Lord comes and executes judgment on the quick. “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” Then follows that blessed period, to His glory alone, and not to the praise of poor fallen Christendom as it fondly dreams; an unworthy hope, the bride reigning without the Bridegroom! What so distasteful to a true spouse who derived all from Him?

For the scope of the context is as conclusive as it is plain. The hope of the saints is kept distinct from prophecy. The coming of the Lord, which is to gather us to Himself, is not mixed up with His day, but a motive for the heart against the delusion that the day was come, as some alleged. No one pretended or believed that the Lord had come, nor that the saints were translated to Him on high, which nevertheless must be before His day dawns for the destruction of His enemies. Of His coming neither the misteachers nor the mistaught had ever thought till the apostles recalled the saints to this their hope in order to dispel the error about His day. Meanwhile lawlessness works secretly to corrupt the testimony of God's grace and truth; and more than this Satan cannot yet do, because there is one that restrains till he withdraw, when the apostasy shall come and the lawless one be then revealed, not before. His defiant opposition to God, usurping His glory in His temple, is the signal for the Lord Jesus in person to destroy him with the breath of His mouth and to annul him by the manifestation of His presence. So perverse are men that here (8) where publicity of judicial intervention is most emphatically expressed, they are ready to conceive of secret providence; whilst in verse 1, where not a word implies manifestation, they will not hear of aught else. His coming gathers the saints to Himself; the manifestation or appearing of His coming it is which makes an end of the lawless one. The saints are with Him and come from heaven for that judgment, as we may see in Rev. 17:14, Rev. 19:14; they had been caught up to heaven at His coming before the day. The distinction is as clear as it is important; the Revelation as a whole can scarcely be understood without it, as the future is otherwise vague indeed, and mistranslation follows with false interpretation in its train.

The connection excludes all room for an intervening millennium. The mystery of lawlessness is distinctly shown to have been even then at work, and to pursue its corrupting course, till the apostacy comes, and the man of sin be revealed; the very reverse of a reign of righteousness on the earth forever so short a while, much less for a time so considerable. There is an evident and solemn link between the secret energy of lawlessness that wrought ruin from the apostolic days, till (the restraint being gone) it merges in the lawless one whom the Lord destroys by the manifestation of His coming. All scripture points to, and is alone consistent with, the appearing of the Lord, as the necessary means, on the one hand, of divine judgment in destroying those that destroy the earth, and on the other of rewarding the suffering saints as well as blessing the world, especially His ancient people at the head of all the nations. It will be the administration of the fullness of times, when God shall 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 predestined according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ. It is neither the present age, nor is it eternity, but the age to come, when the glorified Son of man with His heavenly Eve shall have dominion visibly over the subjected universe of God. Of this, His present exaltation (when we see not yet all things put under Him) is the pledge, as the Holy Ghost given is its earnest to the joint-heirs. For while He shall inherit all things, according to the glory of His person and His rights as well by creation as by redemption, there is an especial fitness, that over the earth, which cast Him out when He came down in infinite love, He should reign in power and glory, all kings falling down before Him, and all nations serving Him. But this state of things is as distinct from the present as from eternity; yet, as it has never been accomplished, so it surely must be, for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken it, and it is due to His Anointed.

On 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

It is hardly conceivable then to find language more explicitly opposed to the notion of mere providential instrumentality or of covert judgments than the words we have just had to weigh. “The spirit of his mouth” is expressive of the inner energy of divine power (whether creative, Psa. 33:6, or judicial, 2 Sam. 22:16, Job 4:9, Psa. 18:15, Isa. 11:4; 30:33) with which the Lord shall dispatch the lawless one. “The appearance of His coming” declares that it will not be annulling him from a distance or by secret action any more than by secondary means, but by the shining forth of His presence. And, as if to cut off all excuse for unbelief, the best text of authority demands our reading, not “the Lord” only, but “the Lord Jesus.” Even the too common attempt to maintain a distinction between “consume” and “destroy,” can only be through force of habitual prejudice, not to say ignorance; for the Greek term in the first member of the sentence no more implies a gradual waste than in the second. On every ground then tie gospel is out of the question. Together they mean an overwhelming and utter judgment inflicted by the Lord Jesus personally before all the world, as both related to one and the same destruction.

The apostle now turns to explain the connection of Satan, as also of God's retribution, with the lawless one, “whose coming is according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness for those that, perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe falsehood, that all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (ver. 9-12.)

The Lord Jesus is the Son of God, and in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell. The man of sin, the son of perdition, is the awful counterpart of the enemy; and the picture would not be complete if we had not the dark addition of the unseen power of evil at work in him. Here it is given in a few energetic words of the Holy Ghost, falsehood being the universal characteristic: “in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood,” the very terms (with the blessed unquestionable contrast of grace and truth) in which the apostle Peter (Acts 2) set out the Messiah, “a man demonstrated of God to you by deeds of power and wonders and signs, which God wrought by him in your midst, even as ye yourselves know.” How amazingly solemn that here we have the Anti-Messiah described beforehand in language so similar!

The application of all this to the Papacy has quite enervated the force of the Scripture among Protestants generally. For they, with such an object before them as the Popes of Rome, naturally think of unreal miracles, and false pretensions to power, and signs which have it as their aim to support their ambitious designs in the world. Macknight as well as another may illustrate this kind of interpretation:— “After the heathen magistrates were taken out of the way by the conversion of Constantine, and after he and his successors called the Christian bishops to meet in general council, and enforced their assumption of divine authority by the civil power, then did they in these councils arrogate to themselves the right of establishing what articles of faith and discipline they thought proper, and of anathematizing all who rejected their decrees; a claim which in after times

the bishops of Rome transferred from general councils to themselves. It was in this period that worship of saints and angels and images was introduced; celibacy was praised as the highest piety; meats of certain kinds were prohibited; and a variety of superstitious mortifications of the body were enjoined by the decrees of councils in opposition to the express laws of God. In this period likewise idolatry and superstition were recommended to the people by false miracles, and every deceit which wickedness could suggest; such as the miraculous cures pretended to be performed by the bones and other relics of martyrs, in order to induce the ignorant vulgar to worship them as mediators; the feigned visions of angels who, they said, had appeared to this or that hermit, to recommend celibacy, fastings, mortifications of the body, and living in solitude; the apparition of souls from purgatory, who begged that certain superstitions might be practiced for delivering them from that confinement. By all which, those assemblies of ecclesiastics, who by their decrees enjoined these corrupt practices, showed themselves to be the man of sin and lawless one in his first form, whose coming was to be with all power and signs and miracles of falsehood, and who opposed every one that is called God or an object of worship. For these general councils, by introducing the worship of saints and angels as mediators in the place of Christ, they degraded Him from His office of Mediator, or rendered it altogether useless. However, though they thus opposed God and Christ by their unrighteous decrees, they did not yet exalt themselves above every one that is called God or an object of worship. Neither did they yet sit in the temple of God as God, and openly show themselves to be God. Then blasphemous extravagances were to be acted in after times by a number of particular persons in succession; I mean by the bishop of Rome, after the power of the Christian Roman emperors, and of the magistrates under them, should be taken out of the way.

“This height, however, of spiritual and civil power united the bishops of Rome did not attain till, as the apostle foretold, that which restrained was taken out of the way; or till an end was put to the authority of the Roman emperors in the West by the inroads of the barbarous nations; and more especially till the western empire was broken into the ten kingdoms of the fourth beast. For then it was that the bishops of Rome made themselves the sovereigns of Rome, and of its territory, and so became the little horn which Daniel beheld coming up among the ten horns which had the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things, to show that its dominion was founded in the deepest policy, and that its strength consisted in the bulls, excommunications, and anathemas it uttered against all who opposed its usurpations. But this impious scheme of false doctrine, and the spiritual tyranny founded thereon, agreeably to the predictions of the prophet Daniel and of the apostle Paul, began at the Reformation to be consumed by the breath of the Lord's mouth; that is, by the preaching of true doctrine out of the Scriptures. In short, the annals of the world cannot produce persons and events to which the things written in this passage can be applied with so much fitness as to the bishops of Rome. Why then should we be in any doubt concerning the interpretation and application of this famous prophecy? At the conclusion of our explication of prophecy concerning the man of sin, it may be proper to observe, that the events foretold in it, being such as never took place in the world before, and in all probability never will take place in it again, the foreknowledge of them was certainly a matter out of the reach of human conjecture or foresight. It is evident therefore that this prophecy, which from the beginning hath stood on record, taken in conjunction with the accomplishment of it verified by the concurrent testimony of history, affords an illustrative proof of the Divine original of that revelation of which it makes a part, and of the inspiration of the person from whose mouth it proceeded."(Macknight's Apost. Epp. 496, 497,

ed. Tegg, 1835.)

This copious statement, tersely presenting the scheme of the Protestant school in as good a shape as I know, is given here, and falls before the truth. For the first beast of Rev. 13 (which coalesces with the little horn of Dan. 7) is the Roman empire risen out of the abyss—the beast that was, is not, and shall come or be present. Now this cannot apply to the north-eastern hordes who first broke up the Western Roman empire, and then formed, say, ten kingdoms out of its ruins. Whereas the ten horns of prophecy are to reign for one hour with the beast, to which they give their power as suzerain; as all perish together at the appearing of the Lord Jesus from heaven. Rev. 17 xix. It is the second beast, who is the religious seducing chief or false prophet, doing great signs, and exercising all the authority of the first beast in his sight, and thus clearly answers to 2 Thess. 2, being distinct from the apostate imperial power, though its staunchest ally. We have had imperial unity without the ten kingdoms; we have had the ten kingdoms which dismembered the empire without imperial unity, though Charlemagne and Napoleon Bonaparte ardently sought it. There is to be the combination of that imperial power (revived by Satanic power) with the ten kingdoms of the west; and along with this an apostate religious power in Palestine (Dan. xi. 3639), that is certainly identical with the apostle's man of sin, and as clearly the Antichrist of the future (not the papacy, wicked as this may have been). It is he whose coming shall be in falsehood what Christ's was in truth, with all powers and signs and wonders to support his lie as the Lord was proved to be of God thereby. And just as Elijah brought down fire from heaven in demonstration that Jehovah, not Baal, was God, so will the Lamb-like beast do “in the sight of men” to accredit the beast and the false prophet, setting himself forth as God in the temple of God.

Plainly the Protestant view confounds in the past things differing much (whatever analogy be traceable, for even now, says John, there have arisen many antichrists), and Dr. M. goes farther than a wise man ought in saying that in all probability such events will never take place. The interpretation limps, as error naturally does; for first the general councils that introduced superstition are treated as “the man of sin"; then, as this is defective as well as vague, the pope of Rome. And when men prophesy who are not prophets, can one wonder that they prophesy falsely Even the world allows that it is the unexpected that happens; as the believer knows that every word of God must be fulfilled: these scriptures have not yet been. Mahomet is excluded, impostor though he was, as pretending to no miracle. The false prophet of the future in the land will do great signs such as no Pope ever wrought or claimed to work. And he will work “in all deceit of unrighteousness for those that perish,” as Christ by God's word, in righteousness and holiness of truth for those that are to be saved. Deceit of unrighteousness characterizes every false religion, but here it is “in all deceit of unrighteousness,” and men are lost “because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved.” For here we are given to see the activity of the lawless one in seducing men to their ruin in Satan's power; as before we had his blasphemous and self-exalting antagonism against God whose glory on earth he had arrogated to the exclusion of every object of worship. And into this men will fall, so much the more because they had the truth familiarly enough before their ears to despise it, never receiving the love of it unto salvation. Lawlessness secretly at work prepares the way for the apostasy; as the utter renunciation of Christianity does for the Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son, as well as that Jesus is the Christ, confirms the resurrection-beast of the dragon's power at Rome, and sets up as “the king” in the Holy land.

But there is another feature of moment to be added, judicial hardening from God in His abhorrence of Jewish and Gentile infidelity in their apostacy from the gospel and rebellion against Himself. “And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe falsehood.” So there was with Pharoah in Egypt after slighting ample appeals and solemn signs; so there was among the Jews, partially before the Babylonish captivity, fully in the rejection of the Messiah, and (we may add) of the Holy Ghost and the gospel; so there will be when Christendom becomes apostate and amalgamates with the infidel Jews in worshipping as the true God him who comes in his own name; “that all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Let me say that, though undoubtedly the Received Text is wrong, and the best authorities exclude the future, it is simply absurd to say that the verb is present ("sendeth"), because the mystery of lawlessness is already working. It is ethical, not historic, as often, and indeed like “is” in verse 9. Even Dean Alford and Bishop Ellicott could not hold that the lawless one is revealed, as thecontext proves his revelation to be contrasted as a future thing with the actual and secret working of lawlessness. Compare Rev. 14:9-11. “Damned” in the Authorized Version is false as a rendering; but the result of being “judged” is damnation, for only unbelievers come into judgment; and therefore, pleads the Psalmist, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” Salvation is by grace through faith, God having already not only pardoned the believer, but condemned sin in the flesh by Christ as a sacrifice for sin, that there might be no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus. Rom. 8:1-4.

Chapter 19

On 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

With a retribution so terrible yet so righteous on apostate enemies, the apostle puts in contrast the assured portion of the believers to whom he writes.

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of [the] Lord, that God chose you from [the] beginning unto salvation in sanctification of [the] Spirit and belief of [the] truth; whereunto he called you by our gospel unto obtaining of [the] glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Verses 13, 14.)

The manifested character and awful doom of those who abandoned the truth when most fully brought out had been laid before us. Now we are told of the simple blessedness of those who cleave to the grace of our Lord in the gospel, and its effect upon the heart of those who wrought in the work, and were sharers in the blessing. It were a poor ground of thanksgiving if the salvation were precarious; but this is quite to mistake the nature of Christianity, which is founded on the glory of Christ's person and on the everlasting efficacy of His atoning work. Hence on the one hand the unspeakable guilt of rejecting, and above all of apostatizing from it; as on the other hand the blessedness and security of those who enter in by faith. Peace, joy, thanksgiving are the fruit of the love of God thus shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. And no wonder; it is God's own joy and love flowing in and out of hearts, all round, purified by faith. Doubts and fears are not of faith any more than the presumption founded upon our own estimate of ourselves, the natural effect of law acting upon the human mind for despair or false confidence. Christ and His work of redemption alone give a true foundation before God, and as the foundation is immutable, so with faith there need be hesitation neither in the channels nor in the objects of this grace, as we see here. “But we ought to give thanks to God for you always, brethren beloved of the Lord.” This is not the unbelieving language of man. Divine love reproduced in the believer's heart delights in owning the present fruits of grace. There is no reserve where no such mischief was at work as called it forth. Had there been the admission of human righteousness or going back to ordinances, as we see in the Epistles to the Galatians, Colossians, and Hebrews, the apostle would have solemnly warned and even spoken conditionally; for there the Spirit of God descried real actual and growing danger. Here, where there was simplicity, there was no call for such guarded language. As the workmen were bound to give thanks always to God for them, so the saints are designated as brethren beloved of the Lord. What honor, what happiness, unsullied by suspicion or question on either side!

For what then do the apostle and those with him so continually thank God? That God chose the Thessalonians from the beginning unto salvation. The context appears to decide that “from the beginning” must be interpreted in the largest sense, not merely from the beginning of the gospel or of Christ's manifestation on earth, but from of old, from everlasting. “Chose,” too, is somewhat peculiar here, not so much chose out from others as chose for Himself, a Septuagintal usage. This is sweet and comforting to a believer whom true repentance has made nothing in his own eyes; if nature take it up, it turns to pride and hardness without a drop of real consolation.

But the way in which God's choice operates in time is next shown with brevity and clearness, “in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Here I conceive there cannot be a doubt that sanctification of the Spirit means, that mighty separative act of the Holy Ghost, by which a soul is first livingly set apart to God; and so it is accompanied by faith of the truth. Practical holiness is the consequence, and this we have seen insisted on in 1 Thess. 4:3, 7, 5:23. Here it is rather the great principle and power which accompanies conversion to God, so generally overlooked in Christendom, or, if the thing be seen and owned more or less, not called by its true naive. It is that operation which meets a man when a sinner, and by grace constitutes him a saint. People are willing to allow it afterward in practice, but are afraid to own its truth at the starting point. They are too far from God, too unbelieving in the energy of His grace and the wisdom of His means, to accredit His work in the soul, which, however deep, has as yet little to show for itself before men. But there is belief of the truth; and confession of the Lord, of course, accompanies this. There may, however, be at that stage many a difficulty and much searching of heart, which the Lord turns to real and permanent account, though not a little, especially in our day, as in special circumstances of old, may be due to legal bondage. Still grace gives confidence, that the light of God may thoroughly search the heart, and if Christ be kept in view, the more it is searched the better. If Christ be shrouded by the law-work in the soul, there cannot as yet be peace but distress, as in the latter part of Rom. 7. The person, however, is no less a saint then, than when set free by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, as in Rom. 8:2, though the latter alone describes the proper condition of a Christian. Practical holiness follows in the exhortation of Rom. 12, &c.

1 Peter 1:2 helps greatly to fix the sense, not only here but in 1 Cor. 6, where sanctification follows washing, and precedes justification. This every theologian must know is quite outside the ordinary systems of divinity. There is no question here of sanctification in the practical life after justification, which all admit and insist on; but the theological systems omit the very important bearing in Scripture, and therefore to real faith, of sanctification before justification. Of that fundamental preliminary work it really cannot be pretended they know anything; nor is it pressed in the pulpits of great men or of small, being ignored popularly no less than theologically. The truth in fact has dropped through, and from every school, ancient or modern, Calvinist or Arminian Hence the difficulty both for Roman Catholics and for Protestants. The Vulgate gives “in sanctificationem Spiritus, ad” &c., which the Rhemish version (1682) reproduces “into sanctification of the Spirit, unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,” as the Geneva version (1557) had yet farther strayed in saying “vnto sanctification of the sprite, through obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” No doubt it was the influence of Theodore de B■ze, which acted so banefully on the English exiles; for he in his just preceding version had ventured to translate “ad sanctificationem Spiritus, per obedientiam et aspersionem sanguinis I. C.” and even to argue for this perversion in the notes of his subsequent editions. I have not the first edition of 1556 (R. Stoph. Genesis) to see whether his annotations even then wore so audacious; but in his Greek and Latin New Testament of 1565, as later, he boldly says, “Ad sanctificationem Spiritus, ■ν ■γ■ πν ε■ματος. Id ε■ς ■γ..... Erasmus, Per sanctificationem Spiritus; non sails apposite. Per obedientiam, ε■ς ■πακο■ν. Id est δ■ ■πακσ■ς, &c.” Now it was not ignorance of either Latin or Greek which led the French Reformer into these stupendous misrenderings; it was a defective though presumptuous theological system which still exercises a similar tyranny over men's minds. For learned or unlearned, they go to Scripture, not to learn in simplicity what God has there revealed to His children, but to get proofs if they can of tenets they have imbibed from the nursery,

and never think of bringing to the absolute test of the Scriptural standard. Thus it is plain that the prevalent error as to sanctification led Bιze, who assumed it to be the truth, to change the force of the inspired words doubly. Erasmus may not have hit the mark in “per sanctificationem Spiritus,” but he is incomparably nearer than his critic. For ■ν must often be and is rightly rendered “by” or “with,” not “through” like δι■; as agency or means, but expressing a characteristic cause or abiding state, where “in” would scarcely suffice or suit. It is therefore a question here between “by” or “in"; but “to” or “unto” is positively and inexcusably false, and never can be in such a context the meaning of ■ν. In contrast with Israel set apart by an outward rite for obeying God's law under the solemn sanction of the victim's blood, which sprinkled both the book and the people, and so held death before them as the penalty of transgression, the believing Jews are addressed as elect according to the knowledge of God the Father, by (or in) sanctification of the Spirit, for the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, i.e. for obeying as sons of God (so Jesus did in the highest way), and as freed from their guilt by His blood. Hence ε■ς ■παικο■ν κα■ ■. is perfectly regular and beautifully true, as indicating the blessed object in constant view to which the Christian is set apart by the Holy Spirit, to obey not as an Israelite under legal bondage and with death as the penalty of failure, but in the liberty of Christ whose blood cleanses him from all sin. By the obedience and blood of Jesus may suit Protestant Confessions of faith, but it is a painful inversion of the apostle's language; as to say ε■ς ■π. =δ■ ■π. is unworthy of a scholar far beneath the erudite and able successor of Calvin. But all this shows that the sanctification of the Spirit here in question describes that vital work in separating a soul to God when born again, which is followed by justification when the soul submits to the righteousness of God in Christ, as practical holiness is the issue in the consequent walk.

But God's secret power in the Spirit's separation to Himself is not all. That there should be sanctification and belief of the truth He uses means and calls by the gospel; or as it is here said, “whereunto He called you through our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of spur Lord Jesus Christ.”

Thus, if we have God's purpose in Himself before time, we have the object He proposed as to the saints for eternity. He chose them from the beginning unto salvation. This He effectuated in time for the saints in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, not by a law curbing the lusts and passions of a fleshly people under the elements of the world. For God will not now own aught less than inward reality in subjection to His own revealed mind. And what He employs to produce this holy result is the gospel as preached by Paul and those with him. For, while the gospel is of God and concerning His Son, none the less was our apostle the most honored instrument of His grace in bringing out its full character as well as its deep foundations. All the apostles preached it, and Peter with especial success in acting on thousands from the first. But Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, not only preached with unprecedented fullness the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of Christ, but entrusted directly and indirectly the truth as he knew it to faithful men, such as were competent to instruct others also.

And then the end, how high and holy as well as excellent! How worthy of God and suitable for His children! It was not merely to obtain glory, but “to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As He is the One in whom all the divine counsels center for the display of His own excellency, so would His grace have us who now believe to share it with Him. “If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also

glorified together.”

Chapter 20

On 2 Thessalonians 2:15-17

It is remarkable how the thoughts of men cross the word of God when His grace is brought out as a living, believed, and applied reality. Speculative men wonder and judge after their puny way that the apostle should call the saints to steadfast adherence in ways and words to the truth, after he had just owned their calling of God to obtain the glory of our Lord. The mere mind of man regards this as logical inconsistency, conscious or not: why, reason they, should those elected to salvation be exhorted to aught more? Is not all sure and settled on divine grounds? But it is the elect, the consciously blessed and happy children of God, whom Scripture everywhere urges to vigilance and prayer, to reading the word of God and all other means of spiritual well-being; never do we find such calls to the unbelieving and the fearful. Those who owe all, and who own that all is due, to sovereign grace, are the very persons to show diligence in their responsible services day by day. And how can this be known save by the revelation of His mind? If we are God's workmanship, we were created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them. To faith alone all is plain and sure. If Christ is believed on God's testimony we believe His love from first to last, and His word is a law of liberty to our souls. The reasoning that sets His grace at issue with our responsibility is seen at once to be of Satan. Subject to the word we believe both, go forward in peace, but acknowledge the need of all He lays on us.

“So then, brethren, stand firm and hold fast the traditions which ye were taught whether by word or by letter of ours. But our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, that loved us and gave everlasting encouragement and good hope through grace, encourage your hearts and stablish in every good work and word.” (Ver. 15-17.)

There can not be asked a more conclusive disproof of that ecclesiastical consciousness (■κκλησιαστικ■ν φρ■νημα) which Dr. J. A. Moehler (Symbolik, § 37) claims for the Romish body, as the true sense of tradition, than this verse 15 affords. For the peculiar sense existing in their midst and transmitted by ecclesiastical education, is a colored light which misleads souls, not only involving but sealing them up in error, with so much the more self-security because they assume it to be the general faith of the church throughout all ages as against particular opinion, the judgment of the church as against that of the individual.

But this is a merely natural sentiment, such as pervades every department of human life; not only every nation having its own peculiar character imprinted on the most hidden parts of its being, as well as manifested in every relation, but each considerable society, religious or political, literary or scientific, having its own traditional and distinctive spirit, with which it strives to carry out its aims consistently.

To argue from such an analogy is to deny the reality of the church as a divine institution, and to sever the living link of each believer with God. The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven is the sole power of preserving intact both the individual relationship of the Christian, and the common walk of the church. For if the church is God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 2 Cor. 6:16), so is the body of every saint now (1 Cor. 6:19); the presence of the Spirit makes good the privilege alike in either case.

Undoubtedly His presence is productive of the most important and blessed results; but the church is no judge in matters of faith, still less is it infallible in interpreting the divine word or in aught else. The church is the lady, not the Lord, and is bound by her essential relationship to obedience as her prime and inalienable duty. Hence the Lord sent the apostles as His vicegerents, who, as need arose, made known His word and will to the church. They were the Lord's commandments, even when orally communicated; and they were in due time written by the apostles, though not all at once, but in fact as required. Let unbelievers if they will accuse scripture of deficiency or other faults. We believers know that it is adequate to make the man of God complete, furnished completely to every good work. What sort of logic is it that would attribute so perfect a result to imperfect means?

Never was it from the assembly that the word of God went forth, but from the Lord through servants extraordinarily chosen and endowed by divine power to that end. And the word came not to any particular assembly alone, but as of God binding on all that called on the Lord, whatever the special circumstances which drew it forth. Hence says the great apostle, “If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge [or take knowledge of] the things that I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). If the apostles were authoritative envoys, it was the Lord's authority they imposed on the church, which was bound to unqualified subjection. His name is the all-important claim; theirs only as vouchers for it; the church being responsible simply to obey.

So when Paul wrote his first epistle to the Thessalonians, he adjured them by the Lord that it be read to all the (brethren, or holy) brethren. They were young in the Lord, having been not long converted and only enjoyed his instruction for a sufficiently brief season. Yet does divine wisdom see no ground for withholding from these babes in the truth a communication remarkable for its freedom in presenting some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and ill-established wrest, as also the other scriptures, to their own destruction. On the contrary, and, perhaps because it was the first epistle written to the Gentiles, the inspired writer employs language of striking solemnity to impress on all the duty of hearing what he charges to be read to all.

And now again, in the second epistle, he says, “Accordingly then stand firm, and hold fast the traditions which ye were taught whether by word or by letter of ours” (ver. 13). Beyond a doubt the delivered instructions embrace oral and epistolary teaching, and in no way allow an indefinite sense actuating powerfully but almost insensibly a community from age to age. The traditions which the apostle urges the church to hold fast were known and possessed truth (1 Cor. 11:2), not at all scripture supplemented by a vague spiritual sense that would mold all by its intrinsic influence. The Romish idea is unknown to and excluded by scripture, which insists on the Lord originating and forming all that is His will by that word which the Spirit makes effectual in all His operations from quickening to the highest edification, and alike in worship and in service. For He is here in the individual saint, and in the assembly, to glorify Christ according to the Father's will. The theory of a dual rule of faith betrays its real character as a rival of scripture, and a rebel against God whose glory admits of no coordinate authority, such as its tradition cannot but assume to be. For this supposes defect in scripture, and claims, though human, nothing less than divine honor. A tradition you have not got and do not know is not only an absurd contradiction of the only true sense of tradition in scripture; but its assertion by Romanism exposes its votaries to the purely human traditions of the elders, which the Lord denounced as commandments of men which make

void the word of God. In vain do such worship God; they honor Him with their lips, but their heart is far from Him. The word of God alone has an absolute title over the heart and conscience of His people. It may be added that this in no way supercedes ministry. For the right exercise of every gift from Christ (and all real ministers are His gifts or δ■ματα to the church) is to bring the gracious authority of God as revealed in His word to bear in power on the soul. It is the enemy who would interpose between God and His children to whom His word addresses itself. For it is not so much a question of our right to His word, but far more of God's right to instruct and guide, correct and warn His own. And hence the great bulk of New Testament scripture is to the saints as such, not to chiefs like Timothy or Titus, though these two are not forgotten, as if they needed no special exhortation. True ministry will never enfeeble or deny God's rights by interposing itself or aught else between the conscience and God. Its appointed work is, as it always was, to help souls in their desire and duty to know the will of God. But when the causes of ruin so far wrought among the saints as to bring before the Holy Spirit the blinding power of corrupted Christendom, He more than ever insists on the value of scripture (not a word in the later epistles about the oral part of what was delivered,) as the intended safeguard in presence of men speaking perverse things, or of grievous wolves in sheep's clothing. Hence we are bound to test both ministerial dicta and church action by the word ever living and abiding. The denial of such a responsibility is Romanism in principle, wherever it may be, and this so real and thinly disguised as to deceive none but the victims of delusion. Just in proportion to the power of the Spirit which accompanies the preaching or teaching of Christ's servant, does the word neutralize extraneous influence of every kind, as well as judge and destroy hindrances from within. So the soul realizes its immediate obligation to hear and obey God; accepting, not man's word, but as it truly is, God's word which also works in him that believes. On the one hand, when the professing body holds a form of godliness but denies its power, we are told to turn away, were it even in most favored Ephesus; on the other hand, we are told in the same context to abide in the things we have learned and been assured of, knowing of whom they were learned—from the apostle—in the fullest contrast with the vague latent tradition which worldly wisdom wants, as a sort of common law in Christendom. Not tradition, but the sacred writings as a whole are able to make wise unto salvation, not without but through faith which is in Christ Jesus. When the highest claim on earth, when the church, would be a snare, he that would here below stand firm for God's glory and will, is referred to every scripture as divinely inspired and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction that is in righteousness. Woe be to whatever comes between the soul and God, darkening, destroying, and denying that which alone has direct and paramount authority, as it must judge at the last day. It is that which we have “heard from the beginning": what comes in since has no divine authority, were it ever so ancient and venerable. God would guide His own, and uses ministry the rather to effect it, by His children's faith in His word.

The expression of thankfulness for the assured blessing of the Thessalonians, in contrast with the everlasting ruin of the apostates from Christ and Christianity, is followed up not only by an exhortation to stand firm in the truth of God given to them, but by a prayer suited to their need. “But our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, that loved us and gave everlasting encouragement and good hope through grace, encourage your hearts and stablish you in every good work and word” (ver. 16, 17). He who came out from God to sinful man on earth, and went to God in heaven after the accomplishment of redemption, revealed Him as our Father, as Himself abides our Lord. God is fully manifested to faith, and the believer fully blest, whilst waiting for

Christ's return to complete for the body what is already done for the soul. The apostle desires that grace may cover all the path that intervenes with that divine encouragement, which alike suits His past goodness, and His people's exposure to suffering and sorrow; and the more so, because they are called to bear a steadfast testimony to Christ, inwardly and outwardly, in every good work and word. A wonderful call, when we think of God and His Son on the one hand, and of ourselves on the other. Who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God, who has given us His Spirit, that divine power might not be lacking to the least of His children for their arduous but blessed mission. Here again the gift of everlasting encouragement does not stifle, but rather draw out and strengthen, the prayer that He may encourage His children's hearts. Our Lord, and God our Father, are remarkably identified in thus cheering and strengthening us now, as in 1 Thess. 3:11: a special phraseology, inexplicable save grounded on the eternal relation of the Father and the Son, and their unity of nature in the Godhead.

Chapter 21

On 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

From prayerful desires for his beloved Thessalonians the apostle turns to ask their intercession on behalf of the testimony of the Lord generally, and especially of himself and his companions in their continual exposure to the adversary.

“For the rest, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as also with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men, for all have not faith. But faithful is the Lord who shall stablish you and keep from evil. And we have trust in [the] Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we enjoin. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.” (Ver. 1-5.)

It is beautiful to see how grace binds all believing hearts together through Christ. The apostle was the most gifted and energetic servant whom the Lord ever raised up to spread the knowledge of Himself throughout the world. In him the call of sovereign grace, not only as a saint but as an apostle, found its highest expression: “not of men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.” He neither received the gospel of man nor was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. And when it pleased Him who separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by His grace, to reveal His Son in him that he might preach Him among the nations, “immediately I conferred not,” says he, “with flesh and blood.” Yet the same man, who was thus formed and led of God manifestly to break the very semblance of a successional chain in official position as well as in the revelation of the truth, earnestly enlists the prayerful interest of the youngest brethren, his own newly-born children in the faith, in world-wide labors, both evangelic and ecclesiastic, encompassed with grave and frequent perils. On the one hand no one, no thing, must intervene between the risen Christ and His servant sent on the mission of His grace; on the other he (most markedly independent of men in his mission, in order that no mist may obscure the call of Christ or the message of His love) is the most dependent of all men on divine guidance and support, and thus the most desirous of the sustaining prayers of the saints.

What gracious wisdom there was in God's thus ordering must be apparent to any spiritual mind. Was it Paul and his companions who alone reaped the blessing of the saints, however young in the faith, thus praying Could anything be more strengthening or elevating or purifying to the believers themselves, unless it were direct occupation with Christ Himself, which indeed was promoted in no small degree by this very identification of heart with that which is ever so near His heart? Whatever draws out the affections towards the Lord in that which glorifies Him and His word is so much the purer gain for His treasury and ours, as it is deliverance from self and present things where Satan easily ensnares. And as His word ran and was glorified with the Thessalonians, they could the more really and simply pray that so it should be elsewhere. They were not cast down or distracted by internal and humiliating complications, which preoccupy the spirit and hinder the outgoing of heart far and wide for the blessing of others to His praise. Paul could freely ask, and they without stint or effort give, their prayers. The word of the Lord might

make rapid progress, without a deep result in man, and without glory to Him who is its source; the apostle would have them pray that it should be glorified even as also among themselves it was. They could therefore the more truly and heartily desire this from God elsewhere.

Besides there fail not many adversaries, as surely as grace gives an open and effectual door for the testimony of Christ. Never does the apostle, never did a spiritual man, boast of the numbers, or the position, the wealth or the intelligence, of his supporters: no surer sign of the world, nor of Satan's snare among those who take the ground of faith. The apostle does ask their prayers “that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, for all have not faith.” The word here translated “unreasonable,” ■τοποι, meant originally “out of place,” and hence strange, marvelous, and in a moral sense worthless, as saying and doing what was unsuitable and out of the way. I know not why “the faith” should be preferred to “faith” in the abstract: the Greek will bear either. Nor do these adversaries mean Jews only, though these were prominent and active in bitter unbelief. Faith is natural to no sinner's heart; it is ever of grace.

There is, however, a blessed resource, as they are told by one who well knew how far party hatred and personal detraction can go:— “But the Lord is faithful who shall stablish you and keep from wickedness” (or “evil” ver. 3). His faithfulness answers to the faith of His own, be it ever so feeble; His face is against those that do evil, as His eyes are upon the righteous, and His ears unto their cry. Hence the confidence that He would strengthen the Thessalonian saints and guard them from evil. So faith reasons and is ever entitled to reason. Nor can any ground be stronger; for it is from God to man, not from man to God, as men are prone to reason to their disappointment, shame, and sorrow. For, as our Lord Himself warned His own, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” They sleep when they should pray, and may flee or even deny where they ought to stand and confess. How different the other side! “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Rom. 5:8-10. So here the argument of the Lord's grace is before the apostle who would have the disciples strong in Him and in the strength of His might, the secret of victory to faith.

But if the end be thus sure, grace makes the way plain, the yoke easy, and the burden light. The obedience of Christ is the law of liberty. To a single eye His path is alone the question. Therefore the apostle has not a doubt that the saints addressed are as desirous of doing the Lord's will, as he of making it duly known. “And we have trust in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we enjoin” (ver. 4). For there is a distinction between Christ's giving us rest, and our finding rest to our souls. The former is of sovereign grace, however laboring or burdened we might be, and the gift is free and full to sinners according to the glory of His person and the goodness of the errand on which He came and suffered; the other is of divine government, and we as children of God find rest to our souls day by day, not certainly in self-will which is our danger, but in simple-hearted subjection to Him and confidence in Him; even as He Himself always did the things which pleased the Father who sent Him, and could say that it was His food to finish His work—that He kept His Father's commandments and abode in His love. It is in obeying Him only that the believer finds rest to his soul; and so the apostle counts on the Thessalonians here.

Verse 5 comes in beautifully to complete the paragraph: “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.” Could anything more effectually strengthen or keep souls in obedience? We need not follow those who in times ancient or modern contend that the Holy Ghost is here objectively before us: there is no sufficient ground for abandoning the usage of scripture. By “the Lord” is meant as elsewhere Jesus the Son of God, to whom he wishes to keep them straight; and this, by drawing and fixing their affections in the love of God and in the patience of Christ.

But even here, and in both respects, we have to face the doubts of learned men and their difficulties in submitting to the truth. We are told with sufficient confidence, that the first, from the fact of his wishing that their hearts may be directed into it, must be subjective, the love of man to God. The objective meaning, God's love, is said to be out of the question. This may seem “natural"; but it just destroys the force of the truth. The simple meaning is also the deepest and alone true. The apostle would have our hearts guided into the love of God, the love in which He has His being, forming His counsels, and acting as, well as revealing Himself. This too alone secures our love to Him, which is at best tiny indeed, compared with that unfailing source and infinite fullness which Christ personally and in His work has discovered to us, and the Holy Spirit has shed abroad in our hearts. It is, one grants, very natural to think of our love to Him; but the sight of Christ by faith gives the word living power and leads us into God's love as revealed in Christ, who alone (and not we) could be an adequate object to draw out and unfold the affections of God and His moral glory. And thus it is that we learn ourselves even to be the object of His love in a way and degree which otherwise had been impossible, for He gives His own to know that “as He is, so are they in this world,” and that the love wherewith the Father loved the Son is in them, and Himself in them (1 John 4:17, John 17:26).

Such love as this alone delivers from self practically; whilst it produces its like in us without effort or thought about it. Nor is there any other means comparable, for it is His way; especially if our hearts are also directed “into the patience of Christ,” not, I think, the endurance which He showed when here, however true and blessed it may be for us to cultivate that, but His patient waiting for the blissful meeting of His own, thenceforward changed into His glorious image at His coming. For this He waits patiently in heaven, as we now wait for Him on earth. Into the communion of His patience, as well as of God's love, would He lead our hearts. Toward the beginning of the first epistle the Thessalonians were said to be converted to serve a living and true God, and to await His Son from the heavens. Here toward the end of the second we have in substance the same elements, with the shade of difference proper to each case. The apostle sought the well-being, enjoyment, and progress of the saints; and what can effect these so well as directing their hearts into the love of God and the patience of Christ? The God whose love we know is His Father and our Father, His God and our God; the words the Father gave to Him He has given to us; and He is coming to introduce us into the glory which will make the world know that the Father sent Him and loved us as He was loved, We ought not to wait for any such demonstration of it, but to rest in His perfect love, as we wait patiently for Christ. Rev. 3:10 is a clear instance that ■πομον■ has this meaning; and so in 1 Thess. 1:3. Other occurrences in the sense of “endurance” cannot disprove it. We must leave room for the modifications of language by the context in all speech, most of all in a book so surpassingly rich and deep as the Bible. One-sidedness, always a hindrance and a danger, is nowhere so injurious as in the exposition of scripture: yet where is it so habitual? May

we be warned and watchful.

Chapter 22

On 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9

It remains to direct the saints how to deal, not with wickedness as at Corinth, but with the disorderly ways of any in fellowship No sin is to be ignored or passed by in God's habitation; and His dwelling there is the measure of judgment for His children. What is offensive to Him, what grieves His Spirit, what dishonors the Lord who made Him known and embodied His will livingly, cannot be indifferent to those who are called to bear witness to His nature, grace, and glory. But one of the ways in which He exercises the hearts of His children is in representing Him aright when they have to face and judge the delinquencies of one another. On the one hand they are responsible never to wink at evil, now that they have all beheld God's unsparing judgment of it, as well as its demonstrated hatefulness in the cross. On the other they are not set to legislate, as if they enjoyed continual inspiration by apostolic succession, or that God had not already revealed His mind completely in the Scriptures by chosen instruments “from the beginning.” The church is here to obey; the Lord directs with a wisdom and righteousness worthy of Himself, as we learn best in the spirit of dependence, and by real exercises of obedience. The Spirit of God works in the assembly, as well as in each individual, to apply the written word with a divinely given intelligence. For there are dangers owing to nature on either side: the easy-going gentleness which shrinks from duly probing and justly estimating evil; the Draconic severity which visits lesser faults with such rigor that there is no sterner dealing left for what is far worse. Scripture meets all by giving us both precept and example, that principle from God and not man may cover all, and direct conscience in each, with an unforced conviction of His will.

“ Now we command you, brethren, in [the] name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw from every brother walking disorderly and not according to the tradition which they received from us.”

As yet there had been in the Thessalonian assembly no such case of scandalous wickedness as 1 Cor. 5 afterward dealt with. Yet in the first epistle the apostle saw reason under the inspiration of God to warn the saints against personal impurity as well as to caution each not to wrong his brother in the matter. It is an offense which especially affronts the Holy Spirit given to us; and the Lord is the avenger in all these things. And in urging what is wholly different, brotherly love, even as the saints are taught of God to love one another, he had exhorted them earnestly to seek to be quiet and mind their own affairs, and work with their own hands.

But, as the bright hope (we have seen) had somewhat waned for their hearts, when he wrote his second epistle, he had to feel also that some had heeded too lightly his call to walk honorably toward those without, so as to have need of nothing or of no one. It was not, in my judgment, too enthusiastic absorption with the Lord's cooling which induced any to neglect their daily duty; it may have rather been that excited apprehension of the day of the Lord as if already set in which indisposed some to honest labor and gave rise to the gossiping communication of their fears which would naturally flow from such an error, as it has often done since. Be the motive as it may, the sorrowful fact was then patent, that some in their midst were now walking in the disorderly way already denounced; and the apostle accordingly adopts still more solemn language in directing the

saints how to meet the dishonor thus done to the Lord. With that name he binds up his injunction that they should withdraw, or keep themselves, from “every brother” walking so unworthily. The disorderly are not described as wicked persons, but still spoken of as brethren; but it was a course which even moral men would feel to be disreputable, and this aggravated by their indifference to, if not defiance of, the previous exhortation of the apostle already here referred to.

Thus they were inexcusable if the Christian is saved to glorify the Lord. And what were their brethren to do, if that name swayed their hearts supremely? Never was a greater fallacy than to imagine the assembly left to spiritual instinct under the plea of the Lord's authority. Not so: “if any man thinketh himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge (or, take knowledge of) the things that I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord.” “From the beginning,” it was so; and it is assuredly quite as necessary now. The church is called to obey even in the exercise of its most serious functions. There is the most frequent temptation to assume discretionary power; and Christendom has everywhere fallen into the snare. But such an assumption is really a departure from the one invariable duty of obedience, the sole path of honor to the Lord, and of blessing to the saints themselves. It ought not to be irksome for any who love His name; it is certainly safe for those who are not merely incompetent for a task beyond man, but are here simply as witnesses of Him. And it is recorded for our admonition that in the only council of which Scripture speaks, on an occasion of the utmost moment for the truth and liberty of the gospel, with all the apostles present, not to speak of other chief men among the brethren, there was much discussion before all in Jerusalem as there had been previously through Judaisers among the Gentiles, till the decisive judgment agreeably among “the words of the prophets” was given by James, and decrees framed accordingly were sent to be kept among the assemblies. Even they, the apostles and the elders with the whole church, needed, and had, the Scripture as the end of controversy.

So here, though the occasion was most ordinary, the apostle enjoins the brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. All are bound to walk according to apostolic teaching.

But smaller offenses are no more left out of the Scriptures than the great. Nor will a love for Christ allow any stain be it ever so slight among those who bear His name. The assembly must never be the shelter of evil: what does not suit Him does not suit those who represent Him on earth. But to put away is not His will for all that is offensive to Him. Even of old He could say He hated putting away in the earthly and natural. In the spiritual domain it is only right when according to His word it is imperatively due to His glory. Levity in what is so grave one can understand in a petty sect governed by self-will; it is unworthy of those who know what the church is to Him who gave Himself for it. But in things great or small it is the Lord who regulates all by His word, which His servants are responsible to apply truly in the Spirit. Hence have we the apostle here enjoining His will on the disorderly walk of some in Thessalonica. To pass it by would be not merely their loss but His shame. To leave it vague would open the door for the self-importance of man ready enough to define and exact. The apostle was given to treat the offense gravely but with measure. This was righteous, and man (as he was ever bound) ought to be in the place of obedience.

But, even in calling the saints to mark their reproof of disorder, the apostle deigns to plead with the hearts and consciences of all. “For yourselves know (says he) how ye ought to imitate us; because we were not disorderly among you, nor did we eat bread for naught from any one, but in toil and

travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you: not because we have not title, but to make ourselves an example to you that ye should imitate us" (ver. 7-9). How blessedly he can exhort them to follow, conscious of his own following the Master: an incomparably truer "imitation of Christ" than the monastic one so popular in Christendom. Yet he who could say with a good conscience "we were not disorderly among you" was not behind the very chiefest apostles. Nor did he claim aught from the saints he had left behind, nor from the Thessalonian converts who were learning from him the ways of Christ; but he set a pattern of unselfish grace at great cost to himself. How had some of those begotten by the gospel he preached learned the lesson? How had Christendom which would deny the least title in the ministry of Christ to one in this important way following the wake of the great apostle of the Gentiles? Does memory fail, or does not the prohibition of any such toil or travail in a minister of the word figure prominently in the ecclesiastical canon-book? But those who invent tests and rules are not afraid to contradict Scripture and in effect to censure the apostle. Their imitation of Christ is more sentimental and pretentious; his was as deep and real as it was very homely and of no account, save indeed to be shunned and despised by the least and lowest of sects, as well as by those who more openly seek the world which their hearts value. The apostle (filled with the love which is of God, and not of the world as Christ is not) sought, not theirs but them, and could point to his own daily ways, when among them at the beginning of the gospel in witness, of a self-denial which of itself rebuked in the strongest yet most gracious way the disorderly brethren who were working neither day nor night, and were not ashamed to eat the bread of every one who would supply them for naught.

It is to be noticed that this too is not the first time the apostle recalls his labors for his own support while evangelizing among them in Thessalonica and teaching the young converts; for he speaks of it in similar terms in the second chapter of his earlier epistle. It was heavenly devotedness, and the mention of it no less single-hearted. He would not be burdensome to any of them. To me, he could say, at a later day, to live is Christ. Without doubt this showed itself primarily in dependence on and delight in Christ, in the Spirit's lifting the heart above all that attracts and seduces into habitual rest and joy in the Lord, and consequent victory over the wiles and power of Satan. But the outer life corresponds with the inner, and the power and grace of Christ are not only in the spiritual affections but issue also in love to God by the outward ways which have the divine impress and savor of Christ. If he exhorted his son Timothy in his last epistle to be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, he knew long before what it was to be strengthened himself; and this cannot but disclose itself in giving a fresh color to the ordinary things of this life, so that they become in truth the most extraordinary.

But the apostle is careful to assert the laborers' title, though he speaks as he worked in a total self-surrender: "not because we have not title, but to make ourselves an example to you that ye should, imitate us" (ver. 9). It is one thing to assert the right that the Lord confers on His service, quite another where it might be misinterpreted or misapplied. Here, as at Corinth, he foregoes that which he carefully explains to be a divinely given title of much moment to maintain both for the givers and the receivers, to say nothing of His wisdom who so laid down. His will. An overflowing charity which thought only of the blessing of others and above all of Christ's glory filled his spirit and accounts for all, whether it may be maintaining a principle perfectly right in itself and of importance to others, or abandoning at this time his own just claims in honor of Christ and the gospel.

Nor did it cost him nothing. A man of means may preach and teach publicly and privately; but then he escapes necessarily the pressure of manual labor by day or by night. When wearied by his spiritual exertions, he has not to think of filling up with other work every available minute that he can fittingly abstract for the supply of his bodily wants. The apostle, in an energy of devoted, love which has never been equaled among the sons of men, tells us in a few words the simple truth of his ordinary life, while enjoining the saints how to mark their sense of the disorder in Thessalonica. And he faithfully lets them know that he was giving them this truly Christian zeal as an example for their imitation. How it acted on the Thessalonians in general we know not; but we may be sure that such a gracious abandonment of fleshly ease and of worldly etiquette was eminently suited to inflict the most withering rebuke on the idlers who, liking to talk rather than work, imposed on the kindness of the brethren and dishonored the Lord. How blessed when the fault of others turns to our learning afresh the grace of Christ as it applies in a world of sin, selfishness, and misery! Still more so, when he who so teaches walked from first to last in the grace he commends to others; and this, not only as now to the saints generally but to the elders in particular, as we read in his parting address at a later day to the Ephesian elders at Miletus. “Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered to my wants and to those that were with me. I showed you all things that so laboring ye ought to help the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

What an immeasurable gap between this true-hearted disinterestedness, and the base begging of the mendicant friars, Franciscan or Dominican, which appealed in a natural way to the feelings of mankind by a show of austerity beyond Scripture, and thereby amassed vast wealth in the end, and what men value yet more, incalculable influence and power from the highest to the lowest, save among those who saw through their pretentious to spirituality, or were jealous of a reputation which eclipsed their own. To say with Rabban Gamaliel that one thus working was like a vineyard that is fenced is far beneath the apostle; lowly love was active there. It was to live Christ every day without the bondage of a vow in a liberty that could accept the offering of his dear and poor children at Philippi. For there is no doubt on the one hand of the right to support, and of the duty on the other hand of the saints to render it ungrudgingly. But grace knows how and when on the laborers' part to dispense with it, if the glory of Christ or a special lesson to souls so calls for it as here. And how real and faithful is the guidance of the Spirit! For who can suppose that, when the apostle thus wrought with his own hands by midnight lamp in the tent-making of his early days and native land, he foresaw the need of reminding the Thessalonian saints of his habitual and incessant labors in this kind during his brief visit to their city? But what believer can doubt that the Spirit of God led the blessed man, both in thus laboring when there, and in now laying it upon the saints to give his exhortation a weight with which nothing else could compare?

Chapter 23

On 2 Thessalonians 3:10-15

It is possible and even probable that these brethren who showed indisposition to work may have taken advantage of the love that flowed to such as were engaged in the ministry of the word. Selfishness could soon find place to look for that love in their own case where no such service was rendered. A simple eye to Christ preserves from any snare of this sort or any other, enabling one to detect and deal rightly with the evil where it appears. And the written word, coming from Him who saw all that was needed from first to last, provides perfectly for every need that could arise, though not without the Holy Spirit, who alone can guide us according to scripture and thus manifests our state good or bad. For we are sanctified unto obedience—the obedience of Jesus.

“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear of some walking among you disorderly, doing no business, but busy bodies. Now those that are such we command and exhort in [the] Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, faint not in well doing. And if any obeyeth not our word by the epistle, mark him to keep no company with him, that he may be ashamed; and count him [not as an enemy but admonish as a brother.” (Ver. 1015.)

It is a striking characteristic of Christianity that, as in it not one thing is too great or high for the saint, so neither is aught too little or low for God. He concerns Himself even with a duty so simple and small as a man's working day by day and not sponging on his brethren. Union with Christ is the key to all. If by grace I am one with His Son, no wonder that my Father should take pleasure in opening His heart and mind to me. But for the same reason it becomes a question practically not of mere right and wrong, but of pleasing Him as children, of representing not an honest man merely, nor yet Adam unfallen (were this possible), but Christ. And if we are in Christ on high, Christ is in us here below. Our responsibility flows from these exceeding privileges, which they ignorantly destroy who would reduce us to the footing of Jews, under the law as our rule of life, an error which looks the more fair because it claims to guard moral rights, but is in fact subversive of the gospel and of Christ's glory and so of all we boast.

Who on the other hand could have thought that pious Christian men would be so inconsiderate, to say no more, as to live without working, so selfish as to expect support from those who did work or were living on the fruits of industry? Such was the fact at this time among the saints in Thessalonica, and the Apostle had even pre-warned them when he was there. It is a danger which might be anywhere and at any time, but at no time or place more likely than where saints are fresh and simple in the life of Christ: the very blessing exposes to the peril. Among decent men of the world such an expectation would be altogether exceptional if not impossible. The common interests of men all but exclude the thought; their selfishness would resent it as intolerable.

Thus the grace of Christ has its perils as well as its joys, perils on the side of exaggeration no less than of short-coming. The only security, the only wisdom, the only happiness, is in looking to Christ, who assuredly leads not to idleness but to earnest service in a lost world. None who looks to Christ could be a drone: if inclined to it, let him not forget the apostolic charge that whoever

does not choose to work, neither let him eat. This would be an effectual cure, if faithfully carried out; and are not the saints bound to do so? It is a just and homely way of dealing, no doubt but the Christian is surely equal to the occasion, not less than a Jew or a Gentile. If anything be contrary to Christ, it is the selfishness that would take advantage of grace; and we are called not to humor but to reprove and repress what is so unworthy of the Christian, because it misrepresents Christ.

This idleness was real disorder of walk. And it is an infectious disease which so much the more demands prompt treatment, “For we hear of some walking among you disorderly, doing no business, but busy bodies.” Such never was the Master, never is a true servant. For love in a world of misery delights to serve, instead of demanding the service of others, as pride and sloth do. The Son of man came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” And in this He is surely a pattern to us; and assuredly the great apostle proved his greatness in this as in all else. The idlers at Thessalonica had therefore the less excuse for their idleness. And there was danger of worse, for those who do no business are apt to be busybodies, as the apostle pungently warns them. Leisure from work is time for mischief, and occupation with the affairs of others without a duty is mischief.

But here, too, faith works by love; the truth builds up instead of destroying or scattering. Chastening has its measure, as the end is restoration. “Now those that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread. “The meddlesome effect, as well as its cause—idleness, must be given up. The name of the Lord was incompatible with both; but the apostle beseeches as well as commands. Thus even what nature might teach is bound up with our Lord and Savior. It is a question of God's kingdom and not of mere morality as if we were only men.

But the saints generally are exhorted to go onwards in the path of all that suits and pleases Christ. They were neither to be indifferent on the one hand, nor to be stumbled on the other. Disgust at those who walk unworthily is neither grace nor righteousness. It was therefore with a caution to others. “But ye, brethren, faint not in well-doing, and if any obeyeth not our word by the Epistle, mark him to keep no company with him, that he may be ashamed, and count him not as an enemy, but admonish as a brother.” It is easy for excellent people to lose heart in doing what is comely and honorable. The dislike of selfishness in others soon produces reaction and repulsion in themselves. The apostle would not have it so, but rather an even and earnest perseverance in all that is fair in the Master's eyes, whilst dealing plainly with such erring brethren and dishonorable ways. Disobedience was not to be passed by. “Our word by the Epistle” was not a Word of men, but, as it is in truth, God's word (1 Thess. 2:12), which also works in those that believe, as it leaves those who slight it worse than before. “We” are of God, the apostles could say; “he that knows God hears us, he that is not of God hears us not.” “Ye are of God,” say they to the saints; but let the saints see that they continue to overcome by faith, as they have overcome the power of evil that would have kept them slaves of the enemy. The faith which heeds God's word in the greatest thing will not despise it in the least, nor overlook the unbelief of that man who bears the Lord's name but obeys not the word. It will mark him and avoid his company that he may be ashamed of himself. Is he then put out from the saints, as a wicked person? Expressly the contrary “count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” He was grievously wrong, and his company refused, but brotherly admonition is the word, not excommunication as if he were an enemy and a wicked man.

It would be unnecessary to say, but for the misleading of great names, that neither the word καλοπι■ντες in itself nor its usage admits of the sense of doing good in acts of beneficence to others. This on the contrary might play into the hands of those the apostle censures. We must not confound τ■ ■γαθ■ν with καλ■ν. Both occurs in the proper and distinctive sense of each in the same context of Gal. 6:9, 10. Honorable and upright practice is the point.

Further, it might seem incredible beforehand, if one did not know it as a fact, that Luther and Calvin, and from Grotius down to Winer, though the last hesitatingly and with modification as seeking to heed the article, join in the strange misinterpretation, opposed to ordinary grammar, of taking δι■ τ■ς ■π. as by an epistle [to me]!" Bengel with the Aethiopic of the Polyglotts connects the words with σημ. in the sense of stigmatizing him by this letter. But this gives a quite unnatural emphasis to these words, which are thereby severed from the true and weighty connection with "our word," and lend an unusual and (I think) undue force to σημ.

Again, Professor Jowett is not justified in taking κα■ here, instead of ■λλ■.. Unaccountable it might seem that his nice and ripe scholarship should thus range itself with the older slovenly school which ever imagined that the inspired men use one word for another. But it is mere ignorance; and to treat it as such is the best lesson for the self-exaltation of theologian critics. The copulative is the true expression; the adversative would have been a coarse weakening of the love, on which the apostle counted. They would know how to temper their correction of the evil-doer. Mr. Jowett would have dealt better with the language of Plato. His rationalism undermined his respect for Paul, and suggested the self-complacent thought that he knew what the apostle intended to say better than the apostle himself.

Chapter 24

On 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

The conclusion is in perfect and manifest keeping with all that has gone before. “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace constantly in every way. The Lord be with you all. The salutation by the hand of me Paul, which is a mark in every epistle; so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you all.”

The saints, through faith rescued from the wrath to come, are serving the living and true God, and waiting for His Son from heaven—Jesus raised from the dead. Even “that day” shall not overtake them as a thief: as of the day, they are sober, and have on the armor of light; and triumphing over death, comfort one another with the bright hope of His coming, when we shall ever be with the Lord. The worst deceit and the destructive power of Satan have no real ground of alarm for them, though none know so well the character of both in the latter day: still less has the day of the Lord any terror, though misled and misleading man has striven hard to trouble them by a false apprehension about it. But now, delivered alike from hopeless sorrow by the first epistle, and no less baseless fear by the second, their hearts had been comforted and stablished in every good work and word. And the apostle could and did ask their prayers that the word of the Lord might run and be glorified, and His servants be delivered from unreasonable and evil men; as he had also charged them, unweary themselves in well doing, to deal in brotherly faithfulness with disorderly brethren.

It remained only to commend them suitably to the Lord; and this the apostle does in his closing words. In the first epistle he had said “The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly: and may your entire spirit and soul and body be preserved without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” with the comforting assurance, “Faithful is He that calleth you, who will also do it.” This beautifully fell in with an earlier stage, when these young saints needed to be reminded of God's will, even their sanctification, as none were more exposed to the snares of personal impurity than the Greeks of that day: an evil peculiarly offensive to the Holy Spirit given to the saints, as the Corinthians were told yet more strongly afterward. His prayer went well according to the freshness and energy of the Thessalonians, where this hope shone brightly before their eyes.

The second epistle gives greater prominence to the Lord; but holy separateness has no longer such a place to them. “Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace constantly in every way.” He had looked at disturbing causes both in the world and in the assembly. But greater is He that is in them than he that is in the world; and He that is in the assembly is surely competent to make His gracious and withal mighty presence respected, if looked to, for such as dare to forget it or despair. The Holy Spirit is here to glorify Christ: why then should His own doubt or fear? Why not count on that unspeakable favor of “peace,” whatever the natural threats or springs of disquiet?

“The Lord of peace” is a blessed title in which He stands related and revealed to the saints, who might and ought to be assured that He could not fail to act accordingly. For the name of the Lord is the expression of what He is or does; and what is our sense of that which is due to those related to us when they need succor in their difficulties, compared with His unfailing grace?

Nor is this all. “The Lord of peace Himself give you peace constantly,” or, “at all times.” His inspired servant did not wish to raise in their breasts an unwarranted expectation, but had the Spirit of truth directing the desire which he desired them to feel was of God. He did even more; not only at all times, but “in every way.” Is it possible to conceive a more studied exclusion of every source of alarm at all times, a stronger guarantee of peace from the Lord of peace Himself (and what fountain of peace can march with Him?) for saints of little experience, passing through a world full of trouble at all times, with a predicted period impending of tribulation beyond all precedent?

The apostle directs them to expect it from the Lord “in every way.” As they had no time wherein they might not look to Him to give them peace, whatever may be in its destined season for Jews or Gentiles, so He would give them peace, not in some way only, but “in every way.” How exactly answering to His own words before to the disciples! “These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” It was the enemy, not the truth, which had alarmed their souls falsely for a while.

There is indeed a singular but easily conceived various reading τ■ρ■ “place,” for τρ■π■ “way,” in the first hand of the Alex. and Clermont MSS., as well as in the Augian copy (now in Trin: Coll: Camb.) and in the Boernerian (now in the Dresden Royal Lib.) and in two cursives. The Vulgate and Gothic versions represent it; and so apparently Chrysostom, as Montfaucon (not Field) has edited the word. The great Greek commentator has in fact as unduly narrowed the meaning of “peace” as the word in question; for the apostle does not limit his wish to harmony among themselves, but embraces peace in a far higher sense and in all its force. It is therefore an instance not without its instruction, that critics like Griesbach and Lachmann should have the least hesitation in endorsing the ordinary and best attested text: Griesbach marking it as probable; and Lachmann actually adopting it as his text. The apostle prayed that peace might be given them in every way, with no mere outward thought of “place.”

This, too, is crowned by “The Lord be with you all: a wish of small price in eyes which see only a man, writing to other men. What is it to those who know by faith God employing a servant under His own unfailing guidance so to communicate His mind and heart to His children while passing through the world? What avail all other helps, if “the Lord” be not with us all? and why should we not be at perfect peace, if He be with us, whoever and whatever else be lacking?

There is another notable link of connection with the close of the first epistle, though each perhaps has, as usual, its own distinctive traits. “The salutation by the hand of me Paul, which is a mark in every epistle: so I write.” How in keeping with a very early communication of the apostle called to write not a few, thus carefully to authenticate his letters to the Gentile saints! Still more solemnly in the first had he adjured the Thessalonians by the Lord that the letters be read to all the (holy) brethren. The notion that Scripture, addressed even to the whole assembly, was not to be read to or by all, was an interference with divine authority as well as divine grace, which could only be conceived in a degenerate and rebellious age, verging to apostasy. That Paul's epistles are, as truly as any other of the holy writings, accredited as scripture, 2 Peter 3:16 makes sure and plain. And it was the more necessary that they should have in all the mark of his hand in saluting the saints, as he usually employed an amanuensis. (Compare Rom. 16:22, 1 Cor. 16:21, and Col. 4:18, with Gal. 6:11.)

Also, the concluding words of the two epistles resemble greatly while they differ sensibly. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you,” says the first—be “with you all,” says the second. Here we find the more decided emphasis, where and when it was most needed; whilst the same farewell of divine love appears substantially in both.

Chapter 25

Absalom: Part 1

" The fool hath said in his heart, No God!"

David is the principal object before the mind of the Spirit of God in both the lst & the 2nd books of Samuel. In the 1st book we see him brought from obscurity into honor and praise, and there standing, by the good hand of God, in full righteousness amid the persecutions of the wicked. In the 2nd we see him descending from honor, through sin, into degradation and ruin, but there learning the rich and marvelous ways of the grace of God. It is thus the sorrow of righteousness, or "David the martyr," that we first see; and the shame of sin, or "David the penitent," that we next see.

And these things give us different characters in the Psalms. In some of them we hear the breathings of a convicted conscience, a heart exercised in thoughts of transgression, searching after God again, and from thence rising into a blessed sense of grace and salvation. In others we hear the sorrows of conscious righteousness suffering the reproach of the wicked, but knowing all the while its title to fullness of joy and strength in God.

These are the varied exercises known to David's soul; and in, all this he is the type of God's remnant in the latter time, who will have to pass through the shame and sorrows of afflicted and yet conscious integrity, and the shame also of convicted sin. For that remnant, though righteous in their own persons and conduct, will identify themselves with their nation in all its blood-guiltiness, and look on Him who was pierced, and mourn as though they had pierced Him themselves.

And (wonderful, and yet blessed to tell it) David would not have known all that is in God, had he not passed through the sin of the 2nd Samuel, as well as the sorrow of the 1st, for it is sin that manifests God.

And what a truth that is I learn God in the darkness of mine own iniquity. For there was in God a deeper secret than all that His hand revealed in creation. There was the treasure of His bosom. There was grace in God, love for guilty ones; and Adam's sin drew that secret out; for "the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head" at once came forth to tell him that God had something better than all the fruit of His six days' work of creation.

The direct history of Absalom may be considered as beginning with 2 Sam. 11. In the previous chapters of this book David had been advancing into power and the kingdom, approving himself to God and to the conscience of all men. In no scene in which he is called to take a part does he seek himself, or eye his own advantages. He considers the sorrows and dishonor of others rather than his own gains, and will be serving others though at his own expense. Thus he weeps over Saul and over Abner (i.-iv.), and it is his first concern, after he comes to the throne, to bring home the ark of God to Israeli and prepare it a worthy habitation; for which end he would be base in his own sight, and despise the shame of others. He sought the greatness of God's house, and not his own wealth, and the Lord prospered him withersoever he went. As David would be only a servant, the Lord would make him honorable and prosperous; and even his mistakes savor of his virtues. It

is his impatience to be serving that leads to his errors touching both the carriage of the ark and the building of the house. No doubt he was to be blamed, for in those matters he had not waited on the counsel of the Lord, as he had been wont to do; but this came from his desire to be doing service for God. He thought, to be sure, that in these things he must be right. He trusted his heart in them, and therefore did foolishly (Prov. 28:26); 1)14 still his errors savor of that which was characteristically “David,” being connected in his mind with desire to be in service for the Lord and His people. (v.-x.)

All this indeed is excellent; but all this does not make out a well-fought fight, and a stainless victory for David. All is not over even yet; such holy beginnings as these are not everything. The strength of the summer sun instill to try this promise of the spring. He that girdeth on his armor must not boast as he that putteth it off. “Ye have need of patience” is the word, and so we shall find it even here with David.

It was the time, we read, when kings went forth to battle. (xi. 1.) But David the king tarries at Jerusalem, and that sets him at once in the flesh. He was not where the Spirit could own him, but has chosen his own way. It may seem to be a small thing, but it is enough for the enemy of his soul. It is only, one might say, a tarrying in the city when he should have been in the field of battle. But the little foxes spoil the vines, we read, “for the vines themselves are tender;” and this beginning may account for any result. Soft relaxing habits quickly come, in, for the next moment we see him, instead of having girded the sword upon his thigh, lying on his bed at eventide. The outposts had been left unguarded, and the very citadel becomes an easy spoil for the enemy. Nothing could do for him now but to arise and shake himself, like Samson, in the strength of the Lord. But, like Samson, he appears as though he had already betrayed the secret of the Lord. And all because he got into the way of his own heart. He was drawn away by his own lusts and enticed; and lust was soon to conceive sin, and sin to bring forth death. Jerusalem, beloved, was David's place for himself, when the field of battle was God's place for him; and, little as that may seem, it is enough to lead to adultery. “Lord,” may we all say, “it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”

But it is not merely one lust that enters by this door and riots in David's veins, for love of his fair name in the world now proves just as much a lust in him as the desire of his eye. The one led him to adultery with Bath-sheba, the other goads him to the murder of Uriah. He had no thirst after Uriah's blood, but rather contrives expedients to preserve it, and to that end will do all but surrender his place and reputation among men. He sends to the field of battle to fetch him home to his wife, and thus to be a covert for his sin; and when that will not do, his subtle and uneasy heart devises to make Uriah drunk, that he may still accomplish his end, and use him as a veil under which to hide his own iniquity. Nor is it till all these schemes were baffled, and righteousness in Uriah refuses to be so used in the service of sin in David, that David sacrifices him to his lust. To his love of the world he sacrifices Uriah new, as he had just before sacrificed Bath-sheba to the desire of his eye. And he will sacrifice even his nation to the same. He will so order it that the army of Israel may be defeated, as well as the blood of Uriah be shed before the walls of Rabbah, rather than that his good name should be made a scandal. All must go rather than David hazard that. Just as Pilate afterward:—he was Caesar's friend, the world's friend; and, rather than hazard any breach in that friendship, Jesus must die. Sad thus to tell it, David and Pilate are found together. There was no more thirst for innocent blood in Pilate than there was in David; but there was the same love of his credit in the world in David as there was in Pilate. Pilate as well as David can try

many devices to preserve the innocent blood and the world for himself at the same time; but David as well as Pilate will give up the one for the other if both cannot be retained together.

It is sad thus to class David and Pilate together. l3ut flesh is flesh in whomsoever found. But David had now to prove that “sin, when it is perfected, bringeth forth death.” And well is it for us when we prove that here through the Holy Ghost, and do not wait to prove it by the judgment of God by and by. So was it now with David. Adultery, murder, and falsehood had perfected the sin, and new came the bitterness of his soul. He takes the sentence of death in himself “His bones wax old, and his moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” (Psa. 32) Death within was consuming him as a moth fretting a garment. There was no strength of grace as yet to confess the sin; but the life within was sensitive of the wound it had received. The spirit felt the grief it had been put to, but David kept silence and did not tell out his shame as yet, for guile was still in the spirit. (Psa. 32) The voice of a prophet must call forth confession; but when it does come forth, it is indeed of a divine quality; for it is not merely the trespass against Uriah that his soul is conscious of and his lips confess, but he sees his sin in the light of God's glory. And it is there, beloved, we always see it. When we see it aright; it is there we divinely know what sin is. “I have sinned against the Lord,” said David; and with this apprehension he utters, against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” (Psa. 51) Before this confession the spirit had its wound within, and it was intolerable. But this confession perfects his conversion; and then he was able to teach sinners the ways of the Lord, as Peter after he was converted could strengthen his brethren. When he had learned the blessedness of grace abounding over sin, he could present himself to all other poor sinners as the warrant of their confidence in the Lord. “For this,” says he, “shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.” (Psa. 32) Like Paul he is set forth a pattern of all long-suffering, and like Peter he knows the restoring of a soul that had erred from the ways of righteousness.

In the striking style of Scripture, we now read, after David had accomplished his sin, “the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.” There is no long account of God's anger, but this tells us of His mind towards the sin of His servant. But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive them; and so we find it here. “I have sinned against the Lord” says David. “The Lord has put away thy sin,” answers the prophet. (xii.)

Chapter 26

Absalom: Part 2

" The fool hath said in his heart, No God!"

But acceptance into God's favor always puts us into one interest with God's honor in the World; and, from the moment of our acceptance through His grace, we are to be the servants of His glory. The moment we rest as sinners, we begin our labor as saints. By faith we rest as sinners knowing the virtue of the blood of Jesus for the full repose of the conscience before God: but from thence we labor as only in the prospect of the rest that is ours as saints. We become the servants of God's glory when we are made free through God's grace. And so here: David had been just led to his rest as a sinner— "The Lord has put away thy sin;" but now he must serve God's glory as a sinner brought near. As the name of God had been reproached through David, David must now bear the reproach too; and God will show His entire separation from the sin of His servant, and before all men, He must measure his former work into his bosom. The child that Bathsheba had borne him must die; as his sword had slain Uriah, the sword now shall not depart from his house; and that which he had done to the shame of others, and done it secretly, others should now do to his shame in the sight of the sun.

It is in connection with all this that Absalom is introduced to us. He is to be made the rod in the Lord's hand for the chastening: of David—a rod, too, taken out of his own stem, his own child; as the Lord by Nathan had just said to him, "behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house." Absalom meant not so, like the Assyrian afterward (Isa. 10:7). The Assyrian was to have a commission from the Lord against the hypocritical nation, but in his heart he thinks only of the spoil and the prey. Absalom is now to serve his own lusts, but God will use him for the renewing of His servant in holiness.

We need not particularly consider the circumstance which is made to introduce Absalom to us. The sin of Aninon, and the sorrows of Tamar, had their purpose, and could well have been used in God's grace to keep poor David in lively recollection of his own sin and sorrow. It was a voice "in his own house" that must have spoken in thunder to him. Blood and uncleanness were staining his own children under his own eye. Tamar's virgin garment was now rent, a sore remembrance of the stain upon himself; and Amnon's blood was shed, awakening the voice of 17riah's blood in his ear from the earth. But we need not more particularly look at this. Absalom was Tamar's brother, and the son of David by a daughter of the king of Geshur (2 Sam. 3:3) but we have nothing of him till now, when he appears at once before us as the subtle and willful one, whose heart and eye were full only of their own devices and objects to reach which appears to be all his care. Amnon's wrong to his sister had raised a deadly fire in his heart, which two full years had no power to quench; but his crafty soul must find the happiest way to let out his rage on its victim. The fire burns as though it had been kindled but yesterday, and his subtlety devises a sure passage for it. It is all of Satan. The guile of the serpent ministers to the furl of the lion, and Absalom plots the matter of the sheepshearing that he may get the blood of Amnon. David has some misgivings. How indeed could it be otherwise? Must he not, after all that he had done and all that the prophet had said to

him, have feared every stir in the house? For one of his own house was to bring the evil upon him. He does not like this sheepshearing feast which Absalom proposes. But he is pressed about it, and Amnon then goes, and falls before the treachery and sword of his brother. (xiii.)

Absalom by this had defiled the land, and forfeited his life. (Num. 35:33.) All that he can now do is to fly to strangers, for the land had no city of refuge for such an one. The avenger of blood might claim him of Bezer or of Kedesh. He had shed his brother's blood, and this cried for vengeance. But David was a man of affection. He had a heart that sought its indulgence in the relations and sympathies of human life, and, being the man after God's own heart, he would have found his joy rather in the ministrations of grace than in the exactions of righteousness. But Absalom had fled, for he was now debtor to that law of which David was the guardian, for David held his throne on the terms of reading the law continually. (Deut. xvii.) What then can now be done? David may mourn for the son slain, and for the son banished, but are not both equally lost to him?

Now Joab was, in modern language, a consummate politician. He was nephew to the king, and thus the king's honor was in some sense his honor, and that he knew and valued and sought to retain; and therefore he never seeks to disturb the throne as now settled in the house of Jesse, his grandfather. He was content to be the second in the kingdom, for that his worldly wisdom told him he might be in safety, but more than that he knew he could not seek without hazard. He could get both Abner and Amasa out of his way, when he thought they were intruding into that place which he had eyed for himself; but the first place he would leave with David, and therefore never conspires against him, but is ever watchful of his interest, ever ready to let David take the principal post of honor (xii. 28), and is even quicker than David himself (xxiv.) to discern and provide for the stability of the throne.

Such an one could not but be busy at such a moment as this. He knew the softness of David's heart, and easily calculated that any device to help him to bring back his banished child would be acceptable; and to do this acceptable service to the king, and thus to have a fresh claim to be the second round his throne, sets Joab in motion now. He did not much care for Absalom's exile, but in some sense “he carried the bag and bare what was put therein.”

But the case was a very difficult one; for David, as I have said, might love his son and desire his return. But David was guardian of that law to which his son had exposed himself, and it was hard for Joab to contrive a way whereby David might let “mercy rejoice against judgment,” and thus bring back his banished one.

“A wise woman” of Tekoah is, therefore provided, whom Joab instructs in this matter. Perhaps we may not know the proper sense of that description of her, but it will shortly appear that she was wise indeed, and that too in the secrets of God Himself. She feigns herself a mourner, and comes to the king with just such a tale of sorrow as must at once have caught his affections, and brought his own sorrow fully to mind. She tells him of her two sons, how one had slain the other in a quarrel in a field, and that the kinsman was out against the manslayer, threatening to leave her a withered stump in the earth. David is surprised. Such matters should lie with the proper judges to determine between the avenger and the manslayer. (Num. 35) But David is surprised—nature speaks in him too quickly—the yearnings of nature move him, and he gives her a pledge three times assured that nothing shall befal her son. Then, armed with this pledge, she more distinctly assails the heart of the king. She is willing to let the pledge be to Absalom the king's son, and not

to her son, and would have it known that she had been all the while pleading for David's sorrow and not for her own.

But “wise woman” as she was, she had deeper resources than even these. She had reached David's heart, and got a pledge from the desire and heat of human affection; but she seeks now to reconcile his conscience to all this, and to let him learn that he had a title in God Himself to let “mercy rejoice against judgment” to the guilty. as his soul desired, and as his lips had pledged. For all would be imperfect without this; for the king, as we have seen, was debtor to the law, and none could set it aside but He who established it. Samson, it is true, may marry a Philistine harlot, though the law denied all such commerce with any Gentile, when he has a dispensation from the Lawgiver. Gideon or Manoah may sacrifice on a rock, though the ordained place is elsewhere, if the Angel-Jehovah will stand by; and David himself may forsake the altar at Gibeon even for the threshing-floor of a Jebusite, when the God of grace meets him there. Now it is this principle of truth which the “wise woman” now brings to bear on the conscience, as her tale of woe had lately borne on the heart, of the king. She pleads with David in behalf of Absalom the very mercy of God in the gospel. She tells the king that he should fetch home his banished one; for says she, “we must needs die, and are as water spilled on the ground (i.e. good for nothing see: 1 Sam. 7:6), which cannot be gathered up again, neither doth God respect any person, yet doth He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him.” Here she brings God's own way before David. She pleads that law of liberty (James 2:12) which expresses even the heart of God Himself in His dealings with poor sinners, the gospel of God's grace in which. He righteously refuses to hear the law, and is just while the justifier of the guilty, having devised a way by which His banished ones return to him. Thus she pleads with his conscience, as she had before pleaded with his affections, and what can David do? Must he not give an answer in peace? Is he not satisfied? If the light of the gospel be thus by this wise woman brought to shine on him, must he not walk, and act in the light of it? Can he refuse to reflect it? This seems to be the way of her wisdom, and indeed it is strange and blessed. What a testimony this is! What a telling of the wonders of grace! That which is no better than water spilled on the ground is gathered up to be brought home to God Himself. (xiv.)

This that we are meditating on is somewhat a neglected scripture. But it shows us that we may ofttimes find some stray and rich kidneys of wheat in the distant corners of the Lord's granary. And this gospel in the mouth of this unknown widow, the “wise woman of Telioah,” further shows us that Israel, even in their infant dispensation, had sweet truths to feed upon. From the beginning indeed the joy has been but one. “The woman's seed” was the king's highway cast up under the eye of faith, the known and published good news, whereby God hath devised to fetch home His banished ones.

The king, however, seems not to be quite at ease. The pleading of our wise woman was as wise as it could have been. Nothing in its season could have been more perfect. But the king was the guardian of the law, and the softness of his heart had betrayed him into an act of grace by which he had undertaken to set the law aside, but the thought seems to be lurking there, that he was debtor to the law. However, according to the king's word, Absalom is brought home, but it is on terms of not seeing the king's face; and so he dwells two full years in Jerusalem apart from David.

But he is still Absalom; wherever or however we see him, he is himself. His taste remains in him, and his scent is not changed, even though he had now returned from captivity. (Jer. 48:11.) He comes home the willful Absalom still, the servant of his own passions and of them only. “Who is lord over us?” is the language of all his actings. His tongue was his own. “No God,” says he, in his heart continually. All that can be said in any way of commendation is, like Saul before him, of his comeliness in the flesh. “In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty. From the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him:” we have no account of him beyond this of his beauty. His acts from first to last are enough to give him his right name and place before us; for in his own personal character, and in all in which it displays itself, Absalom is still the willful one. He is the Saul of his day, or the apostate seed of the serpent, and the agent of the dragon, the usurper, the proud one who consults only his own will, which most surely carries him forth into full and constant resistance of God and His people. Even favors have but little claim on him He may send to Joab to whom he owed everything a second time, but beyond that small courtesy his heart owns no debt to him

Chapter 27

Absalom: Part 3

“ The fool hath raid in his heart; No God!”

But the heart that is thus dead to the claims of kindness finds it easy to entertain anything that Satan would propose. Thus, having exercised the rude strength of the lion in the cornfields of his friends he is quite prepared to practice the guile of the serpent in the kingdom of his father. The one or the other must be the way of Absalom. The child of him that was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, he knows no other master. He is Absalom, “the father of peace.” But it is the peace of a deceiver. He comes in peaceably and takes the kingdom by flatteries. By good words and fair speeches he deceives the simple. He steals the hearts of his father's subjects, the people of the Lord and of His anointed. Nothing can be more corrupt than all his ways, for he is the mere slave of his own evil desires, let them urge him as they may, or set his heart on work with whatever device they may. And he will use any means for his own ends. He pretends the payment of a vow at Hebron, and takes with him two hundred men out of Jerusalem, to furnish as it might seem the table at the sacrificial feast; but all this was only to further his design upon the throne of his father. His slanders of his father, and flatteries of the people, had already prepared the nation for his pretensions; and now he sends out spies from Hebron to declare him through the land, and all too well in readiness for him, and speedily, therefore, the conspiracy was strong, and the people increased continually with him.

The Absaloms of every day have had their evil counselors. This has been already noticed in the case of Saul, and some of these confederacies were then traced. Now we see it in the case of this apostate son of David. He gets Ahithophel to be with him, one who had stood among David's children. But the counselor joins the child: one who had eaten of David's bread, and another with whom David had taken sweet counsel, none other or less than they, must now be found together against him.

But all this gives occasion to one of the most affecting scenes in the history of David as a penitent. We know not whether the more to admire the beautiful workmanship of the Spirit of God in David, when suffering for righteousness, or when suffering for transgression. This I have before touched upon. We see him the martyr in the days of Saul, but then as led by the Spirit reading a sweet lesson of instruction to us, showing all patience and all holy confidence in God; consenting to be hunted as a partridge in the mountains day after day, rather than take vengeance into his own hands, or lift himself up against the Lord's anointed. (1 Samuel.) And so now, though the scene be changed, and we have David the penitent rather than David the martyr, yet all is of equal interest and value to us, under the forming hand of the Spirit of God. (2 Samuel.)

Thus, when in 1 Samuel, the testimony of his conscience was for him, he would gird himself with all the gladness in God that he could get. He put on the ephod, he ate the bread of the sanctuary, he had the prophet and the priest with him in exile, and he carried the sword of Goliath, sweet pledge as it was that no weapon formed against him could prosper. All this was his then, and he claimed it all with confidence, carrying within him his title to rejoice in spirit, though circumstances

were against him, knowing full well that he might have all in God, though nothing in man. He ate the fruit of an unwounded conscience, the glad feast of the Lord's Unclouded countenance. Indeed he dared not then to have eaten the bread of mourners. Could he surround the altar of God with tears? Could he fast while the bridegroom was with him?

But now in 2 Samuel it is otherwise, for the testimony of his Conscience was against him. He is now a sinner. It is sin that has found him out, and has brought him into remembrance before God, and it is not for such an one to keep holy day. He must bow his head and accept his punishment. And so he does, and brings forth fruit that was as much in season, as his previous harvest of joy and confidence had been in season. And in the same spirit of true repentance, he would be alone in the trouble. He would have Ittai his friend go back, and leave him to meet the sorrow alone, for it was he alone that had sinned and drawn out the hand of the Lord; but what had those sheep done? And still in the same spirit he sends back the ark and its priests, as having a joy for him that it did not become him now to taste. The ark, the presence of God, was David's best joy; but he was not entitled now to have it, and therefore he sends it home. All this was just the sorrow that became him now. “Carry back the ark of God,” says he, “into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again and show me both it and His habitation; but if He thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good to Him.”

Nothing of joy was his at present. Let the ark go back to the city, to shed the gladness of its presence there, he will go forward to Mount Olivet with tears and barefooted. He will eat nothing but the bread of mourners, and know nothing but the sorrow of flab Bridegroom's absence. Surely this was godly sorrow working repentance. And beside all this, he will allow even the wicked to reproach him. Another Benjamite comes out against him to plague him sorely; one too whom he had never wronged, or done despite to, any more than to his kinsman Saul of old. But Shimei comes out against him in this the day of his calamity, and reviles him, casting stones at him, and cursing him still as he goes. But David reviles not again. He hears the righteous rebukes of God in all this, and bows his head. God had given Shimei a commission to do this. What could David Suffer more than David deserved? was the thought of the heart of our penitent. Therefore let Shimei, the unworthy Shimei, do or speak as he may, with David it is not Shimei but the Lord. (xv. xvi.)

All this was fruit meet for repentance. It was all perfect in season. But though thus silent as towards Shimei, David in spirit judges that he may plead against Ahithophel, and he says, “O Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” And this desire the Lord allows, for He answers it by speedily confounding that evil counselor.

The counsel which this apostate friend, and companion of David, counseled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God. But the Lord had now appointed to overthrow him Absalom rejects his counsel, his word is passed by; and as his reputation for wisdom in the state was everything to him, his household gods are thus now stolen from him, his “good thing” is gone, and he sinks down a defiled dishonored ruin.

What a lesson to us all, beloved! What did anything avail Haman, while Mordecai sat at the gate? What would not Saul give up, if he could but be honored before the people? O the solemn lesson which all this reads to us. Have we, beloved, anything that, if it were touched, our life would be touched, or is our life so bound up with Jesus, that we could stand the wreck of all beside? What

treasures are they which we are laying up day by day? what vineyard is it that we are cultivating? Where is the ruling passion fixed, brethren? Where is the current of the heart flowing, what point is it hasting towards? Does Jesus draw its desires, and awaken its intelligence, or what of this world is its master-spring? It is well, beloved, to put these challenges to our poor hearts, and try them thus in the presence of our blessed Lord. “When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died.” (xvii.)

And Absalom the king is soon to be like this counselor of his kingdom, for the beast and his false prophet perish together. But there was no prayer in the mouth of David against Absalom, as there had been against Ahithophel. How very striking is this as indeed is every expression that we get of his heart all through these scenes. Nothing can be more perfect than this drawing by the divine hand. I have noticed this already in some features, and here again we trace it. He numbers the people, setting captains over hundreds and thousands of them, and making Joab, Abishai, and Ittai the chiefs. But he would fain go forth himself, for it was his sin which had brought all this mischief on the land, and David was of too noble a heart to let the mischief find any in the foreground but himself; and beside, he has his desire on Absalom still, and judges that his presence might help to shield him, for David was of too soft a heart to disown the feelings of a father even towards a rebel son.

But his people will not hear of this. What a loved man he was! and deservedly so, I am well assured: one, I judge, of the most attractive men that ever lived, who had qualities which could well command, and then detain beyond almost any other, the hearts and desires of all who knew him “Thou shalt not go forth,” the people answered, “for if we flee away they will not care for us; but now thou art worth ten thousand of us therefore now it is better that thou succor us out of the city.” As afterward, when he was hazarding his life in battle with the Philistines, his men aware to him, saying “Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel” (xxi. 17) And indeed he was their light, their gladness, and their leader, the honored and loved one of his day, in favor with God and man. But he now bows to the word of his people, and though his heart is still towards Absalom, he goes not out, but, “deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom,” is the last command he gives his captains on sending them forth to the battle.

With a heart stored with such affections “he sits between the gates to wait the solemn issue,” and the captains and their armies go to the battle of the wood of Ephraim. Victory or defeat would be much the same to David. No result but must tell him whence it came, and be armed with a sad remembrance of that other battle in which another had fallen, fallen too in the judgment of God, as one murdered by his hand, though he was all the while dallying in the city. But the Lord is but refining, and in no wise destroying him. His chastening, blessed be His name, is salvation. For though He is jealous for His holy name, He pities His people. The battle is hot for a moment in the wood of Ephraim, but the Lord is in it, as before at Gibeon; and as there the hailstones, so here the wood devours more than the sword. There was a great slaughter that day of more than twenty thousand men. All is confusion and utter destruction in the ranks of the apostate, and Absalom is caught in the boughs of a great oak, and is taken up between the heaven and the earth, a spectacle to both. He is made a show of openly; for “he that is hanged is accursed of God,” “and cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” (xviii.)

Chapter 28

Absalom: Part 4

" The fool hath said in his heart, Are God!"

Here was the end of another apostate, a more fearful one even than Saul. The paper on "Saul," to which this is in some sort kindred, has shown us that the evil king of Israel was a type of the wicked one in the latter day, who is to do according to his will, to magnify himself above God, and hold nothing in honor or desire but himself and his own way. Absalom in his day, as I have already observed, is type of the same wicked one. They are different samples of the same last great enemy of God and his people, who is to fill up the measure of human iniquity, and then call down the penal fire of God on all the corruptions of the earth. But there are features of all this self-will and wickedness in Absalom, that exceed even what we saw in Saul. Thus, Saul had been produced by the desire of the revolted heart of the nation. He was the man after the nation's heart. But Absalom generated his own evil pre-eminence. It was not the nation's but his own desire that brings him forth. And there is more of the violation of all the laws of nature in Absalom than in Saul. Absalom is the profane as well as the wicked prince (Ezek. 21:25). With him it is not simply unbridled wickedness, but that profane wickedness that could trample on all the claims even of nature. Heady, high-minded, disobedient to parents, unthankful, without natural affection, the very characteristics of the perilous times in the last days, are more awfully developed in Absalom, than perhaps in any other even of the same rank of persons in Scripture.

It is not merely, a corrupted, but an usurped, kingdom we see in the hand of Absalom; and this is another advance in iniquity upon the times of Saul. And still further I may observe, that Absalom seems entirely to disclaim the Lord all through the day of his usurpation. There is not one thought of God in the kingdom then. Ahithophel's counsel but no counsel from the Lord, the strength of his thousands but no strength in the Lord, appears then. And as there is not one thought of God to stir his conscience, neither is there one thought or softening movement of heart because of his father's sorrow. Even the counsel to smite David alone pleased Absalom well (xvii). Even Saul could weep at times, and confess righteousness in David; but Absalom's soul has nothing like a gracious visitation even for a single moment. He never, if I may so say, even thinks of saying, "I have sinned," as Saul does. For what does Absalom care for sin? "Tush, God does not see," this is the language of his uncircumcised heart and lips from beginning to end.

Nor is there one Jonathan to relieve the entire darkness of the scene, as there had been in the court and camp of Saul. There was not one single point of relief with Absalom and all that was confederate with him It is all the unmixed darkness of an evil and apostate hour. And the Lord can in no wise own him. He gives him no commission all through the days of his usurpation. He could not. He had entrusted Saul with the slaughter of the Amalekites, but Absalom is in no wise known to Him. He is his own, and none but his own; from beginning to end.

Such was Absalom, —one of the darkest pictures of human nature that we are given to look at in the word of God; and such is now his end. He hangs in the tree,—another Lot's wife to be had in constant remembrance. He had taken and reared up for himself a pillar in the king's dale, and

called it after his own name, because he had no son to keep his memorial alive in the earth. But the Lord was now giving him another and a far different memorial—a memorial in shame and not in glory. His body was cast into a pit in the wood, and a great heap of stones was laid on him. All his glory was thus tarnished. He was hung by the hair of his head, which had been his boast in the flesh; and, instead of a pillar to his own name, he is made a pillar to us—a witness of the shame and ruin of apostacy.— “The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools.”

This overthrow of Absalom was like the loss of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, or as the fall of Saul on Mount Gilboa, or as by and by, the ruin of that man who having planted the tabernacle of his palaces in the glorious holy mountain shall then come to his end, and none shall help him.

But here let us mark it, that Moses and the congregation of Israel may sing “the Lord has triumphed gloriously;” and Deborah and Barak in their turn may likewise sing, “so let all thine enemies perish, O Lord;” for songs belong to a merry heart, to those who have the testimony of their conscience with them. But there could be no music in David's heart now. That heart was no sanctuary of praise now. How could David at this time enter the gates, and praise the Lord? Those gates open only to the righteous nation that keep the truth. God had appointed salvation for walls and bulwarks, and praise for gates; but David must be silent there, because he had sinned against the Lord. O dear brethren, that we may be faithful to our own joys; that we may so carry ourselves before the Lord our God, as to be able to run along with the saints in their prosperity, and with the chosen in their gladness, and know no check in our spirit, as poor David now knows in this feast-day of the Lord.

No: David has no music at this time Absalom had fallen, and the blood of Uriah was crying from the ground afresh in David's ears. It was not meet that he should make merry and be glad. He could not eat of the sacrifices, for such and such things had befallen him (Lev. 10:19). Victory was defeat, and life was death to David. His path is still the perfect path of the penitent; and thus he now goes to his chamber rather than to his throne; and as he goes, he weeps, and says, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

Better is it to have our path ordered by the Spirit within, though it may be a path of heaviness, than allow it to be determined by mere circumstances around. Thus was it now with David. The Spirit of God was leading him along, and he shall find life and peace at the end, though his sin had made the way dark and dreary for the present. But his sorrow must be all his own. The people had earned a victory, and were entitled to their rewards, and the king's sorrow must not be allowed to tarnish their joy. Joab therefore recalls David to his people, and his people's claims upon him, and David is awakened and goes forth to take his place in the scene again. He arises and sits in the gate; all the people come before him, and the tide of their desires return to him, and all his enemies are put to shame (xix.)

Thus was the restoration in happy progress; but there arises even after this, a little delay and difficulty in setting all in order, for the mischief had been great. Hence the matter of Sheba, the son of Bichri, another Benjamite (xx.)

But the Lord returns to him in full reconciliation. He is again inquired of by him; and in a day of public calamity, David learns that no sin of his was then in remembrance, but the sin of Saul and

his bloody house. And this was for the healing of David's wounded spirit. The goodness of God had led him to repentance; and no sting was to be left behind, no remembrance of all that had now passed was to remain; save where our sin, beloved, is ever to be remembered, in the increased care and diligence and watchfulness of our own spirit (xxi.)

This was very gracious. But even more than this is preparing to witness to David what God was; for in the same grace and tender-kindness, the good Lord, in due season, prepares a song for David, wherein the Spirit leads him to forget all but the divine mercies. “David spake the words of this song in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul.” It is Saul that is here called to mind and not Absalom. Nothing is remembered but the injuries of an evil and unoffended enemy, and all the tale of sin and shame that followed is forgotten. David sings like a “virgin soul.” The Spirit recalls nothing that could have checked the song, and the flow of his heart in the joy of it; for when the Lord forgives He forgets also. At the end of the wilderness (though the Lord had disciplined and rebuked Israel by the way), it was only this: “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel” (xxii.)

There was something very gracious and exalted in the Lord putting this song into David's lips. But we are to see greater things than even these, for after this song which thus rehearses the goodness of God and his rich triumphant grace, we read “the last words of David.” In them the Spirit leads him to trace the moral of his whole history. His commission as King of Israel had been to rule “in the fear of God,” and thus be as “the light of the morning” to his people. But this had not been so, and therefore his house was for the present not to be established; but the Spirit leads him still onward to look above present failure to One who should thus rule and thus establish his house forever, and in whom these mercies of God to him should be sure and abiding mercies, when also the sons of the alien, the sons of Belial, the seed of all evil-doers, should be utterly consumed in the decreed place, thrust away as unprofitable thorns. To this, as to his rest, the Spirit of God leads David, and these are his “last words” (xxiii)

Thus, in these three chapters, we get the full reconciliation between God and his servant, attested by three witnesses. The matter of the Gibeonites the song—the last words of David—all tell us this. And thus we have seen the way of David, but also the end of the Lord. “The man who was raised up on high,” “the anointed of the God of Jacob,” “the sweet Psalmist of Israel,” is set up to celebrate in his own person and history the shining ways of God. Sin had reigned unto death; but grace had also reigned, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 29

Absalom: Part 5

" The fool hath said in his heart, No God!"

Here we end the path of David through the 1st and 2nd books of Samuel, or through the times of "Saul" and "Absalom.", It is grace which God has been exhibiting in this history; and exhibiting in it all its blessed fullness. We see its early dawn in the election of David, when men were despising him (1 Sam. 16:11). We see its brighter and fuller shinings all through the days of the trial and sorrow of righteousness, for grace then was watching over its object, lest any fowler should hurt him, keeping him, though hunted like a bird in the mountains, night and day (1 Sam. 18-31) Then, grace established this elect and favored one in honor and peace above the malice and power of all his foes (2 Sam. 5). At the end grace shows its brightest glory, and does its noblest and holiest work, it restores this elect and honored one, when, in a dark and evil hour, he had turned from the ways of righteousness and peace (2 Sam. 11-23). Then did it rise to its noonday strength. Its early dawn had been sweet, the course which it then ran, as in the heavens, was bright and steady, but its full glory now broke out, when tainted David, like a "virgin soul," sings his joys and triumphs in God.

These were the treasures of grace; and God was making a show of them, to His praise and our comfort, in David. Glory comes forth to shine afterward, in like manner, in Solomon; but grace thus beforehand, had told of herself in David. It was grace electing, grace refreshing, grace exalting, and grace restoring, that the lips of the sinner might be occupied with a theme of blissful and everlasting praise.

But there is one other thing that we have to notice still. As grace was thus displayed towards David, so was it displayed in David. It was the great rule of his life, giving character to his dealings with others, as it had thus given character to God's dealings with Him. Being called to inherit blessing, he renders blessing. Thus, when reviled, he reviled not again (1 Sam. 17:29). Afterward when persecuted, he threatened not, but suffered it (1 Sam. 18-31). In every scene in which he is called to take a part, either in action or in suffering (save where he is turned aside by Satan for awile, as we have been seeing), it is not himself he is seeking or honoring, but others that he is serving in grace and kindness. The death of Saul and Jonathan make easy way for David to the throne; but his own advantage is not the circumstance in that event which governs his thoughts about it, he sees only the dishonor of the Lord's anointed in it, and therefore weeps, instead of triumphs, over the day of Mount Gilboa. So in the fall of Abner and Ishbosheth, which was the quenching of the last light of Saul in Israel, it is only the sorrow and fasting of David that we hear of. It was not his own honor or advantage, that even then determined the state of his mind. And so when fully settled in the throne, he is the man of grace and kindness still, remembering in that hour of glory those who had been the friends of his affliction and exile, and making it his care and business to find out some of the house of Saul to whom he might show the "kindness of God" (2 Sam. 1-10). He would be an imitator or follower of God, as a dear child; for what a God-like desire was that, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I might show the kindness of God unto

him?” Saul's house had deserved evil, and not good, from David; but this made David's kindness to them God's kindness, for “God commendeth His love toward us, in that when we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” And, in the same grace afterward, David refuses to judge Shimei (2 Sam. 16 xix). The thought of the sons of Zeruiah was loathsome to David's soul. “What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?” says he to them, when they were for exacting righteousness. They understood not grace, but David understood nothing else. Mercy had rejoiced over judgment towards himself in the heart of the Lord, and nothing but the same can or must be found in the heart of David towards Shimei or the worst of his enemies.

Thus the history of David, through these 1st and 2nd books of Samuel, or through these times of “Saul” and “Absalom,” tells us, beloved, what God's ways are, and what our ways should be. As His ways to us are in grace, so should be our ways to one another and to all men. In “this present evil world” of sin and sorrow we are learning God's grace to perfection, in our own souls, daily, and should let others learn it in our walk and intercourse with them in like manner daily. By and by in the shining “world to come,” we shall learn glory in the same perfection.

For David was followed by Solomon, and the God of all grace has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, that He Himself may be our boast and song, and satisfying praise forever and ever.

Dearly beloved, in the joy and liberty of the precious and perfect love which is ours now, let us pray that we might abound in the hope of the kingdom that is to be ours also, and walk above a world in which our blessed Master could not rest. Grant this to all thy saints, O Lord, for Jesus our Savior's sake! Amen.

Chapter 30

Absence of Elders in Corinth

The absence of elders in Corinth necessarily made the charge to the assembly direct. How blessed for a day when they cannot be regularly And how unworthy to complain of their absence now given to direct in such circumstances!

Chapter 31

On Acts 1:1-11

As Luke's narrative of our Lord Jesus was addressed to a Christian convert, so was its sequel which recounts the gift of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, in His presence and operation, more especially in the leading apostles, first of the circumcision, then of the uncircumcision. But we have the ways and working of the Holy Spirit, not only with many others, but also in and with the assembly also: a truth of capital moment, though lost sight of practically to the deep dishonor of God, and the irreparable injury of the church itself.

It would seem that Theophilus had either ceased to hold a governorship (or whatever other public position—of a magisterial kind the inspired historian implies by the title "most excellent": cf. Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25, with Luke 1:3), or had become so matured in faith and so spiritual as to value title as little as position, though one could scarce conceive a faithful man abiding in it. Further, they are not to be heard of in old or modern times, who imagine the name to be a fictitious designation of those who love God. Not only does the comparison of the Gospel with the Acts point to a real Christian to whom the writer inscribes both, but the form of the word would in this case have been φιλ■θεος, as in 2 Tim. 3:4, and not θε■φιλος.

"The first account I composed, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which, having by the Holy Spirit charged the apostles whom he had chosen, he was taken up; to whom he also presented himself alive, after he had suffered, by many proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God. And being assembled with [them], he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to await the promise of the Father, which [said he] ye heard of me. For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit after not many days hence." (Vers. 1-5.)

Such is the simple opening of this book, treating of the wonderful works of God in the new creation, which He would have to be testified in the old by a witness no less competent than His own Spirit. In the cross of the Son of man sin was judged by God, not yet on sinners, but in the one perfect Sacrifice, that God might righteously send forth good tidings of saving mercy to Jew and to Greek, alike ruined that they through faith might be alike saved. And now the Savior stood in resurrection life and power, first-fruits of them that are asleep, a life-giving Spirit to all that believe. As He had walked according to the Spirit of holiness in a world of sin during the days of His flesh, so now was He marked out Son of God in power according to that Spirit by resurrection, conqueror over Satan in death as in life, as He had also exhausted God's judgment in suffering for sin, that He might be the righteous Head of a new family who live of His life as He died for their sins. Thus does the Gospel of Luke lead into what is commonly though not correctly called "the Acts of the Apostles"; for it is rather the inspired narrative of the risen Lord working in the energy of the Holy Ghost sent down from on high and witnessing to Him there both in the assembly and in His servants, some of the apostles above all.

Even the Lord risen from the dead, though not yet "received up," is seen here enjoining the apostles through the Holy Spirit. (Ver. 2.) It was not merely before He died; in the new estate of

man beyond the grave we have the evidence of the same blessed power. The Holy Spirit acts in man risen. In Jesus we see this truth, as every other. It will be so with us when we are raised from the dead; we shall not lose that divine spring of power and joy when or because we enter the final state of man according to the counsels of God. It will be that which is perfect come, but the Holy Spirit will not therefore cease to act in us; rather will He form us for all the worship and service suitable for those glorified with Christ.

That Christ presented Himself alive after He had suffered was the great fact established “by many proofs” (ver. 3); and so it is the subject matter of testimony throughout the book, as it is the foundation truth of the gospel. The God of grace is the God of resurrection in Christ who suffered for sins once, Just for unjust. The apostles are false witnesses of God if He did not raise Him up; and He raised Him not up if no dead are raised; and if He has not been raised, our faith is vain; we are yet in our sins. But He has been raised from the dead, as surely as God is true, His word faithful; His grace and power are alike manifested not more in His chosen witnesses, than in the transforming effects of His testimony on others who believe, once children of disobedience and of wrath, His enemies. The charge was to the apostles from Him risen.

Nor was it only that He was seen by them, or appeared to them, by the space of forty days; He spoke also the things concerning the kingdom of God, as His servants preached afterward. This was no less true of the apostle to the Gentiles, as we may learn distinctly and to the end from chapters 20:25, 28, 31.

His command, when assembled with them, was not to depart from Jerusalem but to await the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, not many days after that. (Vers. 4, 5.) It is of the deepest moment that this be understood: for many misapply the Spirit's baptism either to miraculous displays or to the new birth: and the more so, as without doubt He wrought largely in both these ways at Pentecost. But the reader has only to consider John 14-16 with care, to learn from God's word that it is not a question here of the great primary need of sinful man at all times to be born of the Spirit, still less of those gifts or “charisma” which were so abundantly distributed among those who confessed the Lord at that time, but of the immense and standing privilege of the church in the presence of the Holy Ghost sent down in person to abide with the saints and be in them. Him the rather gave to be with them forever; Him the Son sent to them from the Father. For this was contingent on the Son's going away: if He went not away, that other Advocate, the Spirit of truth, would not come. But, the work of reconciliation wrought, Jesus went on high and sent here below the Spirit. This would be the accomplishment of the Father's promise. The saints were then to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

For the believer it is impossible to conceive anything of more commanding importance, whether in itself, for God's glory, for doctrinal truth or for practical value. Yet what was so soon or so generally forgotten? Without it Christ's place as Head of the church is unknown, and consequently the true relationship of the church as His body. Redemption is enfeebled, the new and heavenly place of the Christian is neither understood nor enjoyed, and the proper hope is leveled down to a Jewish expectation with its signs and dates, its troubles and fears. Still more directly does lack of faith as to the baptism of the Holy Ghost affect the walk and service of the individual, the joint worship and public action of the assembly. There is no surer sign, no more fatal means, of the ruin of the entire testimony to Christ than the blank ignorance, the utter exclusion, of this incomparable power and

privilege for the Christian and the church, which now pervades Christendom, as it has done since apostolic times. Oh, what a mercy on God's part, what love on His own, what honor to Christ and His cross, that the Holy Spirit deigned to abide in all His truth to the church, if the church has been thus false to Him! The gift or baptism of the Holy Ghost was the promise of the Father, and the disciples heard it from the Son. John, the, greatest of mere men woman-born, baptized with water, the baptism of repentance; the Son of God but risen and ascended Man, the same is He that baptizeth in (or with) the Holy Spirit. None indeed could but a divine person; yet is it the One who became man to accomplish redemption and was received up in glory whence He sent the Spirit down.

“ They therefore being come together asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not yours to know times or seasons which the Father set in his own authority. But ye shall receive power at the coming of the Holy Spirit upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. And having said these things, as they looked, he was taken up, and a cloud withdrew him from their eyes. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went on, behold, two men stood by them in white garments, who also said, Men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus that was taken up from you into heaven shall so come in the manner in which ye beheld him going into heaven.” (Vers. 6-11)

As in the Gospel (chap. 29:11, &c.) the Lord corrects the hasty expectations of the disciples: the kingdom was not immediately to appear. The passover was to be fulfilled in it when it would assume a different shape. (Chap. 22) The Christian form of the kingdom however is not here spoken of, because the question was about restoring it at that time to Israel. Now the Lord does not at all contradict such a restoration in its season, but the salvation of Israel and the restoration of the kingdom to the chosen people clearly belonged to the ways of God of which prophecy treats; and He lets them know that times and seasons the Father placed in His own authority. Another vista He opens out to them as that immediately before them. “But ye shall receive power at the coming of the Holy Spirit upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” These words explain the situation with divine precision and unspeakable grace. It was not yet to be the displayed kingdom which belongs to the age and world to come. Now it is a question of testimony in the power of the Holy Ghost, with whose mission and presence it is bound up. They were to be witnesses of Christ, not yet reigning with Him, but His witnesses, as rejected yet risen, despised of men, especially of the Jews and Jerusalem, but on the point of being exalted of God in heaven; and witnesses of Him—for all is of grace—both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. Compare with this beginning of the Acts the end of Luke's Gospel, where the risen Savior commands that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. “And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.” It is not baptism here, but vital blessing, repentance unto life and remission of sins sealed with the Holy Ghost. All has its place, and propriety; but the better thing it was the lot of the beloved physician to indict under the inspiring energy of God, who was in honor of His Son's person and work giving life and liberty with the Spirit's seal to all that believe the gospel: its source the grace of God; its righteous foundation the cross of Christ; its character of life His resurrection; its formative object

the heavenly glory; and its power the Holy Ghost sent down from above.

But the true outlook of hope is wanted to complete the circle of blessing. And this, at least as far as it is connected with the scope of this book (for there is a divinely perfect system in all scripture and in every distinct part), now follows, the hope of our Lord's return. “And having said these things, as they looked, he was taken up, and a cloud withdrew him from their eyes. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went on, behold, two men stood by them in white garments, who also said, Men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven shall so come in the manner in which ye beheld him going into heaven.” Doubtless it is His return for the kingdom to be established over all nations and tongues, for the times of the restitution of all things, and not specially to receive His own to Himself and present them in the Father's house. It is the more general aspect of His coming, and not the heavenly side. Still it is the personal object for the saints, the Lord coming again in person, as surely as the chosen witnesses saw Him taken up from them into heaven. This the disciples have let slip as a real living hope, not more to His dishonor and the grief of the Spirit than to their own immeasurable loss. For if faith be the more essential as men say, the true hope cannot be obscured, weakened, or destroyed, without proportionate injury, if we judge by the only true measure of God's glory in Christ. We fall into misleading hopes as soon as the truth ceases to be before the heart; and none is so false as to look for the gradual amelioration of that world or even of Christendom which must be judged in the day of the Lord, instead of waiting as pilgrims and strangers, the bride separate from the world, for Christ to come and fetch us to heaven for the marriage-supper of the Lamb. This is gracious and heavenly separateness to God, above the world's attractions and honors, outside its evils, and unmoved by its enmity. May it be more and more true of us in His grace!

Chapter 32

On Acts 1:12-26

Thus we have clearly set before us the position and expectation of the disciples in these early days. They knew, on the word of the Lord, that the promise of the Father was shortly to be fulfilled in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Instead of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, they were to be witnesses of Christ everywhere to the uttermost part of the earth; and they were assured that the Lord Jesus, who had just ascended, should so come in the manner in which they beheld Him going to heaven.

“ Then they returned unto Jerusalem from the mown called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day) journey off. And when they came in, they went up to the upper room where they were abiding; both Peter and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas Bartholomew and Matthew, James [son] of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas [brother] of James. These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with [certain] women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, am with his brethren” (ver. 12-14).

Thus did these saints spend their time in the exercise of continual dependence on God. They had been the chosen witnesses of the Word of Life, as He had manifested Himself here below and in Himself the Son has shown them the Father. And now they were waiting for that blessed Divine Person who was to be in as well as with them, as the Lord had prepared them for it “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter.” So now they all give themselves up will one mind to persevering prayer.

Believing women were with them. How different their place, even now, from that which Jews or Mohammedans accorded them! from that of mediaeval flattery or superstition! There were others beside wives, and hence the general form of the phrase; and one was among them specifically named, to whom sinful folly was afterward to bow down in worship, professedly subordinate to, practically more absorbing than, that paid to the Son or the Father.

It is the first mention of Mary, in this the only sure and divinely inspired history, that follows our Lord's departure to heaven. Highly favored she had been blessed among women, all generations thenceforth calling her blessed; yet was she found in all lowliness of mind with other women, as the Apostles were with them at waiting on God for the gift of the Holy Ghost. From the cross she had been taken to the home of the beloved disciple. After the resurrection not a word implies at appearance to the mother of our Lord. Another Mary saw Him, she of Magdala, first of all, other women shortly afterward; of any special appearance to His mother, Scripture is profoundly silent. She may have seen Him risen, as five hundred did at one time, bus Scripture intimates not a word about it. So absolutely was Christ to be known no more after the flesh. He was dead and risen, and the glory of the Messiah born of the Virgin faded away in the brighter glory of the Beginning, the First-born from the dead.

It is the last mention of Mary. Chrysostom may well suppose Joseph to have died; the truth is that he had long disappeared. Of both we heard for the last time in the beauteous scene of the Lord at

twelve years of age (Luke 2:42-51). He, too, was not yet anointed by the Holy Ghost; yet was He perfect man and true God, the child of Mary, and subject not to her only, but to her husband—legally His father. But the incident brings out clearly His perfection as a child feeding on the Word of God; but no less clearly His consciousness of being the Son of God (far beyond the thoughts of Joseph or Mary), and withal His subjection to them, “His parents,” in that human place to which He had come down from divine glory in a love no less divine. When in due time, anointed by the Holy Spirit, He enters on His service and His presentation al the Messiah, Joseph is gone. This was as it should be. It was through Joseph He had direct claim as the royal Son of David; for Joseph came down from Solomon, and there lay the true line of promise to the throne Mary, too, sprang from David; but through Nathan, who could give no such title. Legally and naturally, He was descended from the King beloved of God, as He had a title in His own person above David as surely as above Joseph and Mary; He was God, Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel. Still the Word of God mast be honored and verified in every human particular which Divine grace had given and made known, for the exercise and the reward, the trial and the joy of faith.

Now Mary, according to Scripture, appears for the last time in the holy band of prayer with others, men and women, not prayed to but praying. That the upper room was in the Temple is the dream of Dr. Hammond. How strange, that grave theologians should conceive such erudities, and that they seem so destitute of kind and faithful friends to efface them, lest they might turn to shame or hurt! The last place where the disciples could have had such a chamber was the Temple. It was no doubt in a private house where they then sojourned; whether it was that large upper room furnished where the Lord and His disciples sat down to eat the last Passover, we know not, nor is it of divine moment either, else it had been told us. But such rooms were common among the Jews, and, we may be assured, in Jerusalem especially, where God had His plans for blessing through His Son and to His honor.

“And in these days Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren, and said (and there was a crowd of names [or persons] together, about a hundred and twenty), Brethren, it was needful that the Scripture should be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the month of David concerning Judas, who was guide to those that took Jesus. For he had been numbered among us, and received the allotment of this service. (This man then obtained a field from wages of his iniquity; and, falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem, so that in their language that field was called Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) For it is written in the Book of Psalms, Let his homestead be made desolate, And let there be no dweller in it, and, His overseership let another take. Of the men therefore who went with us at every time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, beginning with the baptism of John until the day in which He was taken up, must one of these become a witness with us of His resurrection. And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, Thou, Lord, knower of the hearts of all, show of these two one whom Thou hast chosen, to take the place of this service and apostleship from which Judas fell away to go to his own place. And they gave lots for them; and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (ver. 15-26).

The hundred and twenty did not comprehend all the faithful in the land, but all in Jerusalem probably. To these Peter speaks with decision, but in the light and authority of Scripture. Power from on high had not yet come on him; but there was evidently an intelligence never experienced

by him before the Lord died and rose. These two things may co-exist now; or spiritual intelligence may be found where special power may not be given, though the Holy Ghost is, and this to abide forever. But here we learn the important fact of their distinctness, and so much the more plainly, because the Holy Ghost had not yet been poured out. But Peter applies Scripture with clearness. It shone in the light of the Lord's death and resurrection. It must needs be fulfilled, not in Christ only, but in antichrist; and such was Judas, who became guide to those that took Jesus. The Holy Spirit had deigned to speak of evil as well as good; and all must be fulfilled, though spoken by human lips. The unbelief of man may ruin him, but cannot make the written word of none effect; any more than the lot Judas received in the ministry of Christ exempted him from his awful sin and punishment. And the field got from wages of iniquity bore witness in characters of blood, after Judas passed away from his forfeited place in service and apostleship to go to his own place of torment. No wonder then that, as God so solemnly marked His resentment now before all the dwellers of Jerusalem, He should speak before by the mouth of David of such a sinner against His own Son, as well as against his own soul Psa. 109 pronounced his curse, but called for a successor to his vacated office; and Peter lays down, for such as had gone with the apostles from the baptism of John till the Ascension, the essential condition of becoming with them a witness of His resurrection.

Here once more we see what an immensely important place the resurrection was to hold in the testimony of Christ and the gospel, and how it is interwoven with this Book of the Acts in particular. Nor can there be strength or clearness in preaching and teaching without it. In presence of it vain man is annulled; by it Christ is vindicated, God is glorified, and the believer is justified. But even in this book we may learn more of its power and value in the hands of the Holy Spirit, if we return to the practical use Peter made of the Psalms he had cited.

Two then were put forward, Joseph Barsabbas Justus, and Matthias, Who, as far as man could see, possessed equal qualification. Hence appeal was made to the Lord in prayer. It was His work that was in question, and it is His to choose the workman. So, in Matt. 9, He told His disciples to supplicate the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest; and then, in chap. 10, He called unto Him His twelve disciples, and gave them authority, and sent them forth. It is the same principle here. Elsewhere, in what concerns the assembly of God, His God and Father may be sought most appropriately; but the Lord none the less, in what concerns His service and the instruments He may choose for it.

But there is a peculiarity to be noticed, the using of lots. It was in no way the will of man choosing whom he would, as some learned men have erroneously supposed, not without bias from their peculiar habits, nor unwilling to justify them from Scripture. Nor does the last term, translated “numbered” (ver. 26), warrant here the notion of popular election, which is in principle foreign to Scripture, for the choice of servants in the word. The lot was, as it will be in the latter day, a distinctly Jewish mode of seeking divine direction; and so, in the choice of the twelfth apostle (Matt. 19:28), it was fittingly resorted to here. For the Spirit's presence, the new power. which makes the assembly to be God's assembly, in which Jews and Gentiles are alike unknown, was not yet enjoyed. The Lord therefore was looked to thus; but lots were never cast after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Nor is there just ground for Stier, as cited by Alford, to question the step of choosing a twelfth apostle, which seems to be thoroughly in keeping with the waiting posture of the disciples. Besides, Acts 2:14; 6:2, would to most minds imply the contrary, and show that Luke does afterward speak of the Twelve. To Suppose that Paul was the intended twelfth is rather to lower his true position and extraordinary call.

Chapter 33

On Acts 2:1-11

The death of Christ, as the paschal lamb, took place punctually to the day; so did the resurrection as the wave sheaf; yet no saint knew the significance of either till they were accomplished facts. Nor have we proof, notwithstanding the marked intelligence displayed in the use of scripture since the resurrection (Acts 1; cf. Luke 24:47), that any entered into the meaning of the feast of weeks, with its wave loaves, till it was being fulfilled. They were together, however, in their true place of dependence and expectation. “And when the day of Pentecost was in course of fulfillment, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a mighty blast rushing, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues parting asunder as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them to utter” (ver. 1-4).

This was the baptism of the Spirit, though neither the mighty cause is here unfolded, nor are the effects as yet traced out. But the promise of the Father was now fulfilled. The Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven according to the word of the Lord to abide with His own forever, that other Advocate who answers on earth to Christ in heaven, the Divine manager of all our affairs according to the will of God. As being a wholly new thing there were accompanying signs, and these of a twofold character; not only the violent blowing which filled all the house, but the disparted tongues as of fire which sat upon each. Thus was manifested the presence of the Spirit in a general way for all the house, in a special way as power of testimony for each, a distinction of importance found in other forms elsewhere also.

But testimony is the predominant point here; for if they were all filled with the Spirit, they began also to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Hence the aptness of the form in which the Spirit manifested His action: not a dove as with the Lord when sealed on earth, emblem of One holy, harmless, undefiled, but tongues wherewith now to make known the wonderful works of God, in the new creation every way far beyond the wonders of the old. But the tongues were not one, but parting asunder. The Gentile must hear, no less than the once favored Jew. Now the mission of grace was to go forth indiscriminately as became a dead and risen Savior, whom God exalted on high after man, especially Israel, had rejected Him as their own Messiah on earth. Further, the tongues were as of fire, that set forth Divine judgment intolerant of evil, as just now demonstrated in grace to man in the cross of Christ.

But the languages were as real as they were different from their mother tongue or any naturally acquired one. The fact is as clearly stated, as the gift itself was eminently significant and seasonable. What could be so clear a testimony that if God gave His law to Israel, though in itself the expression of man's moral duty, He was now about to make known His grace in the gospel to every race and tongue? His grace not only forgives all offenses, but quickens together with Christ, so as to be a new and everlasting ground for the energy of the Spirit to produce in a new life the fruit of righteousness which is by Jesus Christ to God's glory and praise. This witness of divine love, efficacious through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, in direction toward all, in effect

upon all those that believe. It was not the extirpation of difference in language, not yet the power which will make once more the whole earth of one lip and the same speech, but grace lifting its objects and instruments above the effects of that judgment at Babel, which by diversity of language confounded the pride of the race, when it sought to combine and exalt itself in a union of human will which forgot God altogether. But God remembered guilty and miserable man, and in His wisdom and mercy availed Himself of the chosen people's hatred of Himself and of His Son, (John 15) to go out in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and to mark this in a way most touching to every nation under heaven.

“Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, pious men, from every nation under heaven, and when this report [or, sound] was made, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because they each one heard them speaking in his own dialect. And they were all amazed and wondering, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? And how hear we, each in our own dialect in which we were born? Parthians and Modes and Elamites, and those that dwell in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and the Roman sojourners, Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty things of God” (ver. 5-11).

If any words were needed to make the nature of the wonder plain and precise, it might have been supposed that these could not fail. But men of this world's science and learning, though bearing the name of Christian, manifest no less incredulity now than the Jews did of old, who foolishly sought to treat it as mere excitement. Some have tried to find in the account the same sort of senseless jargon, or (as Meyer) an entirely new language as its favorers allege, which was revived a half century ago among the Irvingites; others (as Bleek, &c.) contend for a highly excited or ecstatic style of speech suitable to the communication of the marvels of grace, or (Olshausen) for so low a thought as a magnetic relation between speakers and hearers, or (Wieseler, &c.) for mere inarticulate ejaculations of praise! The older rationalists, as Paulus, &c., supposed no other than their native tongue; others, from Gregory of Nyssa and Cyprian to Erasmus and men of our own day, had grafted on this the strange idea that the multitude of foreigners were caused by the Spirit to hear each his own tongue! But Gregory of Nazianzus rejects the notion as making the marvel lie with the hearers rather than the speakers, contrary to the cleart statement of scripture, as indeed are all these vain hypotheses.

The truth is that all these ideas, though maintained not only by preachers, but by theologians of the highest rank, are swept away at the first touch of the written word, ever the standard of truth, and never more needed than in this day of active and daring intellect. The disciples were enabled in the power of the Spirit to speak the various languages of the earth; and it would seem that there were different measures in this gift as in others. The Apostle thanks God that he speaks with tongues more than all the Corinthians, so ostentatious of these sign-gifts; but he also insists on the subordination of them all to prophecy, as a gift characteristically for edification, encouragement, and consolation. The great end in the assembly is building up, to which a tongue without interpretation contributed nothing; as their frequency, if not simultaneous also, was an evident offense against order, both of which he corrects as the commandment of the Lord.

Tongues therefore played a very inferior part in the assembly. That they were conferred for the dissemination of the gospel is the supposition of many in ancient as in modern times. They were

certainly used to arrest the Jews from foreign countries, who flocked to Jerusalem for this feast, or were otherwise staying there. What confounded these strangers from so many lands was, that they each one heard the disciples speaking in their own language, and, whatever may have been the prevalence of Aramaic, Greek, and Latin over the then known world, it is idle to tell one who believes this careful and varied enumeration from the N. E. to the W. and S. (which seems to be the reason why Judaea comes between Mesopotamia and Cappadocia), that the inspired writer does not mean to convey more than a few distinct tongues. Not so judged the residents and the sojourners in Jerusalem, whose piety gave them weight, yet least of all disposed to religious innovation. To them the evidence was irresistible, an impossibility if the variety of languages had not been a plain and sure reality of which they were competent judges. “Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? And how hear we, each in our own dialect in which we were born? Parthians, and Medes and Elamites, &c.... we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty things of God.”

Still those who heard and believed the gospel that day were Jews and proselytes only. But the wondrous form of testimony prepared the way for those who glean the mind of God from the mighty workings of His gracious power, as well as from the words of the Lord, in His varied commissions to the disciples, the wide-reaching activity in witnessing His love to which they were called. His hands which had been stretched out in vain to a disobedient and contradictory people were already pointing to all the nations, who also would hear. But the Lord had to use, as we shall see in due time, fresh means to reach the ears and quicken the hesitating feet of His own, in that grace that tarrieth not for man, and waiteth not for the sons of men.

(To be continued)

On Acts 2:12-21

The tongues were, as the Apostle explains elsewhere, a sign to unbelievers. They were intended to arrest and produce inquiry. The presence of the promised Holy Spirit was an incomparably deeper and more fruitful fact. He was sent down from heaven to form the assembly, the new dwelling-place of God, the body of Christ. He was to be the power of testimony, of God's good news for the world. He was to be in the believers and with them forever, that Paraclete whom Christ after going on high was to send, not only to bring demonstration to the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, but to guide the saints into all the truth, announcing what is coming, and glorifying Christ as He had the Father. Whatever might be the marvel and the gracious suitability of the tongues, the gift of the Spirit Himself immensely transcends them; but His presence and the all-important results of it are beyond the ken of the world which neither sees nor knows Him. The strange thing occupies men.

“And they were all amazed and perplexed, crying one to another, What meaneth this? But others mocking said, They are filled with sweet wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and spoke forth unto them, Men of Judaea and all ye that dwell in Jerusalem, be this known to you, and give ear to my words. For these are not drunken as ye suppose, for it is [the] third hour of the day; but this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young [men] shall see visions, and your elder [men] shall dream with dreams; yea and on my bondmen and on my bond-women will I pour out of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will give wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be changed into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and manifest day of [the] Lord come. And it shall be, whosoever shall call on the name of [the] Lord shall be saved” (ver. 12-21).

As usual, men arrange themselves in more than one class, some astonished, others hostile and scornful. Peter takes the lead in explaining with gravity and distinctness. He explicitly denies the unworthy thought of intoxication, which the early hoar itself should have silenced as against God-fearing souls. It was really what Joel spoke of: not of course the fulfillment as it is to be in the last days, but an installment of that nature. Indeed the words of the prophet went in this beyond what that day saw accomplished; for “all flesh” cannot fairly be limited to Israel, and God, who was soon about to bring in Gentiles to the name of Christ, will bless the nations in the future kingdom, when all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him. The gospel now makes good the indiscriminate grace of God even more profoundly than will be under His government, when He will show that the kingdom is Jehovah's, and that He is the governor among the nations.

In the latter day when Joel's words will be fulfilled as a whole, the Spirit will be poured out, and if Israel enjoy the blessing richly, it will flow far beyond their narrow limits. God's way shall then be known upon earth, His saving health among all nations. Temporal blessing is then to be

vouchsafed to Israel (2:19-27), and their great northern enemy to be forever disposed of; for Jehovah will do great things for His people and land, whatever the enemy may have prepared to do. “My people,” He says emphatically, “shall never be ashamed.” Then as a distinct intimation the prophet presents two announcements: the first, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (28, 29); the second, external signs of judgment ushering in the day of Jehovah, the circumstances of which are detailed in chapter 3 till we come down to the closing account or their blessings once more. As the wonders above and below precede that day, so does the repentance of Israel prepare for their deliverance, and blessing, and especially the gift of the Spirit. We see the same principle here also.

For God, in pouring out of His Spirit now, does thereby associate believers with Christ exalted on high. Given in virtue of redemption the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God in their hearts, seals them for the day of redemption, and is the earnest of their inheritance. He dwells in them now, and will quicken their mortal bodies then at Christ's coming. Besides He is the blessed and divine bond, constituting them Christ's body and God's house. And here it may be of interest to not a few if I set before them the judgment formed by the celebrated ecclesiastical historian, Neander, who had no bias toward the truth of the church from his Lutheran views. It is not cited as invariably sound or as in any respect authoritative, but as a grave testimony from an able and well-informed Christian in direct opposition to the present state of the church, whether Protestant or Romanist, Oriental or Greek. It is, therefore, as far as it goes, a strong involuntary homage to the revealed truth on this subject.

“What Moses expressed as a wish (Num. xi. 29), that the Spirit of God might rest upon all, and all might be prophets, seems to me a prediction of that which was to be realized through Christ. By Him was to be instituted a fellowship of Divine life, which, proceeding from the equal and equally immediate relation of all to the One God, as the divine source of life to all, should remove these boundaries, within which, at the Old Testament position, the development of the higher life was still confined; and hence the fellowship thus derived would essentially distinguish itself from the constitution of all previously existing religions societies. There could, in such a society, be no longer a priestly or prophetic office, constituted to serve as a medium for the propagation and development of the kingdom of God, on which office the religious consciousness of the community was to be dependent. Such a guild of priests as existed in the previous systems of religion, empowered to guide other men, who remained, as it were, in a state of religions pupilage; having the exclusive care of providing for their religious wants, and serving as mediators by whom all other men must first be placed in connection with God and divine things,—such a priestly caste could find no place within Christianity. In removing that which separated men from God, in communicating to all the same fellowship with God, Christ also removed the barrier which had hitherto divided men from one another. Christ, the Prophet and High Priest for entire humanity, was the end of the prophetic office and of the priesthood. There was now the same High Priest and Mediator for all, through whom all men, being once reconciled and united with God, are themselves made a priestly and spiritual race; one heavenly King, Guide and Teacher, through whom all are taught of God; one faith, one hope, one Spirit which should quicken all; one oracle in the hearts of all, the voice of the Spirit proceeding from the Father; all were to be citizens of one heavenly kingdom, with whose heavenly powers, even while strangers in the world, they should be already furnished. When the Apostles applied the Old Testament idea of the priesthood to

Christianity, this seems to me to have been done invariably for the simple purpose of showing that no such visible particular priesthood could find place in the new community; that since free access to God and to heaven had by the one High Priest, even Christ, been opened once for all to believers, they had, by virtue of their union to Him, become themselves a spiritual people, consecrated to God; their calling being none other than to dedicate their entire life to God as a thank-offering for the grace of redemption, to publish abroad the power and grace of Him who had called them out of the kingdom of darkness into His marvelous light, to make their life one continual priesthood, one spiritual worship springing from the temper of faith working by love; one continuous testimony for their Savior. (Compare 1 Peter 2:9; Rom. 12:1; and the spirit and whole train of thought running through the Epistle to the Hebrews.) So, too, the advancement of God's kingdom in general and in particular, the diffusion of Christianity among the heathens and the good of each particular community, was now to be the duty not of one select class of Christians alone, but the immediate concern of each individual." (Meander's General History of the Christian Religion and Church, i. § 2, 248-250, Bohn's edition.) We need not do more than notice the vague inaccuracy of "entire humanity" on the one hand and of the "King" on the other; for we must never expect a Lutheran to know the total ruin of man or the new relations of Christ. That He tasted death for every man is true; but He is King of Israel and of nations, Head of the church, not of humanity as such. He has authority over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him. But this and other passages show that, notwithstanding grave drawbacks, this modern historian understood better than most the peculiar character of that new thing which God formed for His glory on the day of Pentecost; a character in no wise accidental or temporary, but essentially distinguishing it from first to last, and as distinct from that which God had set up in Israel as from the inventions of Satan among the Gentiles. It was God's habitation in the Spirit.

(To be continued)

On Acts 2:22-36

Such was the preface of the Apostle's discourse: a denial of the carnal, not to say immoral, excitement imputed, and an affirmation of the power of the Spirit, then manifested in the gift of tongues, and prophesying, according to the prophet Joel.

Now he enters on the foundation of their hopes as God's chosen people, and sets forth the facts just accomplished in the light of His word, mainly as we shall see Psa. xvi. cx. and cxxxii.

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man shown forth from God to you by mighty works, and wonders and signs which God wrought by Him in your midst, as yourselves know—Him given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by hand of lawless men did crucify and slay; whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, inasmuch as it was not possible that he should be held fast by it. For David saith as to Him, I kept the Lord in view always before me, because He is on my right hand that I may not be shaken. On this account my heart was cheered and my tongue was exceeding glad; yea more my flesh also shall dwell in hope [that, or] because thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades nor give thy Holy (or Gracious) One to see corruption. Thou didst make known to me ways of life; thou wilt make me full of joy with Thy countenance. Brethren, one may speak with freedom unto you about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is amongst us unto this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God swore with an oath to him of the fruit of his loins to seat upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was He left in Hades nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus did God raise up whereof all we are witnesses. Having therefore been exalted by the right hand of God and received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured forth this which ye see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens, but saith himself, “The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on My right hand till I make Thine enemies [the] footstool of Thy feet. Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom ye crucified.” (Verses 22-36.)

The Apostle addresses them according to their due national title as the chosen theocracy; and, while he in no way hides the name of humiliation, he claims for his Master the indubitably proved character of Messiah. It was God, he affirms, who had shown him forth to them by mighty works and wonders and signs; it was God who by Him thus wrought in their midst. They could deny neither the actual display of divine power in every form of goodness and mercy, nor that Israel had so expected the Anointed of God according to the living oracles. The eyes of the blind were opened, the ears of the deaf were unstopped, the lame leaped as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sang. Had all this come without the person to whom Scripture attaches it all? If not yet with vengeance, surely in mercy unequivocally divine? Granted that the parched ground has not become a pool, nor the thirsty lands springs of water, and that the way of holiness is invisible save to faith; granted that the unclean abound and are bold, as the lion and the ravenous beasts are still objects of terror, because the people are apostate from their King when He came, as they once gave up Jehovah for every vain idol of the nations. But God had failed in no attestation that could

commend His servant whom He upheld, His elect in whom His soul delighted; and they themselves knew it, though tempted by Satan to impute it to the enemy, in order to escape the submission of their conscience to the truth. To the enemy! when Christ's every word and every work directly tended to destroy Satan's evil power and wiles. But what will not the deluded mind of man think or at least say to avoid the grace that pities and would save Him if he bowed to God and His Christ?

Did any Israelite stumble at the cross as invalidating His claims? Yet: on the cross, man—the Jew—being what he is, God had ordered it all marvelously to His own glory. Unbelief and rebellion and blasphemy on the one hand were allowed to work their unimpeded way, when the fit moment arrived; and Jesus was rejected ignominiously by His own people, and the Gentiles were urged by them to crucify Him; that He on the other hand might become a propitiation for the sins of His own that believed, yea, for the whole world. If that was man's inexcusable iniquity, this was God's sovereign grace. If they were the instruments of their own spite, He gave One that has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Thus in that cross met creature will of man and of Satan in deadly enmity to God, divine love turning the otherwise hopeless sin to the shedding of that precious blood which cleanseth from all sin, impossible without the glorious person who is God no less than man, impossible save by His once in atonement suffering for our sins, Just for unjust. “Him given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by hand of lawless men did crucify and slay.” The cross therefore, dreadful as it is as the proof of man's blind guilt and of Satan's power, now that it is seen to be not only necessary that Scripture be fulfilled, but the indispensable and only possible door of deliverance for the sinner in God's grace, is owned as an essential and morally the deepest part of God's ways, as it is the highest moral glory of the Lord Jesus. As Himself said on the eve of it, “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.”

But the resurrection! what did God say therein? In vain the lie that the disciples came by night and stole Jesus away, while the soldiers slept. Peter does not even notice such an unworthy subterfuge, but simply asserts the grand truth on which the gospel rests: “whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, inasmuch as it was not possible that He should be held fast by it. For David saith as to him, I foresaw the Lord,” &c. The word of God by David pointed to the resurrection of the Messiah; and God showed Him openly when risen to witnesses chosen of Him beforehand. But indeed it was not possible that He should be held fast by death, to which He, the Holy One, had submitted for sin to God's glory. Nor was it possible that the Scripture could be broken which said, “Thou wilt not leave My soul in Hades, nor give [i.e. suffer] Thy Holy One to see corruption.” Even according to the ancient Jewish interpretation these words of Psa. 16 can only apply to the Messiah (Schöttgen, 664-8). Here Peter, and in chap. 13 Paul, declare that it was fulfilled in God's raising Jesus from the dead, not in David, still less in any other. Thus was He shown the path of life through death with fullness of joy in the presence of God His Father.

The Apostle in his reasoning on this next cites Psa. 132, the great psalm of the Kingdom settled forever in the son of David. “Brethren, one may speak freely unto you about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is amongst us unto this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God swore with an oath to him of the fruit of his loins to seat upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ that neither was He left in Hades

nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus did God raise up whereof all we are witnesses." This, and this only, explains the peculiarly glorious character of the Kingdom even in its earthly relations. Even now the King is risen from the dead. This stamps perpetuity as nothing else could: yet is it the kingdom of a man. Only it is man risen from the dead: though here it is Christ only, first-born from the dead, for in all things He must have the pre-eminence.

But in fact resurrection was the immediate steppingstone, not to the If which still awaits His appearing in glory, but to His going up into the presence of God on high; and this for reasons most nearly affecting God's glory now as well as those who enjoy His favor, as we shall hear presently. "Having therefore been exalted by the right hand of God and received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured forth this which ye see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens, but saith himself, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on My right hand till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet. Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom ye crucified." Again, from that most fruitful treasury of God's words is a sentence drawn to prove that the facts of Christ's life, including His resurrection and ascension, were not only facts of the deepest import, the ground of truths needed for every day and for eternity, but parts of God's infinite scheme for manifesting His own glory and giving effect to His goodness towards us. If Psa. 132 secures the risen son of David for the everlasting King on His throne in Zion, with the abundant and suited privileges peculiar to His Kingdom on earth and in Israel, the citation from Psa. 110 testifies to His present exaltation in heaven. Of this there was the most conclusive proof in the now accomplished promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Spirit, of whose outpouring there was indubitable evidence to their eyes and ears. That gift Christ had received for the second time. Once again on earth He was sealed, the holy and acceptable One of God's delight: now a man in heaven a second time did He receive that same Spirit, as the One who, having finished the work of redemption, had gone on high, the guarantee and glorious witness of the acceptance of all who, believing in His name, are justified and delivered, that they might be united in one, the body of the ascended Head. And on this rests the perpetuity of that gift, the presence of the Holy Ghost, so essential to the Church of God. Not only is the outpoured Spirit the fruit of His accepted work in all its unchanging and everlasting value, but He is therefore given again to Christ, though for us. Christ received of the Father the promised Spirit and poured forth what was seen and heard at Pentecost: how could the Holy Spirit but abide in honor of Him and of His work? No wonder, whatever be the humiliating and deplorable provocations on our part, whatever the deep griefs on His part as feeling for Christ's injured name, that He abides in us and with us forever. He is come to testify to God's exalting Jesus, made both Lord and Christ, whom men, yea Jews, crucified.

On Acts 2:37-49

The effect of this solemn appeal to conscience, grounded on testimonies of Scripture undeniably direct, was both immediate and permanent. The truth of God searched His people unsparingly, His grace met them in sovereign goodness, and established in them the Christ whom they had so blindly and wickedly rejected.

“ And when they heard they were pricked in heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, What shall we do, brethren? And Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Him. And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this perverse generation. Those then that accepted his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they persevered in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and substance, and distributed them to all according as anyone had need. And day by day, continuing with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding day by day together those that were to be saved” (ver. 37-47).

It was a real work of God in the conscience. They were not persuaded only, but pricked in heart. There was submission to His person whom they had just crucified, and this through faith in God's word. It was not mere remorse, still less a change of mind only, but a real judgment of self before God, whose part they now took against themselves and their unbelieving evil in the past, and a distinct casting themselves on Him whom they had so bitterly despised to their own ruin. Now they repented, and were baptized each of them in the name of Jesus for remission of sins. Through His name the believer receives remission of sins; in none other is, there salvation. He is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins. As they repented, so also were they baptized in His name, according to the charge laid on His servants. They took the place of death with Him: I say not that they then understood its meaning, as they doubtless entered into it more or less afterward. The Lord directed His servants to baptize; and the new converts simply and without question submitted. It was His way, nor is any other so good, though many a servant of His has diverged from His orders, and many a convert seems in effect to think himself, in this as in other things, wiser than his Master. It was a clean final break with sins and sin, with man and religions man, with Judaism. Little or nothing could any one of these confessors be supposed at this solemn new-born epoch to apprehend with intelligence; but they did feel before God their own nothingness, and the all-sufficiency of His name who had died on the cross. And they were welcome to the precious privilege conferred on them, as they could in no way have been recognized as disciples of His had they refused baptism in His name. It was the mark of His confession, the sign of salvation; and woe to him that spurns the authority and grace of Him who instituted it.

But there is another matter of new and immense import that follows. These repentant Jews who submitted to baptism in the name a Jesus Christ for remission of sins are assured of the subsequent gift of the Spirit: “And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

They were already born of God: without which there could be no repentance, nor faith. They were to be baptized with water in the name of Jesus for remission. Not till then was the believing Jew to receive the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; for this is in question here, “the gift” (■ δωρε■), not merely the gifts (τ■ χαρ■σματα) or powers which accompanied and attested His divine presence now on earth. It is the more necessary to insist on the specific character of the truth, because of the widespread confusion as to all this in Christendom. The gift of the Spirit here spoken of, the peculiar and abiding privilege of the Christian and the Church, is as distinct from new birth by the Spirit as from the gifts of which we read not a little in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. But there is a circumstantial difference in the manner to be noticed, that while the favored Jew in Acts 2 had to be baptized before he receives this wondrous gift, the hitherto despised Gentile receives the Holy Ghost before being baptized in the name of the Lord: a difference in my judgment worthy of God, and for His children instructive in His ways.

The inestimable gift was not overlooked in Old Testament Scripture: not only the new blessings of redemption in general, but that of the Spirit particularly. And Peter could here say that the promise was to them and to their children, yea, to all that were afar off, as many as the Lord their God should call to Him. Now that the time was come for displaying, not law nor government, but grace, God would call to Himself the most distant, and bless the needy to the fall. It is no question of a mere external sign, but of the power of God in grace according to His promise.

This was not by any means all the Apostle urged on that memorable day; but from among more and different words it sufficed the Holy Ghost to recall the exhortation, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” For now God was about to separate as well as forgive and deliver; at least the salvation goes beyond guilt and sin. He would set apart from the perverse generation hurrying on to its speedy ruin, which was rejecting the gospel as it had the Messiah Himself. From the separate people now proved utterly crooked and rebellious He would have His own to be saved, for His own glory and after a new way. This the rest of the book we have begun to study opens out to us; nor can anything of the sort be to us of deeper interest or of more practical value. For we too, though Gentiles naturally, belong to this new family of God, and new testimony of Christ.

“Those then that accepted his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (ver. 41). “Gladly,” the reading of the Received Text, is rejected on ample evidence by the critics as not found in the oldest and best authorities. It seems to be a perhaps unconscious importation from, or effect of, chap. 21:17, where it is in perfect keeping. Here it is not. For, precious and comforting as the gospel may be, deep seriousness would characterize those souls so newly repentant, and on grounds suited to sound them thoroughly. A “glad” reception would better harmonize with a revival movement and its generally superficial results. The Pentecostal work was both profound and extensive: three thousand souls that day were no slight haul, but in every way suited to prove that a Divine person was, just come in grace no less than power, both to save and to gather. So it is the Lord's will that we should ever remember and heed from first to last. The Holy Spirit works by the gospel and forms the church.

Further, the Spirit abides evermore, so as to cut off all excuse for not going on with God according to His word and will. So here it is noted that “they persevered in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers” (ver. 42). Such was the course on which entered the souls just born to God and blessed of Him in Christ. The teaching of the apostles supplied the needed instruction, fitted perfectly as they were, not only by the Spirit's recalling to their remembrance all the words of the Lord Jesus, but by His own communication, according to the. Savior's promise, of all that they themselves could not then bear. Never was there such teaching for souls whose very recent introduction into divine relationships made them hunger and thirst for all would satisfy the new spiritual wants and affections of their souls. And they had it not orally alone, but after a while also in forms written by inspiration, that we too might have “fellowship” with them, taking in now not the twelve only but the great apostle of the Gentiles yet to be called. For “teaching,” however valuable, is not enough without “fellowship “; and few weigh how much they owe to the presence and living commentary on the truth which sharing it all together in practice furnishes. Then “the breaking of bread” has a most influential place, both keeping the Lord continually before the saints in His unspeakable grace and suffering, and in drawing out the deepest feelings of the heart, where the exercise or display of power might be otherwise a danger, as we see at Corinth, where the true character of the Eucharist was lost, and the assembly became a scene of ostentation. Nor are “the prayers,” meaning I suppose the united or common prayers of the saints, left out of this weighty record; for none can neglect “the prayers” without loss otherwise irreparable; and so much the more of moment were they then as the saints rose to the full joy of their new and everlasting blessedness. For power and privilege would be of all things the most fatal if the saints slipped out of the sense of needed and constant dependence on God.

On the one hand, the moral impression was great and immediate (ver. 43): “fear came upon every soul;” and not the less, but the more, because it was the effect of God's presence in grace, not in judgments which alarm for a moment but soon yield to a fatal reaction. “And many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.” The manifestations of power were not only marvelous, but significant, so as to reveal Him who wrought by means of His servants in His character and ways; alas! among a people manifestly treated as unbelieving and apostate: else His word had sufficed and made them out of place.

On the other hand, how lovely the picture the faithful present for a brief moment! “And an that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and substance, and distributed them to all according as any one had need. And day by day, continuing with one accord in the temple and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding day by day together those that were to be saved” (ver. 44-47). Never before was such a sight among men on earth; never such love rising above the selfishness of nature, not merely in that land and race, but in any other; and all through the power of divine grace in the name of the Crucified now seen by faith on high. It was sweet fruit of the Spirit as far as possible from a claim or command, however right be the voice of divine authority in its place. But here was the flow, mighty yet unbidden, of divine love that embraced everyone begotten of God, without reserve or stint in hearts which answered in their measure to His who with His Son vouchsafes us all things. It was, no doubt, a peculiar hour of transitional character, exactly suited to a state which beheld all the

faithful within one city; what, in fact we never do find when grace called and gathered elsewhere, and especially from among the Gentiles. There love surely was not wanting in the power of God; yet did it never take this shape, but one more adapted to the one body, where-ever found on earth. So, too, we may observe the continuing in the temple as yet steadfastly, perhaps more so than ever, whilst they celebrated “at home” (not “from house to house”) the Lord's Supper: deep and solemn joy in the remembrance of the Savior, but unabated attachment as yet to the temple and its hours of prayer. Even ordinary meals were lit up with the happiness of His presence: how much more where all His self-sacrifice was before their eyes 1 Thus did they praise God, and all the people regarded them with the favor with which they viewed Christ Himself in His earlier days (Luke 2:52). In the last verse “to the assembly” appears to be a gloss. “Together,” from 3:1, should come in here: “and the Lord was adding day by day together those were to be saved." It was the church, but described, not yet so designated till chap. 5:11, where the saints there called out together are styled “the assembly” or church.

On Acts 3

Thus did God gather to the name of the Lord Jesus; His church began to be built. But He did not therefore forget His ancient people. In word and deed He appeals to their conscience, if haply they might repent, and He bring in the predicted times of blessing.

“Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth. And a certain man being lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid every day at the gate of the temple called Beautiful, to ask alms of those that entered into the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to enter into the temple, asked to receive alms. And Peter gazing on him with John said, Look on us. And he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, this I give thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth walk. And grasping him by the right hand he raised [him] up; and immediately his feet and ankle-bones were made strong. And leaping up he stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God; and they recognized him that be it was that sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to him. And as he held Peter and John all the people ran together unto them in the portico that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And Peter seeing [it] answered unto the people, Men of Israel, why marvel ye at this [man]? or why gaze ye at us as though by our own power or piety we had made him to walk? The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, did glorify His servant Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied Him before Pilate's face when he decided [lit. judged] to release [Him]. But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but the Author [lit. Chief] of life ye killed, whom God raised from [the] dead of which we are witnesses; and on the faith of His name did His name make this man strong whom ye behold and knew; and the faith that is by Him gave him this entireness before you all. And now, brethren, I know that ye acted in ignorance, as also your rulers; but God thus fulfilled what He announced before by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer. Repent therefore, and be converted for the blotting out of your sins, so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and he may send forth Him that hath been fore-appointed for you, Jesus Christ, whom heaven indeed must receive till times of restoring all things whereof God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began. Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord our God raise up to you from among your brethren as [he did] me; him shall ye in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be that every soul which shall not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those in succession, as many as spoke, did also announce these days. Ye are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God covenanted with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. To you first God, having raised up His servant, sent Him to bless you in turning away each from your iniquities” (5:1-26).

The actual circumstances here recounted agree singularly with the special form the truth assumes. God is showing His long-suffering grace toward Israel, though He had commenced an entirely

distinct testimony and work in the gospel and in the church. So Peter and John, who were certainly behind none in the new position and testimony, are seen going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. For the time at any rate they seem the better Jews for being so blessed as Christians. Not even their apostolic dignity, nor the power with which they were just clothed, detached them. There at the Beautiful gate when about to enter the temple, a man lame from his birth, often seen, being habitually laid there, asked of them alms, and got a better blessing. For Peter gazing on him with John, arrested his attention who expected to receive some little boon. But if discouraged by “Silver and gold have I none,” he hears of something new indeed: “What I have, this I give thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth walk.” And if the apostle promptly grasped his right hand and raised him up, immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength, so that leaping up he stood, walked, and entered with them into the temple, praising God. It was not done in a corner. All the people saw and heard, recognizing him to be the same that used to sit there begging; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had befallen him.

It was indeed a sign admirably calculated to awaken the Jews, to attest the grace of God towards their utter weakness, to manifest the power of the risen and glorified Messiah, and so much the more as it was not His presence but His answer from on high to the power of His name appealed to by His servant on earth. If such was the instant virtue of the name of Jesus for the lame man, what would not follow faith in that name if Israel believed?

“And as he held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the portico that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And Peter seeing [it] answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this man [or, thing]? or why gaze ye at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him to walk? The God of Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, did glorify His servant Jesus; whom ye delivered up and denied before the face of Pilate when decided to release [Him].” This was no uncertain sound. But all is in keeping. It is the God of our fathers who glorified the Messiah, His servant Jesus. “Son” is not the thought, but Jehovah's servant as in Isa. 42, 49:1, 52, 53, whom the Jews had denied before the Roman judge, when disposed, yea determined, to let Him go.

And who is this that so boldly charged the Jews with denying their own Messiah? The very man who not many weeks before had denied Him with oaths. But Peter immediately broke down in a sorrow which wrought repentance according to God, as he judged not only the ripe fruit; but the root of his sin. Now restored, his feet washed, he is so completely cleansed from the defilement that he can without a blush or waver tax the men of Israel with the very sin from which he had been so lately freed himself. For redemption by the blood of Jesus had meanwhile come in, and its enjoyment is so much the greater as the believer judges himself before God. “But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and the Author of life ye killed, whom God raised from among the dead, of which we are witnesses; and on the faith of His name did His name make this man strong whom ye behold and know; and the faith that is by Him gave him this entireness before you all.” None can preach, any more than worship, like a soul once cleansed, having no more conscience of sins. How desperate their position! The Holy and Righteous One they denied; a murderer they desired as a favor: God was distinctly against them in raising up from the dead the Author of life whom they slew; and the apostles were witnesses of this; as His name through faith in it made the lame man strong whom they looked on and knew. What and where were they in gainsaying unbelief of Him who responded to the faith by Him and in

Him that gave such an one this entireness in presence of them all?

Then does the apostle explain how so dreadful a deed could be on their part. “And now, brethren, I know that ye acted in ignorance, as also your rulers; but God thus fulfilled what He announced before by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer.” In one way this might aggravate the degraded condition of God's ancient people; for how came they and their rulers to be so ignorant? They knew neither the scripture nor the power of God. They valued neither grace nor truth. They saw works, they heard words such as man never experienced before; yet were they more besotted than heathen, duller than their own beasts of burden. But He who suffered for them on the cross prayed to His Father to forgive them, for they knew not what they did; and now the Holy Spirit though the apostle assures them that so it was, as a plea for divine compassion. That His Christ should suffer was no afterthought of God, who predicted it by all the prophets and thus fulfilled it. So must the people learn their blind iniquity; so would He manifest His mercy who gave Him a propitiation for their offenses.

“Repent, therefore, and be converted for the blotting out of your sins, so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and He may send forth the Christ that hath been fore-appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven indeed must receive till times of restoring all things, whereof God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began.”

Here we have the condition of blessing to the Jews. Seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord are vainly sought for them as a people, till they repent and turn again for the blotting out of their sins. So the Lord had intimated when He bowed to their rejection of Him, and declared their house left to them desolate: “Ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord” —of Jehovah. Whensoever their heart shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. They will be converted for the blotting out of their sins. They will welcome their long-despised Messiah, and Jehovah will send Him. There will be at least a remnant converted and awaiting His advent; and He will appear to their deliverance and the discomfiture of their enemies, as many scriptures bear witness. Of that godly remnant not a few will be put to death; and these, whether earlier or later sufferers, shall be raised in time to join the saints already glorified; so that they all may reign with Christ during the thousand years according to Rev. 20. Those who escape and survive will become the first and most honored nucleus for the kingdom on earth, when heaven no longer has within it the Christ fore-appointed for them, Jesus, and times for restoring all things dawn on earth.

For God does mean to bless this long-groaning creation, and inspired the mouth of His holy prophets to speak of it since time began. They therefore do greatly err who deny the immense and universal blessing in store for Israel, the nations, the earth, and the creation in general. They do not know how God intends to crown men here below with lovingkindness and tender mercies, when He shall open His hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Judgment, undoubtedly, shall fall previously; and Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth. 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. For the great distinctive feature is to be, along with this exclusion of Satan and his power, the mighty and beneficent presence and reign of Jehovah. Jesus, who with righteousness shall judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth, after He shall smite the earth with the rod of His

month, and with the breath of His lips shall slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. And 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.

What a gap in the thoughts and desires of saints, who expect none of these great and glorious changes in honor of Jesus! How defective the outlook where the grand purposes of God are unknown in reversal of the ruin and misery of the world since sin entered it! It will be noticed that nothing is here said of the still more magnificent circle of blessing revealed in Eph. 1:10, when God will place under the headship of Christ all things that are in heaven and all that are on earth. Here we have only the earthly things in relation to Messiah and Israel, not the universe put under Christ and the heavenly saints.

Meanwhile the Jews refused to repent, and the kingdom, instead of being brought in, is postponed till they are converted for the blotting out of their sins at a future day, so that seasons of repenting may come from Jehovah's presence, and Christ be sent from heaven, according to the prophetic word. Daring the interval God turns the time of Jewish unbelief to the gospel call of the Gentiles, as well as to the formation of the body, the church one with Christ, wherein is neither Jew nor Greek. Here Peter is still exhorting them to repent, and in case of it pledging the return of Christ to establish the time of predicted peace and blessing. For Jesus was clearly the prophet raised up, like Moses, but incomparably greater, as Moses himself bore witness in Deut. 28:15-19: none could refuse His words with impunity, but to his own destruction. “And all the prophets from Samuel and those in succession, as many as spoke, did also announce these days.” As the Jews were the sons of the prophets and of God's covenant with their fathers, according to the promised blessing in the seed of Abraham, so was Jesus, His anointed servant, sent to them first to bless them in turning away each from their iniquities.

It is not yet the heavenly testimony of Paul, nor even what Peter preached to those converted and believing in Christ, as in the preceding chapter 2, but his call to the Jew responsible to hear the final appeal to that nation.

Chapter 38

On Acts 4:1-12

The discourse of the apostle was interrupted at this point, which is lost to many a reader by the division of the chapters.

“Now as they were speaking unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being distressed because of their teaching the people, and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead; and they laid hands on them and put them in ward unto the morrow; for it was already evening. But many of those that heard the word believed, and the number of the men became about five thousand.” (Ver. 1-4.)

Religious authority took umbrage. Who were these men to speak within the precincts of the temple? It is true that a mighty miracle had been wrought publicly, and undeniably; but officials are sensitive to any invasion of their rights, and are apt to leave God out of the account, speaking as of the world and knowing none else than the world to hear them. But a class came forward now, which had been comparatively in the background whilst the Lord lived and labored. Then were the Pharisees His active adversaries, the advocates of defective and spurious righteousness opposing the Righteous One. Now the enemy had ready another and very different body among the Jews, the Sadducees, roused from their habitual calm by a truth which convicted them of utter infidelity and consequent antagonism to God and His word. Miracles were bad enough in the eyes of free-thinkers; they brought the power of God too near; they were a sign to unbelievers that they might hear the truth. But the resurrection, exemplified in the person of Jesus, was intolerable; and none so intolerant, as those who boast of tolerating every shade, when the truth confronts them. The mild Sadducee outdoes the previously fierce Pharisee; none so disturbed by the announcement of Jesus risen from the dead.

And no wonder. The resurrection of Him whom man had just slain is the most conclusive and irrefragable proof of God's power according to His word, the most complete refutation of those who admit nothing beyond the natural course of things in this world. Laws which govern that course none dispute; nor the knowledge of such laws men call science. But the resurrection proves One above those laws, which in no way control or limit His power, as He will demonstrate in the day in which He makes all things new. Meanwhile the raising of Jesus from the dead, while the ordinary course goes on, is the sufficient and striking witness to the power which will destroy the world that now is, and create a new one, wholly different, to His own glory.

Hence the skeptical school took fire at the apostles for proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead; for it laid bare their evil unbelief and convicted them of being enemies of the truth, fighting against God Himself. Otherwise they would have inquired into the facts and compared them with the Scriptures; and must have rejoiced that He had done so blessed and glorious a thing according to His word. For the resurrection of Christ is the pledge that those who are Christ's shall rise as He rose: He is avowedly the first fruits of those who are fallen asleep. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. They are the heads of the two families, the Adam family, and the Christ family, death having come in by the one head, as now resurrection by the

other. Those that are Christ's rise at His coming. It is a resurrection from among the dead, as His was; and they reign with Him for a thousand years. The rest of the dead do not live till the thousand years have been completed. Blessed and holy he who has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. No one doubts that in another sense they will reign forever, to the ages of ages, as will all the godly who will be born of God during the millennial reign. But this period of special reigning over the earth ought not to be ignored, because of the eternal blessedness of the glorified after the kingdom is over and the new heaven and earth are come in the absolute sense, when the wicked have been raised, judged, and cast into the lake of fire. Theirs is not a resurrection from the dead; for there are none more left in the grave, they themselves being the last remainder after the righteous were raised.

Thus it was not merely the truth of resurrection which roused Sadducean spite, but the resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of the unjust, of the mass of mankind, is not from among the dead; like the resurrection of the just, it is the effect of the power of Christ, the Son of God, when He summons the wicked from their graves to judgment. The righteous have life in the Son now, and rise to a resurrection of life; as the unjust to a resurrection of judgment a thousand years after, when they must honor Him whom they now despise. So perfectly does John 5 agree with Rev. 20. There is no discrepancy; but there are two resurrections according to Scripture, not one only. The general indiscriminate resurrection of the creeds is according to tradition, but a fable. There will be a resurrection of both just and unjust, of the just to reign with Christ at His coming, of the unjust to be judged by Him before He delivers up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father, when He shall have abolished all role and all authority and power. Men, and even believers, whose mind is on the things of men, are offended at the grace which discriminates now, as it will yet more manifestly by the resurrection from the dead. They prefer a “dim religious light,” with its vagueness and uncertainty; they shrink from that blessed hope—at least in its definite shape—which is the fruit of sovereign grace for the believer, involving as it does the solemn and dark background of judgment for all who despise both grace and truth in Christ.

But if the apostles were put in ward that evening till the morrow, the word was not bound, the true light was already shining. Many of those that heard believed. The number of the men rose to about 6,000. This would suppose not a few women and children. Compare Matt. 14:21, Luke 9:14, John 6:10. No sufficient reason appears for taking “men” (■νδρ■ν) otherwise than in its usual preciseness.

“And it came to pass on the morrow that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together at Jerusalem, and Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of high-priestly lineage. And having set them in the midst they inquired, By what power or in what name did ye this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Rulers of the people and elders [of Israel], if we this day are examined as to a good deed done to an infirm man, whereby he hath been cured, be it known to you all and to all the people of Israel that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, in [or, by] Him [or, in this (name)] he standeth before you whole. He is the stone that was set at naught by you the builders, that became the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there a different name under heaven that is given among men by which we must be saved.” (Ver. 5-12.)

On the morrow flocked together the religious authorities from the highest, including all grades; and the two apostles were challenged. Peter answered in the power of the Spirit who filled him, that the good deed was done in His name whom they had crucified, and God had raised from the dead; whom His word characterize as the Stone, set at naught by the builders, yet become the head of the corner, the rejected but exalted Messiah. What a situation for the rulers and people of Israel! And what a light on all that had befallen “Jesus Christ of Nazareth” was afforded by the testimony of Scripture to the Stone, the unquestionable figure used about the Messiah!

Consider ever so briefly Gen. 49:22-24, Psa. 118 (22 the very passage referred to), Isa. 28:16, Dan. 2:34, 44, 45, specially with the use made of it by our Lord Himself in Matt. 21:42-44, to which we may add Eph. 2:20, and 1 Peter 2:7-8. There is first His relation to Israel; then His rejection by the chiefs, but exaltation notwithstanding; next, Jehovah's commendation of Him to the believer in the face of divine judgment; and, lastly, His establishment of God's kingdom here below, to the destruction of the Gentile powers which had displaced Israel. The New Testament, while it of course confirms, supplements all this by connecting the Stone with the two advents of the Messiah rendered necessary alike by God's grace and His judgment, and by Israel's unbelief now and repentance in view of His coming again, crowned by Christ's place as the chief corner-stone, who brings even now those of the Jews who believe in Him into better blessings than the nation will by and by receive at His appearing, even to be a holy and a royal priesthood with all that is suited to each of these blessed relationships.

Into this Peter does not enter here; for he was addressing, not the believing remnant of Christian Jews, but the proud and bitter enemies of both Christ and the Christian. But he does set forth, to Christ's honor, and in love even to those who had so guiltily cast Him out, the sure and exclusive assurance of salvation in Christ. “In none other is there salvation; neither is there another—a different—name under heaven that is given among men whereby we must be saved.” How blessed that, though God has set Him up at His own right hand in heaven, His name is given under heaven among men on earth, by which we must be saved if saved at all It is here and now that we must be saved; for it is of grace, and by faith. There is no other name—our own least of all; and no other way, for He is the way. Faith exalts the Savior and the God who gave Him, and leaves no room for works of righteousness of our doing, even were we capable of them, which in our unbelieving state we certainly were not. All is of grace; but grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. How awful that men should neglect so great a salvation—yea, though on behalf of Christ His servants beseech them to be reconciled to God.

Chapter 39

On Acts 4:13-22

For the servants of Christ the conflict was now beginning. On the one side worldly power and religion, position and numbers; on the other, faith in His name whom their adversaries had crucified. What could have seemed more unequal? Yes, to those who leave out God, and His Son, and the Spirit sent down from heaven. But in the believer is not this inexcusable unbelief? Why do we not always reckon on divine intervention, till He is giving up people to their own delusions?

“Now beholding the boldness of Peter and John, and aware that they were unlettered and simple, they wondered, and recognized them that they were with Jesus” (ver. 13). In none does the Spirit's power shine more conspicuously than in such as can boast nothing of this world's advantages. For high and low cry up the learning of the schools: the high, as making the most of what they themselves have enjoyed; the low, in general, as excusing their own deficiency and overvaluing what they have not. But in the things of God nothing has power like faith in the God who is glorifying Christ. And learning, whenever leaned on an object, so far from being a help, is apt to become a positive hindrance and a real snare. Man as such is capable of attaining it in the highest degree; and pride generally follows, if not the applause of men. But the ways of God are not as ours; and He was pleased to humble man, not only by Christ crucified, but by choosing the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise. In the front rank of these stand the apostles who, speaking broadly, had not one distinction in the eyes of the world, not one of which flesh could vaunt. Such certainly were Peter and John now in presence of Jewish rulers, who, having rejected Jesus, had lost God, were putting forth nothing but an arm of flesh against His purposes and His servants. The rulers saw their bold bearing, on the one hand, and on the other their ignorance of letters or of any public position which could whet their powers or impart experience and presence of mind. If they could not but wonder, they did also recognize their having been with Jesus. This could only aggravate their uneasiness, especially as an unanswerable witness was present. “And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply.” (Ver. 14.) How solemn the position of men who, bearing the name of God's people, are so entangled by the enemy that they cannot deny the truth to which they are at the same time determined not to bow! To own it would be, they think, their ruin. Not so in truth, but their salvation! It would have been the humbling discovery of their sin, and of God's unspeakable grace, of a rejected but exalted Messiah, whose name by faith in it brings life and remission of sins. But no: they will not come to Him that they may have life. They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. They value the glory of men and not the glory of God, who is in none of their thoughts. It is not only the unbelieving who perish, but the fearful, the cowardly, bent on present interests according to their own reckoning, and for their own pleasure, in contempt of evidence to their consciences adequate, yea overwhelming, that they are fighting against God. Did not the man stand before all with the apostles who notoriously had never stood before?

Their guilty dilemma they did not disguise from themselves nor one from another when they got rid of the presence of those who morally condemned them. “But, having commanded them to go aside out of the council, they were conferring among themselves, saying, What shall we do to

these men? for that indeed a notable sign hath been done through them [is] manifest to all that inhabit Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it be not spread farther among the people, let us threaten them [severely, lit., with threat] to speak to no man longer in [lit. on] this name" (Ver. 15-17.) Here the unerring word of God lays bare the workings of hardened feeling without conscience among His enemies; and none are so bitter, none so obdurate, as those who, responsible as His people to do His will, have made up their mind to do their own. They fully knew the remarkable deed just wrought by the apostles; they recognized it as not merely a miracle but "a sign"; yet did they strengthen themselves against the Almighty, running on the thick bosses of His buckler. In the face of the evident finger and instructive lesson of God, they deliberately strive together to extinguish its effects. They are well aware that "these men" claim nothing for themselves, assert nothing but the name of Jesus. But this is the very thing they themselves had to fear and would banish forever if they could. How vain! It is the day pre-eminently for bearing witness to Jesus. This is the true and great business of the believer; this his one unfailing joy and duty; in the gospel, in the church, with friend or with foe, with few or with many, habitually in word, often in deed, sometimes in silence, but always are we called to be His witnesses. Had not He Himself said to these very men with others, as His last charge, "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth?" Could these blind, plotting, self-condemned Jewish rulers stifle that testimony? So they hoped in the infatuation of unbelief which hid their own exceeding iniquity as well as God's will and glory from their eyes.

The charge not to speak at all nor teach in reference to (or resting on) the name of Jesus, which the council laid on Peter and John, was therefore as bold as it was wicked; and the more so as emanating from rulers who claimed the highest authority in religion. How solemn to think that so they treated unwittingly their own Messiah! And why was it unwitting? Had God given them ineffectual light in the prophets? They own at that moment a manifest sign in the man that was healed. This they could not deny; that they would not believe! And so abiding in darkness they knew not the impiety of their enforcing silence about the Messiah whose loving kindness was better than life to His servants.

" But Peter and John answering said unto them, Whether it be right before God to hear you rather than God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard." (Ver. 19, 20). This reply put the case with unanswerable plainness and moral power. A ruler, especially a religious one, is bound to uphold what is righteous before God; and their charge simply amounted to heeding themselves in preference to God; for they demanded not a word more in the name of Jesus, though God had openly and just now honored it unmistakably. As for the apostles, faith in Christ, love to souls, special call, divine authority, and devotedness to His glory, all wrought to open their lips in His testimony and praise. The things they had seen and heard were so bound up with what was due to Jehovah and His Anointed, as well as with the believer's blessedness and the unbeliever's misery, woe be to them if they held their peace! A necessity was laid on them no less than on Paul at a later day. They had received a personal command from Him by whom kings rule in divine providence; only theirs was on the ground, of grace and truth unknown to earthly governors as such, and for ends immeasurably higher and more enduring. Were those who claimed His sanction in a lower sphere authorized to set it aside in a higher? They might attempt it, but as surely would it be to their own irremediable destruction, as it would be in vain for those who

heard the voice of One on high mightier than the noise of many waters, let the floods lift up their voice never so loftily.

“ And they having further threatened them let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them on account of the people; because all were glorifying God for what had been done. For the man on whom this sign of healing was wrought was more than forty years old.” (Ver. 21, 22.)

Threatening, and further threatening, are tokens of weakness and ill-will, not of power which knows how to forbear till the critical moment come. It is the natural resource of such as have not the truth, and withal no plea of unrighteousness in those they would punish. And in this case, as often, the people were feared, not God. Not that they loved but rather despised the people; but they were necessary as an instrument of influence, and the loss of this they dreaded above all. What a contrast with that Ruler, who is just, ruling in the fear of God! Their character is as darkness, and the end death: He, as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Government, poor as it may be now, is right and needful; but it is never right when those who should exercise it shrink from fear of the people, instead of acting before God who authorized them. Alas! it was the council that was without God and opposed to Him; and the poor and simple, ignorant as they might be, in this case did all glorify God for that which was done. They were familiar for many years with the sufferer who by divine power was healed; and they had no class interest which was wounded by owning the good hand of God. The Jewish rulers feared not God but the people, and would have punished the holy servants of Christ if they could only have found an excuse plausible before men. They were in the darkness of nature, with the pride of possessing the law of God, and under the direction of Satan. The wisdom of their wise was perishing, and the understanding of their prudent hid. Learned or unlearned were obliged alike to own in the presence of His revealed mind that they could not read it. Henceforth it was with the servants and confessors of the Lord Jesus; the Spirit given them was self-evidently, not of cowardly fear, but of power and love and a sober mind. The truth of Christ too nearly concerns God and man to be shelved. If truly received, it commands conscience and heart, mind and soul. If the rulers could not deny the sign before their eyes, still less could the apostles refrain from confessing the truth of Christ, the Savior in heaven for man on earth. For them to withhold God's glad tidings in Christ would have been treason spiritually. Indifference to Christ or the gospel is cousin-german to infidelity.

Chapter 40

On Acts 4:23-30

Undeniably there was now a power on earth intrinsically superior to that of man beyond all comparison, but not at present at work to preclude shame and suffering, above all for Christ's sake. Nor was it merely with dark heathenism that it clashed, but with the highest authority of the Jewish people, now proving themselves as opposed at least as the heathen to the light and truth and power of God manifested by the presence of the Holy Spirit here below. The wonders and signs done by the apostles, the tongues of the Gentiles spoken in a moment by Jewish Christians who, had never learned them, the mighty works of God in redemption set forth, and unselfish grace raising the believers above what not only their own habits craved, but the nature of man universally, did not, rich as they are, constitute the entire testimony for the name of the Lord Jesus. A particular sign before the temple done in His name had roused not more the amazement of the multitude than the jealous fears of the religious chiefs, sore troubled because they proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. How blinding is the influence of unbelief! They could not deny the reality of the miracle; they would not believe the gospel. They put in ward and further threatened the instruments of divine power. They have not a word to say about their own Scriptures bearing witness to their rejection and God's exaltation of the Messiah; yet they charged the apostles not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus, desirous of punishing them, but finding as yet no means how to do so, because of the people whose favor they dreaded to lose, without the fear of God. A truly lamentable picture of those who claimed to be exclusively His people on the earth!

Little did they know that God had begun to call a new corps of witnesses from His ancient people, and that He would gather in more from the Gentiles. And so the Spirit is intimating in this very book as a fact, the ground of which is explained in the Epistles.

“ But being let go they came unto their own [company], and reported all that the chief priests and the elders said unto them. And they on hearing [it] with one accord lifted up their voice unto God and said, Master, thou [art] he that made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and all that in them [is]; who by the Holy Spirit, [by the] mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say, Why did Gentiles rage and peoples meditate vain things? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Anointed [or Christ]. For of a truth in this city against thy holy servant Jesus whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with Gentiles and peoples of Israel were gathered to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass. And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings and give to thy bondmen with all boldness to speak thy word, while [lit., in that] thou stretchest forth thy hand for healing, and that signs and wonders be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.” (Verses 23-30.)

What made these believers “their own company?” What drew the two apostles to them instinctively and immediately on their dismissal from the council? It was the Spirit of God who had gathered them to the name of the risen Christ. The people of Israel, their leaders at least, were now becoming their enemies as His; a new people was being formed with a high priest sat down on the

right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For He has obtained a ministry the more excellent, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant which has been enacted upon better promises. It is not that they then understood their own privileges as they are here put, nor that the statement here made reaches their best and highest blessings; but they knew the one on high who was the accomplishment and securer of all, and hence they were more and more attracted to the circle of those who confessed Him and detached in principle, as gradually more in heart, from their old belongings and their old boast.

And “their own company” responded with one accord on hearing their report of all that the religious chiefs of the nation had said. It is a remarkable outpouring to God, and proves how deeply they err who fancy that there can be no agreement in prayer save through a previously composed and commonly possessed form: a grave interference with and practical denial of the power of the Holy Spirit, the only right and adequate spring of all that should characterize the assembly of God. For He it was who guided in this spontaneous spreading out before God of their then passing circumstances, according to the written word and in striking identification with the Lord Jesus. “Master,” said they, in the sense of Sovereign owner and disposer of all, “thou art He that madest the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.” They acknowledge His glory in creation, but turn at once to His prophetic word through David in the beginning of Psa. 2 This they distinctly apply to that unnatural combination which Jerusalem had just beheld between Gentiles and Jews, between Herod and Pontius Pilate, against Jesus the Messiah. He who at first created all, governed all; and He had revealed His will in His word.

For beyond a doubt it was of the Holy Ghost that David so spoke. To no event since the Psalm was written can the opening words apply save to the one just before them; of that strange union and daring guilt they do speak with precision, where Jew and Gentile set themselves with their rulers in array against Jehovah and His Anointed as never before or since. There are great principles in Scripture, but also exclusively personal prophecies. But though they discern in it a Satan-directed conspiracy, in which evil seemed to have all its way without check even to the crucifying of the Lord of glory, they are clear that the enemy with all his hosts has in reality gained nothing but defeat. The others thought it not at all when they held their council and adjudged Jesus to the death of the cross; but they were gathered by Him who is higher than the highest, to do whatsoever His hand and His counsel predetermined to be done. And so it ever is, even in this world lying in the wicked one though it be, but not always so conspicuously as the written word made it in that which was and is so infinitely momentous to God and man. But how solemn to see “in this city,” as everywhere, that men who are the nearest concerned, the perpetrators of these horrors against God and His Christ, are the last to perceive the import of their own acts, still less God's gracious and worthy purposes by them! In truth, not one sparrow falls on the ground without Him; and the very hairs of our head are all numbered.

Futile and wicked effort! The murderous violence of man but rivets the bands and cords He would burst asunder. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. But this is far from all. Then shall He speak to them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure. This, however, is not yet; for, instead of judgments to punish their evil and overwhelm their pride, His grace is mean while sending ontthe gospel, repentance and remission of sins preached in the name of Jesus to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The promise of His Father is sent forth

on the disciples, the Holy Ghost as power from on high to associate those who believe with Himself in heaven. When this work of heavenly grace is done, God will take His place for the earth and Israel especially. He has in no way forgotten or repented of His promise to Abraham or David. “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Do any contend that this latter part of the Psalm is now accomplished, spiritually as they call it, under the gospel? It is perfectly demonstrable that such a strain of Scripture is precluded by the context. For it is declared that Messiah shall [not save nor unite to Himself as members of His body; but break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. So Rev. 2:7 shows that the faithful who are now being called will share in this with Christ at His coming, instead of its being fulfilled in some allegorical way at this time—a sense unworthy of all just interpretation. Hence the final appeal is to the kings and judges of the earth to pay homage to Jehovah and the Son, lest He be angry, and they perish under ever so little a kindling of His wrath. It is not a call to the poor and heavy-laden to believe the gospel; it is a question of the future and manifest kingdom of God when the Son of man comes in power and glory. Compare Psa. 8 and Dan. 2 vii. Still, whether it be then or now, blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

In vain do some following a few Rabbis limit or even apply such words to the reign of David or Solomon; for they go beyond their glory, and still more their successors. Neither attempted to reign to the ends of the earth, or required the homage of its kings as such; nor was any man called to trust in either; nor was lack of reverence visited with perdition. That Christ has not yet executed the judgment of verse 9 is no proof that He will not, but rather the solemn assurance that He will.

In our scripture it is noticeable that those, who so definitely use the Psalm for its accomplishment in the uprising against the Messiah stop short thus. Not a thought is expressed of His asking for Jehovah's giving the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. He is occupied with His heavenly relations and offices now. He will ask for the earth when He is about to come and execute judgment on the living and the dead. Then will be His appearing and His kingdom. Now He is hid in God, the source of gifts for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ, till we all come unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

Hence the praying saints do not ask for such vengeance from God on their adversaries, as we find in the Old Testament, and emphatically the Psalms which reflect the inmost feeling of the godly concerned, whether in their past preparatory accomplishment or in their complete fulfillment at the end of the age. It is not, as many in ignorant presumption dare to think, that these intercessions against the wicked as in Psa. 6 x. liv. lix. lxxxiii. and the like, are vindictive but solemnly judicial when the time and instruments are there to pour out God's wrath on all who despise Him. But now it is the day of grace and salvation, the accepted time, while Christ sits on the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost is uniting to Him the one body, the church, and sovereign grace in the gospel flows out overflowing for the while all difference between Jew and Gentile who are called to heavenly glory. In a spirit suitable to this do they pray “And now, Lord, look upon their threatening, and give to thy bondmen with boldness to speak thy word, while thou stretchest forth thy hand for healing, and that signs and wonders be done by the name of thy holy servant Jesus.”

It was enough for their hearts that the Lord should look upon the threats of those that sought their injury: He knew best what to permit and what to restrain; and He could deliver. For themselves they besought grace to speak His word with all baldness or liberty. Is this what we are doing or seeking? Do we prize it as our chief joy and duty and business on the earth? Is it merely with Christian companions of like mind, spending an hour or two in the morning with people of leisure, and in the evening with those who have closed their earthly toils? This may be all well; but in such circumstances it is apt to be sitting over the word rather than the word over them, admiring the things which they know, and criticizing those who do not know the wondrous counsels and ways of grace. Far different was the heart of these early saints who had much to learn; but in their faith they supplied or added that moral courage and zeal for Christ and divine love which drew them out to speak His word “with all boldness.” The Lord granted their desire, not merely in setting at naught when He saw fit for His glory the threatenings of His and their enemies, but in rendering free and bold witness to Himself. His word ran and was glorified as we shall see; and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women. They spoke of Him devotedly, and abundantly did He bless them. It never occurred to their simple minds that they should preach for preaching's sake with the inevitable and deserved result of absolutely no fruit. Speaking His word, they looked to Him that it would issue to His glory in bringing souls to God and filling them with divine joy in His grace.

It is true that their faith, according to the word of the Lord (Mark 16:17, 18), counted on more than spiritual blessing. The healing of the sick or infirm in His name they desired, as a precious and significant token to unbelievers. So had the Master wrought when here; so would they His bondmen do in witness of His gracious power, as He was risen and in heaven who had vanquished Satan, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that followed. In the confidence of this guarantee on His part they ask Him to grant them with all boldness to speak His word whilst He stretches forth His hand for healing, and that signs and wonders be done in the name of the holy servant Jesus. This was seasonable where God was inaugurating the infinite fact of the Holy Spirit sent down in person from heaven and now permanently making the assembly to be His habitation, His temple or house on earth. What honor too for Him whom the Jews had crucified by the hand of lawless men, that these signs and wonders were done “through the name of His servant Jesus!” When the name of the Lord was professed throughout Christendom, there would have been no adequate object, or even propriety, in the continuance of such signs, the Scriptures being then accepted in that sphere as the true and full revelation of God. And inasmuch as that profession for the most was unreal and superficial and increasingly to the denial by their works of the Lord whom they professed, how morally incongruous would have been the continuance of these external tokens of honor and power! The more one weighs the matter, the more fitting does it seem that He who vouchsafed miracles at the beginning should not have bound them as an inalienable heirloom to the church or to His servants. He promised that they would follow “those that believe"; and so they did. He never intimated that they were to follow perpetually or absolutely; and they then ceased in His wisdom, as they really could not be now without the danger, yea certainty, of ill results to His dishonor; for they must tend to gloss over the present ruin-state of the assembly, to blunt the conscience of all, if all had them, or to inflate a few if only exercised by a few.

The testimony, the word of God, was then the prime desire which they spread before Him, for they sought mercy and blessing for their adversaries, not vengeance; and the seals of power they asked at His hand did not consist of consuming fire from above, or the earth opening to devour the foe, but rather “healing,” and if “signs and wonders” they besought them “through the name of His holy servant Jesus,” because their hearts were set on the honor of the Son, even as they honored the Father. The power prayed for was not for apostolic influence or authority, but for His glory who made Himself a bondman, and to commend the word that reveals Him. It was the Creator, who had, through His servant David, predicted and now accomplished His work, even through His enemies.

It will be noticed that the critical text differs not a little from the received, not merely in the omitting “God” in v. 24, and “in this city,” in 27, but yet more in the singular addition given by NAB C and other authorities. It is difficult to conceive the ordinary text deliberately changed into that ancient form with its unusual apparent harshness; it is easy to understand that later copyists might soften the phrase. It is not often that the older witnesses give us greater copiousness; but here we have distinct instances of it. Further, in 27 and 30, as in iii. 13 26, the true counterpart is “servant,” and not “Son,” or even “child” here, answering to Isa. 42; 52, as indeed the Authorized Version rightly translates in 25. Only Jesus is here carefully distinguished as “His holy” One.

Chapter 41

On Acts 4:31-37

A distinct and immediate answer to united prayer was now given, faith as ever receiving more than it asked. “And when they prayed, the place wherein they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness. And the heart and soul of the multitude of those that believed was one; and not one said that aught of his possessions was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power did the apostles give their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. For as many as were owners of lands or houses sold [them] and brought the prices of the things that were being sold, and laid [them] at the feet of the apostles; and distribution was made to each according as any one had need. And Joseph that by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, son of exhortation), a Levite, Cyprian by birth, having a field, sold [it] and brought the money and laid [it] at the feet of the apostles.” (Verses 31-37)

The voice of Jehovah shaketh the wilderness. He looketh on the earth and it trembleth. So when He comes to reign, the earth will see and tremble. Here it is not in judgment, but in grace that He gave this outward token of His intervention, not conveying as in an earthquake the idea of some universal and unlimited danger, but, by its peculiar form, limited to the place wherein they were assembled, giving the conviction that He heard and watched over them for His own glory.

But there was more and better than any external sign. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke (not now, as far as we are told, with other tongues, but) the word of God with boldness. It was the presence of God manifested most suitably in power but grace withal. It is wholly distinct from that operation of the Spirit where a soul is born anew. It was the energy of the Holy Spirit, shown outwardly as well as in believers: the Spirit not only given, but excluding the action of flesh so that, for the time at least, nothing wrought which was not of Himself. It was spiritual power but in the dependence of faith, and uttering not strong and original ideas, but the word of God with boldness, as became His servants, confiding in His perfect grace, and feeling the ruin of man without Christ. Before this, two of the apostles when forbidden by the high authorities of Israel pleaded, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” They were all now animated with like faith and fervor in the Holy Ghost. It was no small thing for any to be thus strengthened; how much more to see an entire company of such confessors.

How are they characterized? “And the heart and soul of the multitude of those that believed was one.” Never before Pentecost had such a sight appeared on earth. The description is, if possible, more vividly spiritual now that opposition came out distinctly against them. All savors of His presence who deigned to come down from heaven and make the saints the dwelling-place of God. The Holy Spirit it is whose energy works all that is acceptable to God, all that is edifying for man. Without Him there had been only so many individuals. The Spirit unites to Christ; He also and thereby gives practical unity as here. The heart and soul of those that believed, though a multitude, was one. Undoubtedly such unity could not have been without one supreme and absorbing object, even Christ; but there was also needed the power of the Spirit to exclude the

activity of each several will. For flesh loves to differ, and seeks its own things. Next they all sought the things of Jesus Christ, though without intelligence of union with Christ or heavenly relationships. Yet never before nor since has there been in any communion on earth an equal testimony to deliverance through His name from the selfishness of nature and the pride of the world, never more sustained joy in God or mutual love through our Lord Jesus. It was the accomplishment of the prayer in John 17:20, 21, “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” Their heart and soul was one. The expression of the inspired historian is most energetic, as the practical unity in grace was realized with singular brightness before the world. No sign of greater weakness in the church than division of way, feeling, or thought; no more evident mark of the Spirit's power than unity of which Christ is the spring and character.

Next follows, as fresh as ever, that unexampled token of superiority to personal interests which Pentecost first beheld. “And not one said that aught of his possessions was his own, but they had all things common.” Certainly this was in no sense law but grace; but is it not surprising that any believing the scriptures should elude the plain and blessed fact? It was a state of things beautifully suited to the church when it was all in Jerusalem, and in the full early bloom created by the ungrieved Holy Spirit: when saints were gathered to the Lord elsewhere, we find it no more. Communion of goods, so far as it was carried out in grace, in the nature of things could only be rightly whilst all the members were in one place. When the Lord wrought in other places, the saints were as near in divine relationship as those that dwelt in the same city. That which was peculiar to the assembly in Jerusalem then merged into more ordinary and comprehensive forms of love toward all the saints wherever found: for the church on earth is one, and we are members one of another even if in the most distant quarters of the globe. We have then instruction and exhortation of the, most precious kind about giving, as in Rom. 12 Cor. xvii., 2 Cor. 8 ix., Gal. 6, Eph. 4, Phil. 4, 1 Tim. 6, Heb. 13, &c., clearly supposing no such state as all things common, but rather rich and poor who were appealed to accordingly. The word of the Lord, though to us always true, was receiving its most marked application: “Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.”

Here too we are told of the prominent place Christ's resurrection held in apostolic teaching. “And with great power did the apostles give their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.” Need it be urged that the apostles were right, not the moderns who preach the Lord in His service, or in His death, and there practically stop? For thus do these curtail the true witness of its blessed fullness; and all their preaching, not to say their faith, suffers. For why sever the resurrection from the death of Christ? If He be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain: ye are yet in your sins. Without His resurrection there is no proof that our sins are gone, ourselves justified, and God glorified. Where resurrection is not held fast in power, the door is ever open both to ignore man's total ruin, and the full deliverance God has wrought in Christ and is now giving freely in His grace. One may reason, others may hope; but the resurrection is the grand fact that He who suffered for our sins is no longer in the grave where man laid His body, but is raised of God; whose glad tidings concerning His Son are that He is thus proclaimed victorious over sin and death, to the salvation of every believer.

And this witness is of all efficacy for the believer, for “great grace was upon them all.” It is of all moment to arrest and turn unbelievers; but faith sees in the resurrection of the Lord the pledge of its own justification no less than of the judgment of all who oppose or neglect so great salvation. The God who raised from the dead Him who made Himself responsible for our sins, and went down into death under divine judgment for our sakes, is the Savior God; and His great grata reproduces itself in those who know Him thus. Love is not the fruit of a command or of an effort to love. His grace has creative power of graciousness in such as know themselves loved of Him

It is painful that any one should, from chap. ii. 47, reduce this great grace to “popular favor.” The next verse does not give the reason why the people looked favorably upon them (“because they suffered none of their number to be in need,” as if the church were a good benefit club!). Verse 34 really exemplifies a special way in which the great grace upon them wrought: especially as it was no longer the simple immediateness of giving which was originally seen in chap. ii. 44, 45. Now, when lands or houses were sold, the prices were laid at the feet of the apostles, and distribution was made to each according as anyone had need. What a contrast between the spontaneous unselfishness here manifest, and the formal rigor of monastic rule, Mendicant Friars, &c.!

Among those distinguished by their self-stripping love for the brotherhood stands specially recorded the afterward eminent name of Joseph, surnamed Barnabas (verses 36, 37), son of exhortation or perhaps consolation. Later on (xi. 24) he ii characterized as “a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith.” Here, a Cyprian, he is said to have been a Levite, yet possessed of a field, which he sold, and laid the money at the feet of the apostles. The express mention of the circumstance here proves how little the practice had become compulsory: for why name Barnabas in particular, if it were rule absolute and universal? Where men imitate in the world or even in the church, law-work supersedes grace, and the community swamps the individual, to the destruction of love on one side and of conscience on the other. The grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ alone puts and keeps both in their true place, whether the individual or the body, because thus only God is God before man believingly. Popery and communism alike strive in vain to realize the unselfish grace of these early days in the church; for they are, neither of them, likenesses but caricatures, as far as possible from having the same source, character, or issue. Grace is inimitable: only the Holy Spirit can produce it in reality. He it is who wrought in so rich a measure then; and He abides to work whatsoever is in keeping with Christ at all times, with full consideration of what is due to God's actual ways, and man's state also. But the interests and activity of the Holy Ghost are no longer in the fold of Israel. He is present, in the fullness of grace and power withal, in a new and different sphere outside Israel no less than the nations; He is there bearing witness of the risen Jesus whom men crucified and slew, and of the boundless blessing conferred on those that confess Him. He is producing new and suited fruit in those that are His, united as one soul, whatever their old habits or once clashing interests: such now the sweet effect of their oneness in the Father and the Son, that the world might believe that the Father sent the Son.

Chapter 42

On Acts 5:1-11

Manifestation of grace provokes the adversary, and the flesh would gladly gain the highest credit to itself at the least possible cost. It was early to forget that God had just made the assembly His dwelling-place; and certainly the witnesses to His presence therein were many and plain. But the enemy knows how to lure the soul by degrees into fatal evil, and spiritual pretension is a direct road and a slippery as well as rapid descent.

Barnabas had been singled out for special mention as he was afterward to be used and honored of God in the front rank of His servants Ananias follows, but his heart was not right with God: that moment of “great grace upon all” was seized for his great deceit, with the aggravation of his wife knowing and taking part in it. How many a Christian woman has been the true helpmeet of her husband in timely warning and instant appeal, condemning any and every evil at the first buddings! How dreadful when the man and the woman aid one another to forget God and His gracious but holy presence! when they agree to dishonor the name of the Lord by lying pretensions to self-sacrificing devotedness!

“ But a certain man, Ananias by name, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession and reserved [part] of the price, his wife also being privy: and brought and laid a certain part at the feet of the apostles. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to reserve for thee of the price of the land? When it remained, did it not remain to thee; and when sold, was it not in thy power? How [is it] that thou conceivedst this thing in thy heart? Thou didst lie not to men but to God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down and expired; and great fear came upon all the hearers, and the younger [men] arose, swathed him, and carrying out buried [him].' (Ver. 1-6.)

Sin is aggravated by the position of the guilty, as is carefully shown in Lev. 4. The ruler is distinguished from one of the people, and the anointed priest involved far more serious consequences than both.

But there is another and yet more solemn criterion, the presence of God, and this according to His nature now fully revealed. In Israel it was Jehovah dwelling in the thick darkness, who governed His people, around Him yet unable to draw near, the Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest. Now it is, by virtue of the blood of Christ, who has therefore entered once for all into the holies, having found eternal redemption. Therefore also is the Holy Spirit come down to constitute us God's dwelling place, His holy temple. If sin became exceeding sinful through the commandment, how abominable in the light of the cross! But therein God condemned sin, not only in its fruits but in its root, and this in Him who became an offering for sin. Such was God's work in sending His own Son, the Holy One yet made sin, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. The sins of the believer are blotted out and forgiven, the evil nature, which could not be forgiven, is already condemned in His cross who died for it; and He is risen, and we are in Him, freed from all condemnation, and living of His life who is alive again for evermore. The Holy Ghost also is not only witness to us but power in us, and personally here to

make good God's presence.

Then, again, the dwelling of God is the true and full ground of the call to holiness. Even in Israel it was so “Holiness becometh thine house, O Jehovah, forever.” So shall they hereafter sing in truth of heart when the kingdom comes and Jehovah reigns. And so, looking back, not forward only, it had been when they had no more than a temporal redemption by divine power from Egypt, a type of the incomparably more blessed and permanent, yea, eternal redemption, which the Lord Jesus acquired by His blood. Even then, when the redemption was but the shadow of better things to come, the God of Israel manifested His presence on behalf, and in the midst, of His people. Now all is real; because Christ, who is the truth, came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The full result does not yet appear for the universe, till He comes to reign in righteousness, after which shell be the new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. But meanwhile the mighty work of propitiation is not only accomplished but accepted, and the Spirit of truth is come down in person to effectuate the presence and dwelling of God here below in the assembly of the saints as His house. Hence if the Book of Exodus is, above all books of the Bible, the figure of redemption in its first half, its last half shows us the consequent dwelling, the tabernacle, of Godin the midst of His people; and the ways of the people are regulated accordingly. “There I will meet with the children of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar. I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God.” Exodus 29:43-46.

So it is in the church, now. Holiness is imperative individually, for the Spirit of God dwells in us, as saints purged by the blood of Jesus, alive from the dead, freed from sin and become bondmen to God, that we may have fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life. “What know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God? And ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore with your body.” 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. But He dwells in the assembly also (1 Cor. 3), and makes us collectively the living God's temple, responsible as come out from unbelievers to be separated, and to touch not what is unclean. There God dwells; to such He is a Father. “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every pollution of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” 2 Cor. 6:7. Thus in every way, individual or corporate, holiness is grounded, not on law, but on what grace has wrought and given us through our Lord Jesus; and the Holy Spirit is present abidingly to make it good, or, if there be evil, to raise up a suited testimony against that which the cross has proved to be absolutely intolerable. In His children, in the church, will God least of all make allowance for iniquity. God is there in the power of the Holy Spirit to avenge the wrong done to His grace as being there, and to His nature of which the Christian is made a partaker.

Ananias, then, comes forward seeking credit for a display of faith working by love, which the flesh, set on by Satan, sought to emulate without trust in God, nay, seeking to deceive Him too, as if He had no house on earth in which to dwell and manifest His power as well as grace. Part of the proceeds of his sold possessions he kept for himself, part he laid as the whole at the feet of the apostle's. The Lord by His servant resents the sin and insult. “Ananias, said Peter, why did Satan fill thy heart to deceive the Holy Spirit and reserve of the price of the land?....Thou didst not lie to men but to God.” What can more simply and withal more powerfully let us know their sense of

God's presence? Sin then blinded the eyes of the guilty disciple; in days not far off unbelief stole the truth away from the church, which thereon set up its own bulwarks, rules, and functionaries, works of its own hands, its calves of gold, in forgetfulness both of Him who is coming back from on high and of Him who meanwhile is here to glorify the Son as the Father. There is no ground to suppose that the motive of Ananias was the hoped for possession of spiritual gifts like Barnabas, or the coveted power to impart them as in Simon's case. It is an error to infer that thus his sin was indeed against the Holy Ghost. The truth of God is deeper than any mere product of human reasoning. It is the same verb in 3 and 4, but a different construction: with an accusative in the sense of imposing on any by falsehood; with a dative as addressing a lie to a person, here to God Himself in the person of the Spirit sent down from heaven.

God was in His holy temple (the old temple being now by the rejection of the Messiah no more than “their house,” the house of unbelieving Jews); and there one bearing the name of the Lord dared to lie to His face. It was no mistake of haste, but deceit with a selfish and hypocritical aim purposed in the heart; and it was so much the more heinous in presence of fresh and boundless grace on God's part, and its fruit in the unexampled self-abandonment of many saints before all. God of old sternly judged an Achan who coveted the accursed thing, and a Gehazi who enriched himself by a shameless prostitution of the prophet's name. “Is it a time,” said the indignant man of God, “to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants?” So, though it be the day of grace, it is on this account all the more solemn in God's eyes that one professedly a believer in Christ should expect his iniquity to pass muster in the house of His holiness.

On hearing the apostolic words Ananias fell down and expired; so that all that heard were overawed. The younger men that swathed and carried out his body to burial had not returned when, about three hours after, his wife entered, not knowing what was done; and Peter, drawing out from her the distinct evidence that she was privy to the imposture, said, “How is it that ye agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” This is just what Satan desires and prompts, that those who are, or at least profess to be, the Lord's should not believe that He is among them. To tempt Him is to doubt this in word or deed—to say in heart, Is He among us or not? How unworthy of those who ought best to know His presence, secured at infinite cost as the Christian at least should also know! How awful to think of the prevalence of this sin now, little felt or judged even by true children of God! So completely, in fact, have the saints in general lost sight of the presence and action of the Spirit in the assembly, that they notoriously and periodically pray that He may be poured out afresh. They of course mean thereby little if anything more than an accession of comfort for believers, and a great increase in the conversion of sinners. But all the while they ignore His actual presence on earth, and seem quite unconscious of the deep slight put upon Him by shutting out His revealed and sovereign working for the glory of Christ in the midst of the gathered saints. They may be waking up to allow more of His free action in gospel work outside for man's salvation; but as for His energy in the church for God's glory and in subjection to His word, they will not hear of it; whatever it may have been, it is out of date and disorderly now! Alas! this is to make the church of man and not of God, though what is of His purpose of grace will last forever.

But Peter added to the convicted widow, “Behold the feet of those that buried thy husband [are] at the door and shall carry thee out. Then she fell immediately at his feet and expired; and the young men coming in found her dead, and carrying [her] forth buried her by her husband.” (Ver. 9, 10).

An infliction from its repetition so unmistakably divine could not but make an immediate and still deeper impression; and we read that “great fear fell upon all the assembly, and upon as many as heard these things.” (Ver. 11.) It was meant for all within, as well as without.

This is the first distinct mention of the church or assembly. It is spoken of, not as if just inaugurated, but as a known and already existing body. The church began as a fact on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit (the promise of the Father, whom Christ sent from the Father as the Father sent Him in the Son's name) baptized all the saints into one body. There had been saints from Abel; now they in the Holy Spirit became one. In chap. ii. 47 it is well-nigh certain that the true words run that the Lord was day by day adding together those that should be saved, without calling them as yet the church, though of course such they were. The thing was there, not yet so named. Now, according to the words of the Lord in Matt. 16 xvii., they are thus entitled, when God was establishing in the gravest way the reality of His presence by the action of the Spirit who dwells there, and had all power and promptness to avenge deliberate wrong to His nature and majesty done within; unless He would be a party consenting to His own dishonor.

Chapter 43

On Acts 5:12-20

The Lord seized the critical moment when Ananias and Sapphira thus sinned unto death, and a death so awe-inspiring, to put fresh and gracious honor on the Twelve. One of their number had just stood prominently before all as the vessel of divine power in judging deliberate and hypocritical iniquity, in which the offending pair had been consenting partners. Now it was according to His wisdom to manifest the normal flow of His goodness and compassion in honor of the Lord Jesus, and in a world ruined through sin and wretched under its dismal effects.

“ And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all of one accord in the porch of Solomon. And of the rest durst no man join them; but the people magnified them; and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women; insomuch as even to carry out the sick into the streets and put [them] on beds and couches, that, as Peter came, at least his shadow might overshadow some one of them. And there also came together the multitude from the cities round about [? unto] Jerusalem, bringing sick persons and persons troubled by unclean spirits; and they were healed every one.” (Ver. 12-16.)

This witness to the supremacy of the rejected Messiah now exalted to the right hand of God we are apt to forget, being so long accustomed to its absence, and it may be thinking too exclusively of His grace to us and too little of His glory. What mercy it is that keeps up that which is yet more precious and even more profoundly wonderful, the unchanged efficacy of His blood, the new creation, union with Him, and the ever-abiding presence of the Holy Ghost in and with us on earth. But we ought not to be insensible to the blessed even if partial display of the testimony to His power over all the groaning creation, and those evil spirits who seduced man to his ruin into their own rebelliousness against God; nor should we ignore the humbling fact that such a display so soon faded away, as doubtless it was meet that it should. The God of all grace (and so now pre-eminently is God revealing Himself) would not stay such an answer on earth to Christ's exaltation to the seat of divine power, were there not the wisest and most adequate reasons, not only on the side of His own moral glory, but because the continuance of such signs and wonders would be an anomaly in His ways, and an injury rather than a blessing to be saints, when the assembly fall more and more from the grace and truth which came by our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is evident that here as on other occasions the apostles were those above all distinguished by doing many signs and wonders. Plainly from Acts 6:8; 8:6, 7, 13 the power was in no way confined to those whom God set first in the church; for the martyr Stephen and the evangelist Philip were both remarkable in that way. Nor can there be an intelligent doubt, for the believer who reads 1 Cor. 12, that such sign-gifts might be distributed widely and apart from all public office; even as our Lord intimated in Mark 16:17, 18, for “those that believed,” not merely for certain prominent functionaries. Here however the mighty works were done by those in the front rank; nor were they done in a corner, but in all publicity, for they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch, of the rest no man daring to join them. The moral effect was immense. On the other hand, the people

magnified them; on the other, believers Were more than ever added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women. “Women” had been emphatically mentioned in chapter i, when the disciples, however closely found together, were only so many individuals cleaving to the Lord in faith, and giving themselves up with one accord to continual prayer, before the uniting power of the one Spirit sent down from heaven baptized all into one body. The prophecy applied to the Pentecostal gift implied the common share women were to have in the promise of the Father, and its mighty consequence (chap. ii. 17, 18); and now we hear “women” again named explicitly among the multitudes of believers added to the Lord.

Among the signs and wonders a very special feature is pointed out in verse 15: their bringing out the sick into the streets and putting them on beds and couches that the more shadow of Peter as he came along might overshadow some one of them. So did the abundant goodness of God by man in honor of Jesus fill men's hearts with confident expectation. Nor do we hear of disappointment. On the contrary we are told that the multitude also of the cities round about Jerusalem flocked thither, bringing sick people and those troubled by unclean spirits; and healing was vouchsafed to them all. How wondrous the virtue of that Name which thus unfailingly invested His servants with power superior to every demand over evil seen or unseen!

Again come forward the Sadducean party. Liberalism is no more friendly to the truth than traditionalism. And no wonder. Their citadel had been stormed by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They felt themselves assailed and pursued in the open field. by the proclamation of the gospel, and by the miraculous powers which magnified the Name of the crucified Messiah.

“And the high priest rising up, and all those that were with him, which is the sect of the Sadducees, were filled with wrath, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in public ward. But an angel of [the] Lord by night opened the doors of the prison, and leading them out said, Go and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this Life.” (Ver. 17-20.)

During the ministry of the Lord Jesus here below the Pharisees had been His chief adversaries; self, righteousness, unrighteousness, zealously holding to tradition, and veiled by religious forms, waged constant warfare against the Righteous One; and the more, as He was ever the expression of God's grace and truth to those who owned their true condition of guilt and ruin before God. When He presented Himself as Messiah for the last time to the unbelieving people, and was going, as He well knew, to death, not in rejection only but in atonement, all came out in unambiguous opposition, whatever the pretense, chief priests and elders, Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, coming to judge Him, but in result to be themselves judged by the word. Now after He rose from the dead those who said there is no resurrection nor angel nor spirit were naturally the most embitterce, notwithstanding their usual self-complacency and character as the mildest of the people. But man never knows himself apart from Christ, any more than he thinks or feels rightly about God. The revealed truth detects and lays him bare in his departure from God; and this is so much the more intolerable as he has a religious position to maintain. Hence the excessive anger of the Sadducean high priest and his party at this time. Their boasted liberty of conscience is only for the different forms of error. The truth of God is ever unwelcome, and those who preach it are mere troublers to be punished without hesitation. They “laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in public ward.”

But the God who had acted in the assembly, with a stroke which slew the guilty husband and wife, was not wanting now; and a providential messenger of His power was sent to deliver His faithful servants. “An angel of [the] Lord by night opened the doors of the prison, and leading them out said, Go and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this Life.”

The intervention then was as sensible as it was striking. God is marking in the chapter the reality and the varied forms of His action for His assembly and those members of it in particular who are charged with His word and rouse most the animosity of the foe. Angelic care has in now way disappeared for His servants, though there is no such display of power as of old, any more than the presence and energy of the Spirit within the assembly. It is our fleshly activity, and our lack of spirituality, which hinder. We grieve the Spirit by our self-confidence and worldly wisdom; and we fail to discern the wonderful ways in which God delivers. Were our eyes more truly opened of the Lord we should see that, when beset with seemingly countless and overwhelming adversaries, they that be with us, if really with and for Christ, are more than they that be with them. Are they not all ministering spirits sent out for service on account of those that shall inherit salvation?

Here no doubt there could be no mistake about the matter; for it was no question of men escaping by strength or skill or any earthly means, but of an angel opening the doors of the prison by night, leading them out, and commanding them to speak in the temple to the people all the words of this Life. The source of the deliverance was as plain as the commission to speak. The religious chiefs were in flat opposition to the God of all grace who would have men that believed through grace to be His chosen vessels in proclaiming all the words of this Life in Christ the Lord. For there is no other Name of salvation given among men, none other way than the Son to the Father. Life in Him, remission of sins through His blood, the gift of the Holy Spirit, such are the first blessings which the gospel announces to every soul that believes in Jesus. And God will have it to go forth freely and fully, let men say or do as they may. But who shall measure the guilt of thus rejecting every testimony from God, not only despising the message of grace, but forbidding and imprisoning the messengers, that the mercy and truth of God in so speaking to man may never reach his ears? Who can wonder that their judgment slumbereth not? The higher the estate, the deeper the fall.

But God, who knows best that His words are the seed of everlasting life, will not have the proud and evil will of man to intercept His message of good. He therefore as in a day of wonders interfered by an angel to do extraordinarily that which He could have accomplished by more ordinary means, if so it had pleased Him. But the occasion itself then was beyond all that is usual; and it was according to His wisdom that, as His power had been shown judicially within the assembly, and in healing grace by the special envoys of the Lord Jesus, so also with marked superiority over the hostile will of man and authority of the world by the angelic deliverance from the prison. The words of this Life must be spoken at His command that souls might hear and live. One can understand how the courage of faith would be confirmed and increased in His servants by an act so signal; and what a testimony it ought to have been to the consciences of all, especially to the sect of the Sadducees! But unbelief is as hard and as blind towards God, as it is credulous of its own vagaries, and bent on its own will, even with the knell of perdition sounding in its ears.

Chapter 44

On Acts 5:21-32

The apostles, thus miraculously brought out of prison, acted promptly on the message to the confusion of the enemy.

“And when they heard they entered about dawn into the temple and were teaching. And when the high priest arrived and those with him, they called together the council and all the senate of the sons of Israel, and sent unto the jail to have them brought. But the officers that arrived did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported, saying, We found the jail shut in all security and the keepers standing at the doors, but on opening we found no one within. And when both [the priest and] the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were utterly perplexed about them whereto this would come. And there arrived one and reported to them, Behold, the men whom ye put in the prison are in the temple standing and teaching the people. Then the captain went away with the officers, and brought them, not with violence, for they feared the people lest they should be stoned. And having brought they set them in the council; and the high priest asked them, saying, We strictly charged you not to teach on this name; and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and purpose to bring upon us the blood of this man. And in answer Peter and the apostles said, Obedience must be to God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew by hanging on a tree: him God exalted with his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. And we are [his] witnesses of these things [lit., words], and the Holy Spirit whom God gave to those that obey him” (Ver. 21-32.)

In the temple there was no hindrance to instruction in the word of God, the Old Testament scriptures; and as yet none others were written. The apostles therefore used their liberty, as their Master had done before. (Matt. 21:23-xxiii.; Mark 11; Luke 20 xxi. 37, 38; John 7:14, 28, 37; 8:2-59; 10:23-39.) So it was too in the synagogues; and the apostles were in no way disposed to forego the opportunity of expounding the scriptures to the people, as we see in the history of Paul especially. There they were teaching at break of day; they were obedient, and their hearts in the work.

But the adversaries were not slack on their side. “And when the high priest arrived and those with him, they called together the council and all the senate of the sons of Israel, and sent unto the jail to have them brought. But the officers that arrived did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported, saying, We found the jail shut in all security, and the keepers standing at the doors; but on opening we found no one within.” Thus the Sanhedrim met in due form, and in all the confidence of the highest religious authority. But the prisoners were no longer in custody; and, what was the most surprising news of all, without violence from within or from without. The building was found by the officials in all security. the keepers on guard at the doors; but not a prisoner was there. “And when both the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were utterly perplexed about them whereto this would come.” Conscience could not but whisper, the more inexplicable to them it might seem. Strange things had Jerusalem seen and heard: not

only when the Christ was here, but more widely and wonderfully since He died, and, as the disciples affirmed, rose and went to heaven. That God had somehow brought out of the prison the apostles, whom Jewish authority had put in, was rather in keeping with all that had been of late transpiring in their midst in Solomon's porch and elsewhere. But unbelief is the rebellion of the heart and may work most proudly in the face of the fullest testimony, without one solid ground of objection or a reasonable excuse. And as it is the heart that is in question, neither age nor sex, neither knowledge nor ignorance, exempts a single person from its poisonous activity. Indeed an active or subtle mind, however much furnished and exercised, only gives the larger means and scope for its evil opposition to God. “Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life.” “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.” Men dread consequences. Faith is subject to God's word, and seeks to please Him. The Jewish rulers were afraid of the issues now. They had no thought of God in the unseen light of eternity.

“ And there arrived one and reported, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are in the temple standing and teaching the people.” God took care to give publicity to the defeat of the guilty people in the hour of their seeming power over His servants. Had the council before charged and threatened them strictly not to speak at all nor teach on the name of Jesus? Had they now, filled with envy, put them in the public prison? God had by an angel brought them out from doors ever so secured and guards vigilant as they might be; and there they were in the temple standing and teaching the people. “Then the captain went away with the officers and brought them, not with violence, for they feared the people lest they should be stoned.” How comforting to faith the witness of the weak strong, and of the strong weak! Hardened as the captain and the officers might be, they were overawed, so that they abstained from violence even to escaped prisoners,—and not these but those feared lest they should be atoned. But it was man they dreaded, not God. The apostles had God before their eyes, the only true deliverance from the fear of man.

“ And having brought they set them in the council; and the high priest asked them, saying, We strictly charged you not to teach on this name; and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and purpose to bring upon us the blood of this man” They assuredly had no wish for or thought of accentuating their own powerlessness in presence of a few poor and weak and ignorant Galilean. Yet could they not conceal from themselves any more than from others that their own commands were impotent, and the teaching of the apostles everywhere prevalent in the city, with the blood of Him whom they dreaded to name weighing heavily and increasingly on their consciences. But a little while age Pilate had vainly washed his hands before the multitude, as if he could thus rid himself of his dark blot in delivering Jesus to their will; and then answered all the people, His blood be on us and on our children; and the priests, yea the chief priests, pleaded against the Holy Sufferer, instead of interceding for the Guiltless. Now are they the first to deprecate and feel the guilt of that blood on their own heads, and to shrink from its intolerable burden and (save to faith) irrevocable curse. There was, however, no uprightness of conscience: had there been, they would have found a sure and immediate and everlasting resource in the purging efficacy of that blood. What had the boldest of the apostles proved? Were they ignorant of his denying his Master? Yet was he soon after restored in soul so completely as to be able calmly and earnestly without a blush to tax the people with denying the Holy One and the Just and

desiring a murderer to the granted to them! Such is the virtue of Him who came by water and blood: life is in Him only. So testifies the Holy Spirit, and He is the truth. But what did the Sanhedrim care for the truth, especially from the lips of unlearned and ignorant men in reproof of all the erudition and dignified office in Israel?

Peter and John had before this asked, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken to you rather than to God, judge ye. Now they all join Peter in his still firmer reply, Obedience must be to God rather than men. This is the great practical principle of faith, as it was the uniform characteristic of Christ in all perfection here below. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God:” not miracles, not doing good, not teaching, not zeal, so much as unqualified and unfailing obedience rendered to God. Yet was Jesus a man approved of God unto them by powers and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in their midst beyond past example no less than present doubt. Yet was He anointed with the Holy Spirit and went about doing good, and healing all oppressed with the devil. The people too were astonished at His teaching, and all bare Him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth; and the very officers sent to apprehend Him declared with truth, Never man spake like this man. And for burning jealousy for the Father's glory His disciples could not but be reminded that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Ito up. But all these had their fit seasons. Obedience was always there, as unfaltering as constant, as lowly as perfect. Nor is there any principle so essential for the Christian. He is sanctified of the Spirit unto Christ's obedience as well as to the sprinkling of His blood (as the gospel is for faith-obedience, in contrast with enforcement of law), and his soul is purified by obeying the truth to unfeigned brotherly love; for God chose him to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and faith of the truth. Hence, though he may have sometimes to wait on God for light, obedience is the invariable place and duty of the believer. It is never a question of his rights; he. is called to obey. He is bound to be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake, whether to the King as supreme—or to rulers as sent by him, free but not having his freedom for a cloak of malice but as God's bondmen. Hence, if collision come between God's word and the ruler's requirement, his path is clear: God must be obeyed, but in suffering perhaps, not resistance to authority. He is always to obey, though in some cases it may be God rather than men. Nothing is so humble, nothing so firm. Naturally the believer might be feeble and timid; obedience by grace gives strength and courage. He might be self-confident and unyielding: obedience gives distrust in self and meekness in doing God's will. “He that doeth the will of God abideth for over;” even as sin is self-will or lawlessness, and its end judgment and perdition. Therefore is obedience not only an inalienable duty, but the true pathway of power, and the sure means of extrication from every snare of the enemy. So the blessed Lord defeated Satan; and so the apostles now lay bare the tremendous fact that the Jewish heads and people were as wholly beguiled by Satan, as they themselves were in simple-hearted subjection to God. Once the elect nation had God in the world, as they had the Messiah in hope. Now that they had rejected their Messiah, they were not only without God like the Gentiles but the proved adversaries of God. They were only “men” like others; and “obedience must be to God rather than men.”

This Peter proceeds to demonstrate in a few plain, pointed, irrefragable words. “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus,—whom ye slew by hanging on a tree: Him God exalted with His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. And we are [His] witnesses of these things, and the Holy Ghost whom God gave to those that obey Him.” Here the

proof is short and unanswerable, the antagonism to the God of Israel in chiefs and people, beyond question. The God of their fathers (how unlike them the children!) raised up Jesus whom ye slew (and with the deepest ignominy too) by hanging on a tree. Here, it is no longer the ambiguous word livearyprev, but the more determinate thcipcv, not merely raising Him up as a living Messiah on earth, as in chap. iii. 22, 26, vii. (18) 37, xiii. 32, but waking Him up after death. Nor was resurrection all; for God exalted Him (not “to” as in Webster and Wilkinson, but) by His right hand (as Peter had preached, ch. 33, in fulfillment of the undeniably Messianic psalm ex). But in what relation to them did He take His place in heaven? As Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. The door of grace was still open. God was waiting to be gracious to His people though guilty of the great transgression; and He could afford by that blood to free them even from their guilt in shedding it. Surely Christ will appear in judgment one day. Meanwhile He is announced as Leader and Savior to give Israel just what they wanted—repentance and remission of sins.

There was testimony more than adequate—abundant. “And we are [his] witnesses of these things [or, words], and the Holy Spirit whom God gave to those that obey Him.” Compare the Lord's own words in John 15:26, 27: “But when the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also bear witness, because ye are with me from the beginning.” The Holy Spirit is not only their power of duly remembering the past, but Himself the witness of the glory Of Christ in heaven. And this blessed Spirit, who wrought mightily in the apostles and others set high in the assembly, is given of God to those who submit to the authority of the heavenly Leader. Such is the full force of the peculiar word “obey” employed here. The distinct personality of the divine Spirit is as carefully guarded as in ver.- 3, though in a different way.

Chapter 45

On Acts 5:33-42

One can hardly conceive an answer more direct than this of the apostles. Israelitish authority was for them a judged system; for were the chiefs not convicted of deadly opposition to the God of their fathers? They might again and again command the apostles to be silent about Him whom they had hanged, though God had sent Him as Leader and Savior; nor was it their testimony only, but of the Holy Spirit also, whom the Jews could not pretend to have. How awful and terrible their position!

“ And when they heard, they were cut to the heart [lit., sawn asunder] and took counsel (ti 1) H P and the bulk of cursives, the Vulgate, Syriac versions, &c.) to slay them.” (Acts 5:33.) It is always dangerous to oppose the truth, and the more so in proportion to the importance of that in question. Here it was the foundation of all, and so estimated by those whom the Lord called to proclaim it; and as the adversaries were resolved to reject the testimony, they all naturally betook themselves to designs of blood. Convicted yet rebellious, and abhorring the witnesses whom they could not gainsay, they were chagrined to the utmost, and consulted to slay those before them. No compunction, still less self-judgment, as in chap. ii., but they were torn with rage. But the God, who by His angel had just brought them out of prison, was pleased to shield His exposed servants from these more and more guilty murderers, and wrought after another sort of providential interference, not now angelic but human. The hearts of all are in His keeping.

“But there stood up one in the council, a Pharisee, by name Gamaliel, a law-teacher, in honor with all the people, and commanded to put the men [or, apostles] out a little while, and said unto them, Ye men of Israel [or, Israelites], take heed to yourselves as to these men what ye are about to do. For before these days rose up Theudas, saying that he himself was somebody, with whom a number of men, about four hundred, took sides; who was slain, and all as many as obeyed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him rose up Judas the Galilean, in the days of the census, and drew into revolt people after him; and he perished, and all as many as obeyed him were scattered abroad. And now I say to you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or if this work be of men, it will be overthrown, but if it is of God, ye will not be [or, are] able to overthrow them [N A B C co"• D E, at least a dozen cursives, the later Syriac, &c. as against H P, most cursives, versions, &c. which support “it “] lest ye be found [even] fighting against God” (ver. 34-39).

From such a quarter these words of sobriety, as opposed to Sadducean violence, were irresistible. There seems no just reason to doubt that it is the same celebrated man, son of Rabbi Simeon, grandson of the more famous Hillel, who presided over the Sanhedrim during the reign of Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius, whose son succeeded to the same chief place, and perished during the Beige. Under Gamaliel we are told in chap. xxii., Paul studied the law, of which he was styled “the glory,” as he was the first to bear the title of Rabban. That he was a Christian publicly, or even secretly, is only the assertion of unscrupulous legendmongers. Scripture gives us not only a perfectly reliable but a most graphic account of the man and of his character, as well as of the way in which he was providentially used at this critical moment.

This intervention exactly fits in with the entire context, where God is tracing for our instruction how He watches over His own on earth to His glory. There was the manifestation of. the Spirit's presence where they were all assembled, and all filled with Him (Acts 4:31), lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, living to the forgetfulness of all selfish interests, whilst the apostles with ereat power testified of the Lord's resurrection (iv. 32-37). Then follows the display of the energy of the Holy Ghost in judgment of hypocritical deception and covetousness within (chap. v. 1-11), but along with it the renewed activity of miraculous power through the apostles in grace (chap. v. 12-16); next, the Jews growingly opposing themselves to the testimony of Christ, but their power manifestly frustrated by divine power through the angel which set free the prisoners on their mission of grace and truth (v. 17 -25). Lastly, when the exasperated will of men would proceed to deeds of blood, God interferes in the ordinary way of His providence to protect Hi`s faithful servants by a grave and wise man even in the enemy's camp. The voice of moderation and wisdom, though only natural, prevailed over the rash impulses of pride and passion intermingled with fear. God would still provide a further space for truth to awaken consciences and win hearts among His ancient people, guilty though they were. It was the day of grace, when He would save to the praise of the Lord Jesus. “Ye Israelites, take heed to yourselves as to these men what things ye are about to do.” (Ver. 35.)

Of Theudas, who is in the first instance named by Gamaliel, we know no more than Luke records. “For before these days rose up Theudas, saying that he was somebody, with whom a number of men, about four hundred, took sides; who was slain, and all as many as obeyed him were scattered and brought to nothing” (ver. 36). It is not likely that the Theudas, who, according to Josephus, appeared at least a dozen years after Gamaliel's speech in the fourth par of Claudius (A.D. 44), can have been so seriously misplaced even by an historian abounding in inaccuracies, as all competent men acknowledge. If Luke had been only an ordinary godly Christian, is it conceivable that he would put into the mouth of a prominent and respected Jew like Gamaliel a falsehood so egregious as antedating the story of Theudas. If he be an inspired writer, it is needless to assert his immaculate exactness: God who knows all and cannot lie is the true source of inspiration, whoever may be the instrument. The fact is that, on the one hand, the historical accuracy, as tested by the minutest shades of knowledge in the varying conditions and circumstances of which he writes freely in his Gospel, and even more amply in this book of the Acts, is too well known generally by the most competent to need proof here; and, on the other, the name of Theudas was too common (Cf. Cic. ad Fain. vi. 10 ed. Orell. iii. 41, Galeni Opp. xiii. 925 ed. Kuhn), to provoke the least well-grounded surprise that more than one so called could rise up among the many insurgent chiefs who agitated the Jews either before or since the death of Herod the Great. Josephus himself alludes to many, of whom he names but three; the Theudas, whose defeat by Fadus he places a dozen years later, seems to have had a far larger following than the 400 of whom our Evangelist writes.

To the believer it is certain that the revolt of Judas the Galilean was subsequent to that of the Theudas of whom Gamaliel spoke. Josephus entirely agrees with the Acts that it was in the time of the census under Quirinus, A.D. 6. (Antt. xviii. sub. init.) And it is remarkable that the Jewish historian, though describing him there as a Gaulonite of the city of Gamala. susequently (6) speaks of him, just as Gamaliel does in our chapter, as “the Galilean Judas.” Had this later mention been withheld, the impugners of revelation would have become loud in decrying Luke as

they are absurd in their disposition to treat Josephus as infallible. But short as is the inspired report of Gamaliel's speech, we have strikingly accurate information of Judas perishing, as to which the historian is silent, and of the mere but thorough scattering of his most numerous supporters, who did not come to naught like Theudas, but again and again reappeared, till this last and for a time successful effort terminated in the death of his younger son Menahem, A.D. 66. “After him rose up Judas the Galilean in the days of the census, and drew into revolt people after him; and he perished, and all as many as obeyed him were scattered abroad.” Whether Origen (Homil. in Luc. xxv.) had authority to say that this Judas really pretended to be Messiah may be doubtful; bu't he drew his vast crowds with the cry, “We have God as our only leader and Lord.” The uprising was fanatical as well as revolutionary. But how did it end? pleaded Gamaliel.

Then follows his advice of patient waiting for results. “And now I say to you, Refrain from those men, and let them alone: for if this council or if this work be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them lest ye be found also [or, even] fighting against God” (ver. 38, 32). It was the form of toleration which a grave Jew might feel, impressed with recent facts, the character of the accused, and the state of public opinion. But there is far more reference to the issue under God than in the modern doctrine of toleration which is in general a mere homage to the rights of man, ignoring God and the truth. He may have felt that persecution is a sorry means of subverting error or maintaining truth. Whatever the value or the motives of his judgment, it commended itself to the council, and saved the apostles from a death that seemed imminent.

Perhaps it may not be amiss here to give a specimen of the famous John Calvin's skill in handling the word of God. In his comment on the passage he first of all shows little favor to the sober speech with which Gamalial swayed the council and extinguished the fiery zeal of those inclined to extremities. “But if any one weigh all duly, his opinion is unworthy of a prudent man. I know indeed that by many it is held as an oracle; but that they judge badly appears with sufficient clearness even from this, because in such a way one must abstain from all punishments, neither were any wickedness to be corrected longer: yea, one must refuse all helps of life, which not even for one moment is it in our disposal to prolong. Both things indeed are said truly: what is of God cannot be destroyed by any efforts of men; what is of men is too weak to stand. But it is a bad inference that meanwhile we must do nothing. Rather should we see what God enjoins: and his will is that wickedness be restrained by us.” (I. Calvini. 0)7p. vi. in loc. Amstel. 1667.) Here breaks out the inflexible rigor which insisted on the burning of the unhappy Servetus, and the severe punishment of others. Their evil doctrines are not questioned; but what have servants of Christ to do with measures of the kind? We have not so learned Him. The church has no doubt its own responsibility in the spiritual domain; as the world in what pertains to this life. Calvin has confounded all this in the opinion which censures Gamaliel; who meant nothing less than to deny the duty of the powers that be, but rightly urged that men should await the manifestation of that which was doubtful, instead of yielding to the hasty measures of passion and prejudice. To dissuade from extreme violence where the work might prove to be of God was certainly wiser than punishing to the utmost where they knew of no adequate reason. Calvin's logic seems as precarious as his confusion is evident of things spiritual and worldly. But this is not so extraordinary as his judgment that when Luke says “After him [Theudas] rose up Judas,” he does not mark the order of time, as if Judas were the latter; that Gamaliel brought in his two examples

promiscuoucly “in disregard of time,” and that “after” means no more than “besides” or “moreover!” He had said before, “If we credit Josephus, Gamaliel here inverts the true series of history.” Not so; unless we assume there could be only one insurrectionary Theudas. Now Josephus tells us of four men named Judas in 10 years, who broke out in rebellion, and of three named Simon in 40 years; and he in no way professes to name all, but on the contrary implies many more as unnamed. The assumption of Calvin is of all the least rational and least reverent possible.

As usual one wrong step leads to many. For Calvin is led thereby into the truly absurd consequence that, if we reckon the time, we shall find that it was at least twelve years since the death of Christ before the apostles were beaten! This blundering computation is founded entirely on confounding the Theudas of Gamaliel's speech with him who, as Josephus tells us, was dealt with by Cuspius Fadus in the reign of Claudius. “Therefore that space of time of which I spoke is complete, and so the more excellent the constancy of the apostles, who, though ill-requited for the long pains they endured, are in no way discouraged, nor cease to hold the even tenour of their way.” Calvin was a great and good man, I doubt not; but the more striking and instructive is the lesson of boldness and folly when a man, no matter who, abandons the sure meaning of the written word for his own reasoning, which in such a case will ever betray its weak and worthless, not to say presumptuous, character. For what is man when he lifts up his voice against God? I do not dwell on other remarks of the commentator, which let out singular unfairness toward Gamaliel, as I have no desire to defend the latter nor expose the former beyond that measure which seems to me profitable for the reader. But I give his actual words:—

“Ergo conficitur illud quod dixi temporis spatium. Quo praestantior fuit Apostolorum constantia, qui quum post diuturnos labores obitos tam indignam mercedem reportent, non tamen franguntur, neque desinunt cursum suum persoqui.”

“And to him they yielded, and, having called the apostles, they beat and charged [them] not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. They therefore went their way from the presence of [the] council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to be dishonored for the name. And every day in the temple and at home they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus the Christ.” (ver. 40-32).

Thus, though plucked from death, the apostles suffered the indignity of stripes at the hands of Jews, as Paul was afterward to experience at least five times. “The unjust man knoweth no shame.” If the Roman judge scourged the Lord of glory, the disciples were not above their Master, and must bear from Jew or Gentile to be treated as wicked men worthy to be beaten, Deut. 25:2. Doubtless it was for their alleged disobedience; and they are dismissed with a fresh command not to speak in the name of Jesus. How senseless is the will of unbelief! Impossible for one who knew His glory and His grace to be silent: God is concerned in it supremely, and not man only or chiefly because he is otherwise lost forever. And what is due to Him who so humbled Himself, and suffered for our sins, and glorified God as nothing else could? “They therefore went their way from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to be dishonored for the name.” Who can doubt the deep and divinely sprung joy of hearts that answered in their little measure to Him whose delight is in His Son above all? What an impulse, not discouragement, to their testimony “in the temple” to all comers (for of course no proper assemblies would have been permitted there), “and at home,” where the saints broke bread, prayed, edified one another, &c.!

But every where and every day there was but one theme: teaching or evangelizing, it was Jesus the Christ.

Chapter 46

On Acts 6:1-6

Persecution of the Christian for Christ's sake is an honor from God (Phil. 1:29), as grace makes it a blessing to the Church and a testimony to the world. The real danger is from within, and this yet more when the confidence of love yields at all largely to an evil eye and a discontented tongue. And so it was now: after God had so signally judged the deception of Ananias and Sapphira, fleshly and selfish complaint broke out among the Hellenistic or Greek-speaking Jews apparently against those of Jerusalem and Judea. It was not the Jews of pure descent jealous of those from elsewhere, who profited by the self-sacrificing love which sold houses and lands that none might want. Still less was it the germ of those judaizing divisions which were to be a source of not only deep, wide, and long-lasting disquiet, but of the utmost danger in denying the grace and corrupting the truth of which the Church and the Christian are the responsible depositories. “Now in those days, when the disciples were multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews that [or, because] their widows were overlooked in the daily ministration” (ver. 1). The murmuring came from those who had more or less of foreign admixture: whereas ill-feeling usually and naturally characterized those who boasted of associations wholly Israelitish. It was the Greek-speaking Jews who murmured against the Hebrews. That the mistake and indeed wrong was with the complainers seems plain, if from nothing else, from the grace evinced by all those who were the object of their murmuring, as the sequel shows. It is habitually the wrong-doer who denounces men better than himself. “Their widows,” they alleged, were being overlooked in the daily supply of wants. We are not told that so it really was, but so they complained. The poor “widows are ever remembered of God. Their mouth should be stopped, if the allegation were false. “And the twelve, having called the multitude of the disciples unto [them] said, It is not seemly that we, leaving the word of God, should serve tables. Look out then, brethren, from among you seven men of good report full of [the] Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint over this business; but we for our part will give ourselves closely to prayer and the ministry of the word” (ver. 2-4). Up to this time the administration was in the hands of the apostles, as we see in Acts 4:35, though probably they may have employed many brethren in the actual distribution to each needy individual. But that there were already officers whose province it was is not only without but against the evidence of. Scripture. I am aware that Mosheim tries to prove such a class of functionaries from “the young men” (oi vcilrcpot) in chap. v. 6, which he will have rather fancifully to be the counterpart of “the elders” (01 77-pC0131.yrepoi) who do not appear till the end of chap. xi., Kuhnol and Olshausen accepting his thought. But the usage of Scripture nowhere countenances any such official “younger men,” as it does often in the use of “elders.” On the contrary in the same context, on their return from burying Ananias, they are called “the young men,” (oi vcaveatcot) which cannot be conceived to have such a force and therefore ought to refute it for the previous and corresponding term. They were simply the younger brethren, on whom would naturally devolve any prompt call for a laborious and sorrowful duty, of a physical nature. Compare 1 Tim. 5:1, 2; Titus 2:6; and 1 Peter 5:5. Toat not the Hellenists but the Hebrews had deacons already is the unfounded idea of the same writer, whose history would have small value as to later times if not far better than his use of the inspired source—It would be hard to say where Mosheim is right in his review of the

apostolic church. The fit moment was come for the apostles to be relieved from outer work and thus free for what was spiritual. They direct therefore the establishment of responsible men for the daily ministrations in Jerusalem. This service was diaconal, yet peculiar (as Chrysostom long ago remarked), because of the actual circumstances there. Hence it may be that the term “deacons” is not here or elsewhere given to “the seven,” but this number of theirs even more than “the twelve” becomes a sort of distinctive badge. As the money came from the disciples in general, on them do the apostles call to look out from among them brethren in whom they could happily confide; yet the apostles, acting for the Lord in order, established them over the business. It was not seemly, or proper (for apeaTOv admits of a wider sense than the very narrow one of “pleasing,” or “our pleasure” that they should forsake the word of God, and serve tables. To this their continuance in that work would otherwise have come. Loving wisdom thus turns for good ungrateful complaints. But it is in this a principle of moment is rendered evident. Where the Lord gives He chooses, as for all ministry in the word; where the assembly gives, they choose as here. We see the same thing in 2 Cor. 8:18, 19, where a brother was chosen by the assemblies as fellow-traveler with Paul and Titus, providing for things honest not only before the Lord but also before men. This is the meaning of “messengers of churches.” They were selected by the assemblies which sent help to the poor saints elsewhere, as the apostle would not take charge of the collection otherwise. Compare also Cor. xvi. 3, 4. In the case of “elders” we find the apostles choosing, and not the disciples (Acta xvi. 23); and so Titus is told to do. Thus we have three principles quite distinct: (1) the Lord choosing and sending those whom He gives as gifts to the church; (2) the apostle, or an apostolic man by express commission, choosing or establishing elders; and (3) the assembly choosing the administrators of its funds, whom the apostles set solemnly over this business.

That “the seven” were deacons (in the traditional sense of a brief noviciate or apprenticeship to the priesthood) is as unscriptural as that they had previously been of the “seventy” whom the Lord sent out “two and two” with a final message through Judea. Their work was not to preach and baptize, but the dispensing of help to the temporal need of every day. Philip no doubt did preach, but he, we are expressly told, was “an evangelist.” It was therefore in virtue of this gift, not of that appointment to care for the poor in Jerusalem, that we find him, in the dispersion of the assembly, preaching in Samaria and beyond. Just as evidently had Stephen the gift of a teacher if not of a prophet, which he exercised in a most solemn testimony before the council. But neither the multitude chose, nor yet did the apostles appoint, a single man to preach or teach. Evangelists and teachers were given by Christ the Head, and so they are still. The church is neither the source nor the channel of ministry; which is the exercise of a gift flowing from Christ at the right hand of God. So it was at the beginning, and so it remains till He comes again.

Here it was but a local charge, however important and honorable, to which, as the multitude chose, the apostles appointed. The distinction is as plain as it is complete; but men are apt to view matters of the kind through the medium of habit and prejudice. Their duty was to carry out the distribution of the means for relieving the wants of the Christian community; which would leave the apostles free for the service of the word of God. Their number was doubtless suitable to the requirements of their work. Their qualifications were that they should have a good report, and be full of the Spirit and wisdom. To make their establishment more or other is as common as it is baseless. It would be unaccountable if men had not objects foreign to Christ and so to God's word.

“But we,” say the apostles emphatically, “will give ourselves closely to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” This is much to be weighed. For that service of the word prayer should take the first place. So it was with the apostles, but not so with the Corinthian saints, who forgot not only that power is to be subordinated to order (1 Cor. 14) but that life according to Christ has to be exercised now in holy and constant self-denial, as the prime duty of him who names the Lord. Prayer is the outgoing and expression of dependence, and is so much the more requisite, that the ministry of the word be not in the will or resources of man, but in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, yet in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that the faith of the saints stand not in men's wisdom but in God's power. In the order of the soul's blessing from God the word takes precedence, as we may see in comparing the end of Luke 10 with the beginning of Luke 11, where we have the moral sequence of these two means of grace. Receiving from God goes before drawing near to our Father. But for the due ministry of the word prayer is the great prerequisite that flesh may afford no occasion to the enemy, and the individual may be a vessel to honor, sanctified, meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work.

“And the saying pleased [lit. before] all the multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of grace and of [the] Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Simon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and having prayed they laid their hands on them” (ver. 5, 6).

The grace shown by the apostles had a remarkable answer to it in the multitude; for all the names being Greek indicate a Hellenistic connection. Persons seem to have been chosen without exception from the ranks of the Greek-speaking believers, the very class which had murmured against the Hebrews. Was not this grace enough to make the suspicious ashamed? There was no human provision of a balance or of a fair representation, as habits of business or the spirit of a law-court would suggest. God was looked to in faith, and the most marked conciliation prevailed. The supposition that there had been already Hebrew care-takers, and now that Hellenists wore added to look after Hellenistic interests, is to miss and mar this beautiful account of divine love in full activity, by supposing the infusion of a mere worldly prudence.

It is also to be observed that “the seven” when chosen were presented to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them in token of fellowship with their appointment. Imposition of hands, was an ancient sign of blessing, Gen. 48:14, especially of official recognition, Num. 18:15, or of commendation to God's grace, Acts 13:3, 26 (compare xv. 40). The impartation of the Spirit by that act in Acts 8:17, and xix. 6, or again in 1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6, is distinct, as will be shown in their places. Probably in the establishment of elders there may have been a similar laying on of hands as some have gathered from 1 Tim. 5:22. But Scripture is silent as to the fact, it would seem in order to guard believers from that fatal routine of superstitious form which has overlaid Christendom to the dishonor of the Lord and the hurt of rule. Even if apostolic hands were laid on presbyters, we are not told it; but where the duty was of an outward character, and godly men were chosen by the multitude, the apostles (we are, expressly told) did lay hands on them. Not the multitude, but as we have seen the apostles chose elders for the disciples (Acts 14:23); and Scripture does not tell us of their hands being laid on them, even if the fact were so. How infirm is the groundwork of ecclesiastical pride! How perfect is the word both in what it says and in its reticence!

Chapter 47

On Acts 6:7-15

The measure taken by the apostles in appointing servants for the exterior duties of the assembly, leaving themselves free for prayer and the ministry of the word, was owned by the signal blessing of God. Administration of money is a delicate and difficult task, especially if it be undertaken by such as serve in the word. In a low condition it gives influence of the basest kind to those who otherwise could have little or none. But here we are in presence of the Holy Ghost working in energy, holiness, and love, and raising souls above the fleshly feelings that threatened danger to the church. None would be more struck by the unselfish wisdom of the apostles than the sacerdotal class, ordinarily apt to be greedy of power and influence, if not of worse still.

“ And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied exceedingly; and a great crowd of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Ver. 7.)

It looked most promising surely, when the word of God grew as an object of faith and a distinct power among men; when the disciples so greatly multiplied in the city of solemnities itself; when the very priests were now flocking in, unwonted sight as this was, what could most think but that the scattered and peeled nation were at length learning divine wisdom? Would they not soon repent and be converted for the blotting out of their sins, so that seasons of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord and He might send the Christ that had been fore-appointed for them, Jesus? Appearances gave a color, if not currency, to the thought such as never after that could be claimed for it. The truth was, that God was but severing unto the name of Jesus from His ancient people such as should be saved, before He sent His armies, destroyed the murderers of His servants (and, we can add, of His Son), and burnt up their city according to the word of the Lord.

And so, if I err not, He is doing now in the active work of salvation He is carrying on throughout the earth, in Christendom especially. It is the sure sign, not of the world's surrender to Christ and the cross, but that the Lord is separating His own from the world which is hastening to inevitable, unsparing, and condign judgment. Never till then can there be universal or stable blessing for the earth as a whole, such as we are entitled to expect according to Psa. 72; 65-68;92-107 and the prophets generally. The heavens must receive Jesus till the times of the restoring (not the destruction) of all things of which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began. It is the corrupt harlot, not the true bride, that wants to reign in the absence of the Bridegroom. If grace convert ever so many or ever so extraordinarily, as with the priests, they were but saving themselves from that crooked generation. Judgment personally inflicted by the Lord must precede His introduction of God's kingdom in power and glory; but this does not hinder the action of sovereign grace in changing His own and translating them to be with Himself on high before the day of His judgment dawns on the earth. For when that day comes, they are already with Him, and hence follow Him out of heaven, and appear with Him for the execution of that judgment.

Another element of moment is now introduced—the free action of God's Spirit even in Jerusalem, where all the twelve apostles were.

The ordination, if we call it ordination, of “the seven,” was for a temporal service, expressly not for spiritual ministry by the word, but on the contrary, by handing over to them the exterior duty, to let the apostles be undistracted in their blessed work. Assuredly, if it be a ridiculous perversion in one part of Christendom to devise a modern answer in the charge of the paten and chalice, it is only a shade better to make it a sort of probationership to the office of a presbyter. Scripture is overlaid and ignored by human tradition. “The seven” were stewards for the poor, and not a formal noviciate for a full-blown minister. It was reserved for dissent to find a still lower deep, through money to constitute (what one of their own best men called) “the lords deacons,” with power to conciliate or coerce, to pamper or starve out, the minister. How unlike are all these to the holy ways of God and His word!

Yet one of these is brought before us as used and honored of God in a way quite outside the work for which they were appointed. “And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people. And there arose certain of those that were of the synagogue called [that] of the freedmen [Libertines], and of Cyrenians, and of Alexandrians, and of those of Cilicia and Asia disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. Then they suborned men, saying, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God. And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes; and coming upon [him] they seized and brought him into the council, and set false witnesses, saying, This man ceaseth not speaking words against the holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses handed down to us. And all that sat in the council, gazing fixedly on him, saw his face as it were an angel's face.” (Ver. 8-15.)

Beyond a doubt the leveling spirit of democracy, the unwillingness to recognize those who are over. us in the Lord, is very far from the word of God. But even in those days when the church shone in order and beauty as never since, when the highest authorities that ever God set in the church were all there, we behold His sovereign grace acting in a man with no other title than what grace gave him. He was not even a bishop or presbyter; he had been set apart with others to a grave but lowly service. Yet we find him soon after described as full of “grace” (not faith merely) and power, working great marvels and signs among the people. There was no jealousy in that day of grace and power: for all who could and did glorify the Lord there was room and welcome. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of liberty. Law and the world and the flesh gender bondage, and pride, and sin.

The fact is that scripture knows nothing of ordaining a man to preach or to teach, still less if possible for the administration, so-called, of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Superstition has entered, and the power of religious habits of thought founded on every-day routine; so that even pious men fail to see in the Bible what contradicts their theory and practice, and attach to Scriptural acts or words in defense of their own thoughts a meaning which is quite foreign to the truth.

According to Scripture, if a man has a spiritual gift from the Lord, he is not only free as regards others but bound before the Lord to use it. Otherwise let him beware of the condemnation in the parable of the unprofitable servant, who counted his lord hard and was afraid and went away and hid his talent in the earth. It is no question of a Christian's rights but of the grace of Christ, as well

as of the obligation on him who has received the gift to use it according to His will to whom the church belongs and for His glory. So says the apostle Peter; and it were well that men who misuse should hear and weigh his words:— “According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God: if any man speak, as oracles of God; if any man minister, as of strength which God supplieth; that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

I purposely press this scripture which is in perfect keeping with all others that treat of the same subject. It seems the more apposite as he was there with the eleven when God put forward Stephen to act on it. The free energy of the Holy Spirit in gift is therefore in no way a Pauline peculiarity as some affect to believe. In the Epistles of the great apostle of the Gentiles no doubt we have the truth on this head as on so many others dependent on Christ's headship of the Church, developed more profoundly and comprehensively than the Lord was pleased to do by any others. But the principle is the same in all. Thus we find James warning the brethren not to be many teachers, knowing that we shall receive greater judgment, not because they were not ordained. And as the second epistle of John thunders against receiving a man (ordained or not) who did not bring the doctrine of Christ, so does his third encourage Gains (however Diotrephes might oppose) in all loving reception of such as went about preaching the truth. John had authority, if any one on earth then had, to act for Christ; but he takes no other ground than the character of the doctrine they preached for rejecting, or receiving, them. It was a question for him (is it for us?) simply of Christ—of the truth. This we must have if we are to love in truth. Love is of God, and God is love but we must have the truth in order to love in truth. Otherwise it is the most illusive and fatal of snares.

Nor can one hesitate to say, that whatever might be the great marvels and signs that Stephen was doing (8) to the glory of the rejected but exalted Christ the Second man in heaven, the wisdom and the Spirit by which he was enabled to speak (10) were a reality yet deeper and more blessed. The one might arrest any one; but no adversary could withstand the other. And there were many adversaries, here of course all of the circumcision. Who were the Libertines? It would seem, according to the oldest interpretation on record, Jewish freedmen banished A. D. 19 from Rome, whither Pompey had carried many taken prisoners in war, but afterward emancipated by their masters and allowed to adhere to their religion. It is natural, as another has suggested, that men such as these should show strong feeling if they conceived that the religion for which they had suffered abroad was insulted or endangered at. home. They are at any rate put into the foremost rank of Stephen's adversaries by the inspired historian. If it be so, it is a Grecized Latin word. This too would account for the expression “called,” as due to the connected,” Libertines.” Some have tried to make out a city Libertum in Africa; and it is known that there was a bishop of Libertum at the synod of Carthage in A.D. 411. But if such a town existed in the days of Stephen, it was too small to be noticed, and could never take precedence of Cyrene and Alexandria.

Doubt has been felt whether two synagogues were meant or five. It appears to me that Winer is not justified in the former supposition, that the τ■ν first used would have sufficed to have united the five classes, and that the second is not to indicate only two parties, each possessing a common synagogue, but the difference of such as came out of cities like Cyrene and Alexandria with the freedmen first named from those of provinces like Mick and Asia. When we are told that there were then some 480 synagogues in Jerusalem, it seems very unlikely that there should not

be a separate place for each, as the Jews were notoriously numerous in most if not all.

It is of solemn interest how unbelieving men can find a show of reason to fasten the most odious charges on the truth which they hate and those who proclaim it. Yet why suborn men to inform, if they honestly felt indignation at alleged wickedness? One can understand that to claim for Jesus the title of the Christ, the Anointed, was to imply His superiority to Moses; and to hint at the transitory nature of the temple, which the Lord had said was to have not a stone left on another, might be regarded as blaspheming the God whose house it was.

However this may have been, they thereby roused the people and the elders and the scribes. Here the Pharisees would be as furious as the Sadducees or more so. It was a general outburst of proper Jewish resentment; and so Stephen was seized and brought into the council. If the words had been said, the witnesses were none the less false. Nothing could be more wickedly untrue than that he said one word disrespectful to God or Moses, to the law or the temple. But wicked men hear with a wicked feeling, and the Spirit pronounces them false witnesses, though, Stephen's words might sound as they reported. “For we have heard him say, “that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses handed down to us.”

I know not why commentators should question the singular mark of divine favor vouchsafed to his person, unless they abjure faith and deny the yet more wondrous privilege at the close of his discourse. It was striking that he who was accused of reviling Moses and God should receive from God a sign like that which his servant Moses enjoyed. The Jews at any rate ought to have felt it as a solemn appeal to them above all mankind.

Chapter 48

On Acts 7:1-7

The remarkable testimony of Stephen comes before us. It was fitting that the devoted Hellenist, rather than any of the twelve, should break fresh ground and pave the way for the wider outgoing of the truth, just after the mention of so striking a witness to its attractive power from the bosom of Judaism in the faith of a crowd of priests.

Stephen was accused of disparaging what was most sacred in Hebrew eyes—the sanctuary and the law. He was charged with attributing to the Nazarene a purpose of destroying “that place,” and of changing the customs delivered to them by Moses. What can be of deeper interest and instruction than his way of meeting so malignant a perversion of his meaning? Grace is never the enemy of law; though incomparably higher, it rather establishes law. The prophetic word did not conceal that of the stately buildings of the temple not one stone should be left on another; but was Jesus a destroyer, because He was a prophet and more than a prophet? Under His reign the law shall go forth out of Zion; and even in humiliation He came not to destroy but to fulfill it. But unbelief is deaf and blind, and is apt to impute its own evils to those who love the truth. Certainly Stephen said nothing but what the prophets and Moses declared should come.

“And the high priest said, Are these things so? And he said, Brethren [lit. men brethren] and fathers, hear. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Go out of thy land and out of thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.” (Ver. 1-3.)

“The God of glory” is no mere Hebraism for “glorious God,” but directs the heart from the beginning to One altogether above the world not only in Himself but in His purposes, whatever His ways meanwhile on the earth. “Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood [river] in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods.” (Josh. 24) It was in sovereign grace that God thus appeared. Even the line of Shem, the father and kindred of Abraham, were idolaters. Grace gives, not finds, what is good. Not only did the God of glory appear: it was to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, and thus when he was at the farthest point of his distance from “the land,” as well as in idolatrous associations. How little the Jews understood the God of glory or His servant Moses! Stephen, full of grace and power did. Nothing was more foreign to him than “speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God.”

Even Abraham, blessed as he was, moved slowly in the path of faith at first. He did not quit Mesopotamia to dwell in Canaan all at once. Before this he dwelt in Haran. He got out of his land, but not so quickly “out of his kindred,” so that there was a remarkable delay in coming into the land which God was to show him. “Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Haran; and thence, after his father died, He removed him into this land in which ye now dwell.” (Ver. 4.)

It is rather a daring comment to say that “the Jewish chronology which Stephen follows was at fault here, owing to the circumstance of Terah's death being mentioned, Gen. 11:32, before the command to Abram to leave Haran; it not having been observed that the mention is anticipatory.

And this is confirmed by Philo having fallen into the same mistake," &c. The truth is that the favorite Jewish hypothesis (Aben Ezra, Rashi) is that Terah did not die till sixty years after Abraham had left Haran. And in all probability the Samaritan Pentateuch has changed 205 into 145 (Gen. 11:32), in order to meet the supposed difficulty. The source of the error among ancients or moderns is the assumption that Abraham was Terah's eldest son, for which there is no more ground in the order of the names than in the case of Noah's sons, where we know that not Shem but Japheth was the eldest. But, for an adequate divine reason, not the elder but the younger is repeatedly named first. To Terah at 70 years Haran was born, Abraham at 130, who therefore could be married to Haran's daughter, Sarai or Iscah, ten years younger than himself See Usher's Works, viii. 21-23, Clinton's Fasti Hellen. i. 289 et seqq. One may not agree with Bengel's suggestion; but an upright help towards understanding the word which is held fast as perfect is to be respected: "truly lamentable" is the pandering to the enemy on the plea of the spirit, not the letter, of God's word. That Terah who had Haran at 70 might have begotten Abraham at 130 is simple enough, dying at 206; that Abraham should at 99 regard it as beyond nature to have by Sarah a son is no less simple. Hagar had borne him a son at 86; and the natural interpretation of Gen. 25 is that after Sarah's death Abraham had by Keturah, his wife or concubine, six sons sent away from Isaac while he lived, that Isaac only should be his heir without dispute. There is no handling of the word of God so deceitful as the unbelief which treats it as if it were not His, or as if He could lie.

Terah was a dead weight, as long as he lived, on Abraham's obedience. As we are told, "Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan." (Gen. 11:31.) But Canaan, in these circumstances, they never reached. God told Abraham to quit his kindred as well as his country; and till this was done, he failed to reach Canaan. It would have scarcely been proper for Abram as the son to take Terah his father. So "Terah took Abram," &c. This, however, was not at all according to the call of God to Abram. Hence "they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." When Terah died there, "Abram departed as the Lord had spoken unto him." Then the language is pointedly different:— "And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and all the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came." (Gen. 12:3.) There was no failure, now that his faith was not hampered by the incumbrance of nature which almost necessarily took the upper hand; and therefore the movement lacked the power of God to give it effect. That gone, the blessing immediately followed.

There is a question in verse 4 whether the subject be Abram or God understood. If verse 43 points to the latter, the construction of 1 Chron. 8:6 (in the LXX) favors the former: so that some may and do abide with the Authorized Version instead of following the Revisers, and the Vulgate, Syrr., Ar. Cop., if not Aeth. The connection with verse 5 would lead one to prefer God. "And He gave him none inheritance in it, not so much as a foot's tread, and promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when he had no child."

It is wholly incorrect to say that God did afterward give him a possession in Canaan, namely the piece of land which he purchased of Ephron as a burial place, Gen. 23:17; for the gift of God is absolutely future, and that it is so is confirmed, not weakened or trenched on, by the purchase of a burial-place from the Hittite. For who that possessed this land or any other would think of buying

his own possession? There he lays his dead in land so evidently not his own that he has to buy it for the purpose, the pledge to faith that he will have it another day. So far from occasion to wrest our text here or anywhere in order to produce accordance with the history, the language is as plain and perfect as possible. The fact is stated to show how truly the patriarch was a pilgrim in the very land whose present possession had, to say the least, such exaggerated moment in the eyes of his seed, because they walked not in the faith of their father. God will surely give “this land” to Abram's seed. They will buy it of no stranger in that day. No intermediate confusion can touch His promise. “By faith he (Abraham) sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.” Abraham and his seed will have the promise in the day when glory is to dwell in that land (Psa. 85), a truth which Gentile theology makes even believers forget. Indeed all the earth shall then be filled with the glory of Jehovah; but pre-eminently is the glory to rest on Zion, a defense on all, when God shall have accomplished the cleansing of Jerusalem, not by the gospel simply as now, but by the spirit of judgment and of burning. Then shall the children of Abraham, not by nature only but by grace also, enter on the promised inheritance, he himself being in resurrection glory, when Jesus is revealed from heaven and there come the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since time began.

There is no ground for regarding “not,” as “not yet,” nor “gave” and “promised” as pluperfect in sense, nor “and” as “yet,” with learned men who did not understand or believe the scripture before them.

Further, Stephen draws attention to the fact that “God thus spoke, that the seed of Abraham should be a sojourner in a land not theirs, and that they should enslave and ill-treat them, four hundred years. And the nation, to whom they shall be in slavery, will I judge, said God; and after these things shall they come out and serve me in this place.” (Ver. 6, 7.) It is a free citation of Gen. 15:13, 14, with a few words, more or less, from Ex. 3:12 instead of the closing phrase. The God of glory thought of His people in Egypt and in the wilderness, before the holy place or even the law, and will never give Israel up till He has made good His promise, engaged when Abraham had no child. God called Abraham alone, and blessed and increased him. How wrong they all were then in making so much of themselves, and of their privileges, to the slight of His grace and Himself, the God of glory, who appeared to Abraham alone when there was absolutely nothing to boast, nothing but sin and shame in man, and Israel as yet unborn. For as with the father so with his seed. As he went about a stranger in Palestine, so they were first seen in bondage in an alien land; and this for no brief moment, for in round numbers 400 (strictly 405) years intervened from the birth of the child of promise till God judged the nation that had them in slavery. When they did come out, it was not even into the land, but into the desert, where they wandered 40 years. He had indeed delivered them to His own glory; but His dealings were not according to their thoughts and prejudices. Were they the people to claim indefeasible and even exclusive rights? To do so, they must disbelieve their own history, yea, God's word.

Chapter 49

On Acts 7:8-19

At first sight it may appear to some singular that Stephen should introduce circumcision. But he, in fact, simply follows the divine record; so that there is not only instruction conveyed, but it is increased by paying heed to the order impressed on the facts, and so on the history, by the wisdom of God.

“And He gave him a covenant of circumcision, and thus he begat Isaac, and circumcised [him] on the eighth day; and, Isaac, Jacob; and Jacob the twelve patriarchs” (ver. 8).

Thus does Stephen draw marked attention to the covenant of circumcision given of God to Abraham, instead of slighting the institution incorporated in the law. It was thus Isaac was begotten, and those who followed; all submitting to a rite which indicated the corruption of the flesh, and put death on it as the only deliverance from it. But the promise was already long before the law; and the father of the faithful had enjoyed the election and call of God anterior even to circumcision. The truth is a whole, and only suffers from the misuse of one part to enfeeble or destroy another. The Spirit, using the word in view of Christ's glory, puts all in its place, as He alone can. Hence the speaker, being a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, saw and presented things according to God, whereas the unbelieving Jews understood in no wise the true bearing of their own institutions, misusing them for self-righteousness and pride, and hence blindly rejecting the Light of God to whom all pointed.

Alas! it is an old story. Their fathers wore not really better than they; and God has not told us of their doings in vain, if we have but an ear to hear. For how does Stephen sum up the history of that early twelve? “And the patriarchs through jealousy sold Joseph into Egypt; and God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house” (ver. 9, 10). A beloved son, or a God-fearing slave, a guiltless prisoner or a wise vicegerent, Joseph had God with him everywhere and in all circumstances. Yet who of the twelve was so tried of his brethren? who so plotted against as he? Who seemed to fare worse in spite—yea because—of his unsullied purity? Nevertheless, even in prison, “Jehovah was with him, and that which he did, Jehovah made it to prosper.”

Was there no voice, from Joseph and his brethren, to the Jews who surrounded Stephen? “Joseph brought unto their father their evil report."..."And when his brethren saw that his father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."…"And his brethren said, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his deeds and for his words."… “And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him."… “And they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites, for twenty pieces of silver; and they brought Joseph into Egypt.” If so the fathers dealt with the type, who that believes could wonder that they should deal worse with the great Antitype? For it was what was of Christ in Joseph, what the Spirit wrought in and by him, which irritated the fathers of the nation against him

Was it so wonderful, then, that “this generation” had rejected a greater than Joseph; who being sold convicted them of enmity against God, drawn out by hatred of divine goodness in His own person, ways, and words? Let them not forget, that the rejected of his brethren was exalted to the right hand of power for the blessing of others, and even (specially at the end) of his brethren, to whom he is only thus made known after his long separation from them. Thus did he prefigure Christ in His sufferings, as well as in the glories that should follow them.

“Now there came a famine over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction; and our fathers found no sustenance. But Jacob, having heard that there was corn in Egypt, sent forth our fathers for it; and at the second [time] Joseph was made known to his brethren, and is [or Joseph's] race became manifest unto Pharaoh. And Joseph sent and called to him Jacob his father, and all his kindred, seventy-five souls.” (Ver. 11-14.)

It was a pathway of righteous suffering which led to glory; and when exalted, Joseph administers in the wisdom of God what the same wisdom exalted him to provide in days of plenty for those of dearth. Under the mighty hand of God, the dearth pressed not only over all Egypt but over Canaan, where the heads of Israel tasted of that cruel affliction, for they found no sustenance, and in divine providence sought corn in Egypt. This, “at the second time,” gave occasion for their great discovery, not without self-judgment, when Joseph was made known to his brethren, and the line of promise became no longer a secret to Pharaoh. And the fathers, with Israel their father, went down into Egypt, where they in lengthened and retributive sorrow were to pay the penalty for their heartless wrong to their brother, who was exalted of God where Jew and Gentile had both put him to shame, which he repaid in nothing but grace to all, but especially to Israel.

The bearing of all this on Christ is unmistakable; but Stephen does not apply—he only states—facts, so much the more striking because they were familiar, and now set in a light which shone on Messiah as well as the Jews; that the people might thereby know God and themselves. How little they knew anything as they ought was plain from this, that they had hitherto never thought of seeing in Joseph the Christ, nor in the guilty fathers themselves, the still guiltier murderers of the Lord of glory. Their ignorant boast was their shame. And He that was sold no less than Joseph, and lifted up on high from a worse pit and a deeper dungeon, was waiting to bless them; as they themselves were to taste the bitter fruits of their sin in a dispersion worse than a captivity; whatever the mercy that awaits them in the latter end, when they bow repentant before Him in glory.

It will be noticed that Stephen speaks of seventy-five souls, where the Hebrew has seventy; he cites here, as elsewhere, the Septuagint. Calvin (in loco) considers that this discrepancy came not from the Greek translators themselves, but crept in through the fault of copyists, and that Stephen did not say so; but that it was foisted in here to make the speech agree with the Greek version of Gen. 46:27. But this appears to me an unreasonable way of accounting for what is simple enough; and that the apostle's caution against endless genealogies has nothing to do with the matter. The fact is, that both the Hebrew and the Greek version might both be true one reckoning in five sons of Manasseh and Ephraim born in Egypt (1 Chron. 7:14), according to a latitude of various forms, by no means uncommon in such lists.

There is more difficulty in explaining the next verse but one. “And Jacob went down into Egypt and died, he and our fathers; and they were carried over unto Shechem and laid in the tomb which

Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in [son, or father of] Shechem." (Ver. 15, 16). The late Dean of Canterbury had no hesitation in pronouncing him who spoke, full of the Holy Ghost, as guilty of "at least two demonstrable historical inaccuracies"; which, he is pleased to assure his readers, do not affect the inspiration or the veracity of the writer. On the other hand, Bengel, following Fl. Illyricus, &c., seeks to clear the passage up by the supposition that a double purchase and a double burial were intended, with intentional omissions on either side. He therefore maintains the integrity of the reading "Abraham," and declares the conjectural "Jacob" unnecessary; compendious brevity, when the particulars were all known, accounting for a method which to us seems surprising. The facts are that Abraham bought a burial-place of Ephron the Hittite at Machpelah or Hebron, where the three patriarchs were buried, as well as Sarah; and that Jacob bought a field of the sons of Hamor in Shechem, where Jacob was buried. Where the rest of Jacob's sons were laid, does not appear in the Old Testament: Josephus says in Hebron; the Rabbis, in Shechem, as Jerome also reports. Moderns argue for some here and some there; and one at least maintains a transfer from Shechem to Hebron. I prefer to leave the passage; but in the circumstances the least worthy hypothesis is that this blessed and mighty witness of Christ fell into a confusion of Hebron with Shoehorn, and of Abraham with Jacob beneath an ordinary Sunday-scholar. Is it not a safer conclusion that we may be ignorant of facts which, better known, would dispel this mist, or of some peculiarity in the reference, as in Matt. 27:9, Mark 1:2, to which Westerns are not used, but understood without cavil among Jews? One is disposed (when surveying a speech of surpassing scope, and power of insight from first to last into principles of Jewish history) to doubt that the speaker was ignorant of circumstances lying on the surface of the earliest book of Scripture, and familiarly known to every Jew; or that the inspired writer of the book did not see the discrepancy which must strike the most careless reader. And one may question whether it would not be better, these things being so, to amend our manners instead of assuming to amend the text.

"But as the time of the promise was drawing nigh which God vouchsafed to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, till there arose another king over Egypt who knew not Joseph. He dealt craftily with our race and evil-intreated our fathers, that they should expose their babes to the end they might not be preserved alive." (Ver. 17, 19.)

It is always thus. There is ever war between God and the enemy, and nowhere does it rage so hotly as where His people are concerned, and when a distinct manifestation of divine mercy is imminent. God's approaching favor to Israel drew out the enmity of Satan, who stirred up a suited instrument for his malice in the prince of the world of that day, "another king who knew not Joseph." The verses are a pithy summary of Ex. 1:7-20, which gives the details of Pharaoh's wiry, aggressive, and unscrupulously cruel efforts to depress, yet just as signally defeated of God; for, say or do what he might, "the people multiplied and waxed very mighty." The edict to destroy the males failed, not only through human pity, but through the fear of God, who honored those who honored Him, and brought to naught His adversaries.

Chapter 50

On Acts 7:20-29

But now Moses is dwelt on at great length, as before Joseph more briefly. Thus is brought before their minds another and most salient personal type of the Messiah, besides the general testimony to the truth for their consciences.

“At which season Moses was born, and was exceedingly [lit. to God] fair, who was nourished three months in his father's house; and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works. But when he was about forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the sons of Israel; and seeing one wronged, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, smiting the Egyptian. For he thought that his brethren understood that God by his hand was giving them deliverance; but they understood not. And on the day following he appeared to them as they were striving, and compelled them to peace, saying, Ye are brethren: why do ye wrong one to another? But he that was wronging his neighbor thrust him away, saying, Who established thee ruler and judge over us? Dost thou wish to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian yesterday? And Moses fled at this saying, and became a sojourner in the land of Midian where he begat two sons.” (Ver. 20-29.)

The enemy had raised up a suited instrument, another king over Egypt which knew not Joseph. Suffering became the portion of Israel and a deadly stroke was aimed at the promise in the person of their babes. For the commandment of the king was to expose them that they might not be preserved alive. At that critical moment Moses was born, fair unto God, with a glorious career before him, however dark its beginnings. He too, came under the sentence of death, and, after being nourished three months in his father's house, was cast out like the rest. But we have the highest authority for affirming that it was “by faith,” whatever the natural affection of his parents, he was hid by them these three months (Heb. 11:23). “They were not afraid of the king's commandment.” God interfered for him providentially; and, the least likely of all in Egypt, Pharaoh's daughter, took him up and nourished him for her own son. It was manifestly an intervention of God.

But Divine providence is no guide for faith, nothing but the word. Providence brought in, whence faith led out. “By faith Moses when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to be evil-entreated with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked unto the recompense of reward.”

None can deny that Moses was capable of justly estimating the situation. He was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and works. He looked, however, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. His eye was on the kingdom of God; he awaited the Messiah; he knew that the purposes of God, as they center in Christ, had Israel as their inner circle on earth. His affections, therefore, were not with the court of Egypt, or the most brilliant vista it could open for a man of his energy. Poor degraded Israel he loved, and

loved, not so much because they were his people, but as the people of God.

So when he was about forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. Alas! they were fallen, not in their circumstances only, but in their souls. Faith wrought in but few of them to expect a deliverer or to appreciate such as had faith in God. In such circumstances the worst moral condition is apt to be found. An unfaithful Israelite sinks below an Egyptian; and Moses must learn this, as Joseph had learned it before; as an infinitely greater than Joseph or Moses learned it even before the death of the cross. “And seeing one suffer wrong, he defended him and avenged him that was oppressed, smiting the Egyptian; and he supposed that his brethren understood how that God by his hand was giving them salvation, but they understood not. They were dark and dead Godward. The hardness of man they felt. The hope God had given to Israel had almost vanished from their souls. There was certainly no expectation of a deliverance at hand; yet surely they ought to have looked for it. The fourth generation was proceeding, in which, according to the word of Jehovah, they, so long afflicted, were to quit ajudged Egypt, and to come into the promised land again. But God was not in their thoughts, and Moses was misunderstood. Nay, worse than this; “And the day following he appeared unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wouldest thou kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian yesterday?” The keenest wound, as the basest blow, comes from God's people: when man rules therein and not God, Satan works underneath it all.

Yet was it all profitable discipline for Moses, who “fled at this saying and became a sojourner in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.” He must learn of God alone in the wilderness. The wisdom of Egypt must be, as it were, unlearned: God deigns not to honor it for His deliverances. The wisdom that He uses must come down from above. We shall see how God wrought when the due moment arrives. Meanwhile Moses is the rejected of Israel as Joseph before of his brethren. Only as Joseph shows us exaltation over the Gentiles when separated from his brethren, Moses gives us, in another direction, the complication from the offended power and anger of the Gentiles. But it will be noticed that it is during this compulsory exile from Israel that he has a family given him. So the Virgin's Son, Emmanuel, speaks in Isa. 8. There too Israel are unbelieving; there too is a hostile confederacy of the nations; but, “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me, are for signs and for wonders, in Israel from the Lord of hosts which dwelleth in Mount Zion.” Faith waits upon the Lord that hides His face from the house of Jacob, and it looks for Him. At the worst of times He is for a sanctuary; at the right moment He works out unmistakable deliverance. How solemnly all this bore on the actual circumstances of the Jew! They did not understand that Jesus was their Deliverer. They gradually grew to hate His words, because His words judged them in the secret of their souls, and His parables portended sure destruction on their pride and unbelief. Hence they cast Him out even unto death; but God raised Him up and was now manifesting the children He had given Him, as yet from Israel only, but soon to be from Gentiles also. The hour of Messiah's rejection is but the occasion for a higher glory and a more intimate relationship with those who meanwhile believe; just as the stranger in the land of Midian becomes the father of two sons which he had not in Egypt with the sons of Israel around him.

Had Stephen invented these remarkable facts and yet more remarkable foreshadowings? No Jew, however prejudiced, could deny them to be the brief, true, and bright reflection of God's word in

their own hands. The undeniable truth inspired by the Holy Ghost shone solemnly on that which they had done to One attested by God to them by works of power and wonders and signs which God wrought by Him in their midst, as they themselves too well knew. Such is man on the one hand, and such God on the other: so surprising as to provoke the unbelief and ill-will of all who do not bow to His revelation as well as to the bitter conviction of their own evil. To the believer it is the old but ever new lesson of learning the first man, and the Second: where this is learned, the heart seeks and owns it could not be otherwise, man being what he is, as also God what He is; for He cannot deny Himself, though man in his blindness constantly denies both himself and God. But the correction comes when Christ is brought home to the soul by the Holy Ghost in the gospel: one repents, and believes. Such an one reads his own evil in what man did and is: anything of iniquity in a Jew or a Gentile is not overmuch marvelous; he can find a match for Pharaoh or for Israel in his own breast if not his own life, or in both. But greater grace assuredly than was ever shown by a Joseph or a Moses, he knows in the Son of God who came down from heaven not to do His own will, but His who sent Him—in the Son of man who came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Thus does faith turn all things past or future to present account; as a man's unbelief loses all blessing from every quarter, and will rather destroy his own soul than give honor really to God and His Son.

Chapter 51

On Acts 7:30-37

Thus was Moses an outcast for many long years, not more from the incensed king of Egypt than from his own unworthy brethren, who loved him the less, the more abundantly he loved them; as unmindful of the promised deliverance as unappreciative of him who forfeited all on their account. Israel denied him who was in that day the type of the Holy and the Righteous One. It was no new thing.

“And when forty years were fulfilled, an angel [of the Lord, D E H P, almost all cursives, and many ancient versions] appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire of a bush. And Moses, on seeing, wondered at the sight; and as he went up to observe, there came a voice of [the] Lord [unto him, most authorities, but not the best]: I [am] the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob. And Moses trembled, and durst not observe. And the Lord said to him, Loose the sandal of thy feet, for the place where on thou standest is holy ground. I have surely [lit. seeing] seen the ill-treatment of my people which is in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and am come down to take them out for myself. And now come, I send [or will send] thee into Egypt. This Moses whom they denied, saying, Who established thee ruler and judge? him hath God sent [both] ruler and deliverer, with an angel's hand that appeared to him in the bush. This man led them out, having wrought wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. This is the Moses that said to the sons of Israel, A prophet will God raise up to you out of your brethren, like me.” (Ver. 30-37.)

God ordered the trials for Moses as none else would. For him, at the vigorous age of forty years, spent with every natural advantage possible in that day, who would have planned an equal period in the comparative solitude of Midian, without a project or even a known communication with his race, in patient waiting on God? Yet what wiser, if God were acting in wisdom and power by Moses to His own glory?

Then came a most singular but suited, manifestation: an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai, in a flame of fire of a bush. It was no less significant than that vouchsafed to Joshua at a later day. When conquest of Canaan was in question, what more encouraging than a man seen with his sword drawn, captain of Jehovah's host? When the work was to bring the people through a waste howling wilderness, what more appropriate sign than a bush blazing yet unconsumed, and yet more “the good-will of Him that dwelt in the bush?” Moses, himself, “separated from his brethren,” could well appreciate its significance, when wonder and fear had yielded to reflection in the light of the Divine communications he had received.

And as he went up to observe, there came a voice of [the] Lord, I [am] the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And Moses trembled, and durst not observe. “Before redemption, even a saint trembled when brought into God's presence. Be it that His voice declares Him the God of promise, of the fathers Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, “Moses trembled, and durst not observe.” Till redemption, peace is impossible. “And the Lord said to him, Loose the sandal of thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” Before the exodus of Israel from

Egypt there was a manifestation of divine righteousness in delivering them and judging their oppressors, and holiness is proclaimed inviolable from the outset; no less is it so when Israel are called under Joshua to uncompromising conflict with the Canaanite dwelling in the land. “Holiness,” it was sung at a later day for an epoch not yet fulfilled, “becometh Thine house, O Jehovah, forever.” The same prefatory admonition precedes alike the types of redemption accomplished for His people, and of warring in their midst with Satan that they may enjoy their proper privileges. God will be sanctified, whatever His grace in redeeming His own from the house of bondage, or in leading them to victory over the powers which usurp their heritage. Let us not forget it. How often irreverence has crept in, both in learning divine righteousness and in conflict with the enemy! “These things ought not so to be.”

But redemption was in His heart; and of this He forthwith speaks to Moses, now weaned from self-confidence as much as from worldly association. “I have surely seen the ill-treatment of My people which is in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and have come down to take them out for Myself.” Who but God would have thus undisguisedly spoken of a poor set of slaves as “My people"? Others would have delivered and bedecked them first. It is the same God who as a father falls on the neck of the returning prodigal in his rags and kisses him, whatever the honors afterward lavished on him But, let it be the foreshadowing or the antitypical reality, it is of the utmost moment to apprehend that redemption is the work of God present in person, and delivering, not merely from the enemy, but for Himself. Their ill-treatment must be avenged, their groaning be heard and answered with His consolations; but He comes down to take them out for Himself.

“To deliver” was of course verified also; but the literal rendering is much more expressive, and gives not mere relief from the usurper's hand, but the positive object; and what can surpass it? If it be often overlooked, both in doctrine and in practice, it is of the more consequence to insist on it. Elsewhere may be put forward liberation, of which it is of course right in its place to point out the nature and effects; but here it is God's taking Israel out for Himself, as said of Joseph in ver. 10, and not infrequently in scripture, though the emphatic force only comes out fully in redemption. For Christ suffered once for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God. It will be manifest when we are in glory; it is no less true now to faith while we are here on earth. Nor can any truth bound up with redemption be of deeper moment for the soul. True spiritual experience rests on and springs out of it.

“And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.” But how different the feelings of Moses! When in Egypt, he had gone forward in his own energy; and now, when sent of God, he makes objections and difficulties! How instructive the twofold lesson for us! So it is ever. The man who was not called readily proffered to follow the Lord wheresoever He might go; as ignorant of himself and of the world and of the enemy, as of Christ. The disciple who was called begs leave first to go away and bury his father, but learns from the Lord that there must be no object before Himself.

“This Moses whom they denied, saying, Who established thee ruler and judge? him hath God sent both ruler and deliverer [or, redeemer] with an angel's hand that appeared to him in the bush.” The language is framed so as to maintain the parallel between Moses, as before of Joseph, with Jesus the despised and denied Messiah, whom God is to send from the heavens, not only to bring in generally the predicted times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, but to redeem Israel

from the hand of the enemy, and to gather them out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. It is not only the New Testament but the Old, as the Lord expounded to the sorrowing disciples on the day of His resurrection, which teaches the sufferings of Christ and the glories which should follow them. “Ought not Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory"? Indeed, He had taught the same before His death. There will be the bright and judicial manifestation in its due season; for as the lightning when it lighteneth out of the one part under the heaven shineth unto the other part under heaven, even so shall the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things and be rejected of this generation. Then indeed will He bless Israel, in turning every one of them away from their iniquities.

Of Him Moses was but a shadow, however honored of God as both ruler and deliverer, with an angel's hand that appeared to him in the bush. Jesus the Son of man will Himself appear on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; and He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds from one end of the heavens to the other. A greater than Moses shall be displayed in that day; but in this day a far greater humiliation was His than that of Moses. Still in both respects the analogy was close, evident, and intentional; for the Holy Spirit in the word was providing for the help and warning or blessing of man, and the clear intimations of scripture left the Jew especially without excuse, as Stephen demonstrates.

“This [man] led them out, having wrought wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.” None denies that Moses stands in the front rank of great as well as good men; but it is God who made His presence signally known and respected in what He did by him chiefly, though sometimes without him, in that long succession of wilderness patience, and of power fruitful in wonders, abundant in instruction. Stephen's aim is however to give scope to an under-current of analogy to Christ, and hence the man Moses comes into prominence, the better to furnish it as his solemn appeal to a people who never forgot their oldest folly and never truly learned from God when again putting them to the test. What could Moses have done without God for one day in the desert, not to speak of forty years? What wonders and signs could he otherwise have wrought in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, before Meribah on the day of Massah in the wilderness, when the Jewish fathers tried Jehovah, proved Him, and saw His work? No doubt there was intrinsic power in the person of the Sea, who from everlasting to everlasting is Galatians Oily, subsisting in the form of God, He counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God (in blessed contrast with the first man, who sought to be what he was not, to God's dishonor and in disobedience), but emptied Himself, taking a bondsman's form, coming in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, death of the cross. All between His birth and death was alike moral perfection; a man who never did, never sought, His own will, nothing but the will of God, till all closed in the yet deeper doing by suffering it for sin in death of atonement, that God might be glorified even as to sin, and we righteously delivered. But in His service, of Him pre-eminently it could be said that God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him. And if that generation denied Him, saying Who established thee ruler and judge? none the less did God raise Him to be a more blessed Redeemer, a more glorious Ruler of the kings of the earth, as He is ordained of Gad to be Judge of living and dead, whilst He will also fulfill every

hope of Israel according to the prophets.

No wonder therefore it is added, “This is the Moses that said to the sons of Israel. A prophet will God raise up to you out of your brethren, like Me.” The difficulties and differences of the most celebrated Rabbis prove what a stone of stumbling is the true Christ, the Lord Jesus, to unbelieving Israel. How otherwise could we account for such a man as Abarbanel perverting the words of Deut. 18 here cited, to Jeremiah? If there be among the prophets, yea in all the people, a marked contrast with the honored deliverer from Egypt. and the law-giver in the wilderness, it is the mourning man of Anathoth, whose testimony and life show a continuous struggle of grief and shame between his burning sense of God's ignored rights and his love for the people of Galatians who most of all ignored them, as well as himself. Utterly untenable is the theory of Aben Ezra and others, that Joshua is meant, who but supplemented, and in little more than one direction, Moses' work, but in no adequate way stands out as the prophet raised up from his brethren like Moses. Hence the effort of some most distinguished among the Jewish teachers to interpret as a succession this singular prophet! as contrary to usage in the language as to the fact in their history. Compare Num. 12 and Deut. 24 The position of Mediator, whose words must be heard on pain of death, points to Moses' peculiarity; only in the highest degree true of none but Messiah. And if the Jews did not then realize the consequence of refusing to hearken to him, soon did the threat begin to fall on their guilty heads. “The wrath,” says the apostle Paul, “is come upon them to the uttermost.” And not yet have they paid the last farthing. The unequaled tribulation is still before them, though a believing remnant will be delivered out of it, hearkening to Him whom the nation opposed to their own ruin.

On Acts 7:38-50

The parallel is yet farther pursued in what follows. “This is he that was in the assembly in the wilderness with the angel that spoke to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers; who received living oracles to give us: to whom our fathers would not be subject, but thrust [him] away and turned in their hearts unto Egypt, saying to Aaron, Make us gods who shall go before us; for this Moses, who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.” (Ver. 38-40.)

Moses is presented in his mediatorial position, between the angel of Jehovah on the one hand, and “our fathers” on the other. In the “church” is suggestive of thoughts and associations altogether misleading. The children of Israel are meant in their collective capacity. It has not the smallest bearing on what in the New Testament is called the church of God, the body of Christ; indeed this is only noticed here in order to guard souls from an error so grave. The church is part of that “great mystery” or secret which the apostle was given to reveal, the mystery hidden from ages and generations but now made manifest to the saints. What God was then doing by Moses was part of His ordinary dealings, when Israel so readily overlooked the promises to the fathers and took their stand, to their speedy sorrow and inevitable ruin, on their own obedience as the tenure of their blessings.

Immense indeed was the privilege vouchsafed not only then in works but in words of God henceforth given to man in permanence. It was not merely that the angel spoke to Moses, but he “received living oracles to give us” —an unspeakable boon, yet more characteristic of the greater than Moses, whose coming was followed by a fresh, complete, and final revelation of divine grace and truth. Indeed the citation of Moses' own prophecy in ver. 37 prepared to way for new communications with a yet higher sanction. In vain then would Jewish unbelief idolize the servant in sight of his Master. But on the one hand “lively” is too slight here, as also in 1 Peter 1:3 and 2:5; on the other “life-giving” goes too far, and at any rate is not the epithet intended, for this is to characterize the oracles themselves, not their effect on others. I know not why Mr. Humphry should have endorsed the error which Kühnöl adopted from Grotius. And why “saving"? This is but to change, not to translate or expound, any more than the opposite lowering of the sense by J. Piscator and J. Alberti, as if received viva voce! “Living” alone is right and sufficient.

And how did the children of Israel treat one thus signally honored in that day? “They would not be subject” to him. If the fathers so treated Moses, was it surprising that their children did not receive the Messiah of whom he prophesied, and was besides so striking a type? Thus the simple recall of scripture history vividly presents the actual guilt of the Jews where any had ears to hear. If their fathers of old thrust Moses from them, what of that incomparably more honored Prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, so recently delivered up to be condemned and crucified? That their hearts were gone from God and turned to Egypt was plain enough then from their appeal to Aaron and his shameless compliance. But was it less true now when a robber was preferred to “the anointed of the Lord?” “Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but

Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber." "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you." The difference between the fathers and the children was not in favor of those then alive, ever dull to estimate the present race, and self above all, which it most concerns men to judge aright. Yet is it exactly what the Spirit of God effects in every soul that comes to God: if there is living faith, there is true repentance.

But unbelief craves a present and visible guide. "Make us gods who shall go before us. For this Moses, who brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him." Israel was rebellious, when Moses was on high; and so is the Jew now that Christ is gone to heaven. But is it only the Jew? Does the Gentile stand in the truth? Only by his faith can it be, as the apostle declares. Is not Christendom high-minded, instead of humbly and heartily hearing? Is it not lifted up with pride, instead of abiding in goodness? And what must be its end? Thou also shalt be cut off." Christendom, little thinking it, is doomed. If God spared not the natural branches, the Jews, He will certainly not spare the presumptuous wild-olive graft.

Alas! the baptized soon forsook their own mercies and denied the special testimony for which they were responsible to God's glory before the world. They got weary of dependence on an exalted but absent Lord; they ceased to wait for His return from heaven; they practically superseded the presence and free action of the Holy Spirit in the, assembly; they gave up their bridal separateness for worldly influence and favor; and they swamped grace under a system of law and ordinances; so that the word of God became of little or no effect through tradition, as departure from the truth became more and more the state of those who professed the name of the Lord. Insubjection to Him speedily bred alienation, and the heart soon turned toward that world out of which grace calls and severs to God. Men are even more naturally idolatrous than skeptical, unbelief being the mother of both these enemies to God and His truth. Men love to have gods to go before them. The true Deliverer being irksome passes readily out of mind: "we know not what is become of him." Is not the wilderness history prophetic? Did not these things happen as types of us that we should not be lusting after evil things, as they also lusted, nor be idolators, as some of them? Indeed all the things recorded happened to them as types, and were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come.

"And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. But God turned and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in [the] book of the prophets, Did ye offer me victims and sacrifices in the wilderness, O house of Israel? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of your god Remphan, the forms which ye made to worship them; and I will transport you beyond Babylon" (verses 41-43). So prone is the incredulous man to abandon the living God in spite of daily standing witness of His power and grace, as well as solemn occasional judgments before all eyes; so readily does he take up that idolatry which he had so lately known to dominate the high and mighty, the refined and learned—the world, in short, where he himself had been enslaved. So powerful an adversary is "public opinion" to the will and glory of God, even in the face of the grandest exhibitions of His favor to His people, and of stern unmistakable punishment on their enemies, and, not least, of shame on their gods who could neither help their votaries nor screen themselves. Nor did the "calf," the abomination of Egypt, satisfy Israel; they craved after objects higher than the works of their own hands, whatever the charm of this to man's vain heart. Once yielding to the snare, Israel must outdo Egypt. So "God turned and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven." Groveling

idolatry aspires to higher things and inflates itself with its heavenly imaginations. Not Stephen is the authority for so withering a charge, but Amos. In the prophets' book it is written: would an Israelite gainsay them too? or tax scripture itself with saying blasphemous things against Israel? The forms of Moloch, “horrid king,” and of Remphan, they made to worship, and they did worship.

And not the least repulsive feature of this early corruption among the chosen nation was that they offered all the while victims and sacrifices in the wilderness to Jehovah. The poorest can afford to be lavish in honor of false gods, who complain of what is due to the true God, as if He were a rigid exactor and not the giver of every good and perfect gift.

But divine judgment is sure if it seem to slumber, and the prophet at a far later day pronounces the sentence for the sin perpetrated in the desert. Whatever may have been the aggravation afterward, it is the first sin which decides. Evil never gets better, never works itself out, though it may easily and always does wax worse. The evil heart of unbelief departs more and more from the living God. Patience may go on for ages in ways admirable in the eye of faith; but judgment, however deferred, is certain, and in due time is revealed, it may be long before it is executed. Neither Damascus, the head of Syria, nor Babylon, the golden city, is the limit of Israel's departation from the land they had defiled: “I will transport you beyond” —saith the Lord. To say that “Babylon,” true in fact, was an error in quotation is a statement Mr. Humphry should have left to skeptics.

“Our fathers had the tabernacle in the wilderness, as he that spoke to Moses commanded to make it according to the model which he had seen; which also our fathers having in succession received brought in with Joshua, in their taking possession of the Gentiles whom God drove out from [the] face of our fathers, until the days of David; who found favor before God and asked to find a habitation for the God of Jacob; but Solomon built him a house.” (ver. 44-47).

Yet all this while of idolatrous iniquity “our fathers of Israel” had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, made as they were assured according to the model Moses had seen and God commanded. That the heathen who know not God could serve idols is not surprising, however sad their sin and inexcusable; seeing that their fathers once knew God, but glorifying Him not as God, nor thankful, they became vain in their imaginations and. with darkened heart in their folly changed His glory into an image of the creature which they worshipped and served rather than the Creator who is blessed forever, Amen. And for this cause God delivered them up to vile affections and the most unnatural evil, as well as to a mind void of judgment; so that knowing the judgment of God against all who do such things worthy of death, they not only practice the same but have pleasure in those that do them.

How much more guilty were those who knew far better, stood in national relationship with God as His own peculiar and favored people, and had the very tent of the testimony for Him and against their ways! They bore it not only in the wilderness from father to son, but into the goodly land whence God by Joshua drove out the old heathen inhabitants that Israel might be in the possession of it, adding thus gross hypocrisy to their greedy idolatry. There is no corruption so grievous as that of God's people; and therefore His proportionate chastenings. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

In the days of David, the favor which God showed him wrought in the heart of the king, who asked to build a house for Jehovah, but had as his answer that Jehovah would make him a house, and that his son, Solomon should build a house for his name, as Stephen here recounts.

Here then, thought the Jew, must Jehovah restrict Himself to that “magnifical” palace of His holiness. For unbelieving man must have an idol somewhere. “But the Highest dwelleth not in [places] made with hands; even as the prophet saith, The heaven [is] my throne, and the earth a footstool of my feet: what sort of house will ye build me, saith [the] Lord, or what [is] my place of rest? Did not my hand make all these things?” (ver. 48-50). Superstitious exaltation of the temple detracts from His glory who gives it all its distinctive grandeur. Jehovah did deign to hallow and glorify it, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of Jehovah had filled the house of God. But Solomon himself on that august had owned consecration that heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, much less the house he had just built! And so afterward spoke the prophet Isaiah, long before Babylon was allowed to burn and destroy the object of their pride. It was no afterthought to console the Jew in his subjection to Gentile masters: so had Israel's king spoken to God, and so had God spoken to Israel long before the Chaldeans had become an adversary to chastise their idolatry.

It was right and pious to own the condescending grace of Jehovah, it was presumptuous to limit His glory to the temple He was pleased to make His dwelling. The Creator had made all and was immeasurably above the universe. From such a point of view what was Jerusalem or the temple? Who was now in accord with the testimony of Solomon and Isaiah? The accusers, or Stephen? The answer is beyond controversy, and their enmity without excuse.

On Acts 7:51-53

In these verses we have the conclusion of the address, a most grave and pointed appeal to the consciences of the Jews who, under the form of a most instructive and wonderfully compressed summary of their national sins from first to last, heard of God's unparalleled dealings with Israel. The facts were beyond question, the language (even when most unsparing) that of their own confessedly inspired writers, the accusation therefore as unutterably solemn as it was impossible either to rebut or to evade.

“Stiffnecked and uncircumcised in hearts and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers, so ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they slew those that announced beforehand of the coming of the Righteous One, of whom now ye became betrayers and murderers, ye which received the law as ordinances of angels and kept [it] not.” (Ver. 51-53.)

“I have beheld this people” said Jehovah to Moses at the Mount Sinai; and behold, it is a stiff-necked people” (Ex. 32:9); again (Ex. 32:3), “I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way.” For the Lord had said unto Moses, “Say unto the children of Israel ye are a stiff-necked people” (5). But this very fact is turned into a plea by the skilful advocacy of the mediator: “If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us, for it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and sin, and take us for thine inheritance” (Ex. 34:9) If Stephen repeated the word at the end of their history, it was fully borne out from the beginning. “How much more after my death?” said Moses (Daut. xxxi. 27). “For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days” (ver. 29). The predicted evil was about to be, as it had been already, fulfilled to the letter, and as the latter days are not yet run out, so neither is this evil exhausted: “this generation” still repeats the same sad tale of unbelief and departure from the living God.

It is Moses again who lets Israel know in Lev. 26 how Jehovah will avenge the breach of His covenant: and yet if then their “uncircumcised hearts” be humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity, then will He remember His covenant with Jacob, and with Isaac and with Abraham, and will remember the land.

But there was another, and the main, fatal charge: “ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers, ye also.” Before the deluge He strove with man, though Jehovah said it should not be so always, and thus set a term to His patient testimony of a hundred and twenty years. After that judgment of the race Israel was the theater of His operations, according to the word that Jehovah covenanted with them when they came out of Egypt. But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, He fought against them. Here again Stephen had the surest warrant for vindicating Jehovah and His Anointed, and for convicting the proud stubborn Jews of their old iniquity and opposition to every dealing of His grace. Alas! they were, as Moses told them at the outset, a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith; and without faith there is no life, nor is it possible to please God. Faith working by love seeks His glory and is

subject to His word, the expression of His mind and will. Israel without faith was the sad and constant witness of a people outwardly and in profession near to God, their heart ever far from Him and pertinacious in antagonism to Him. Their rejection of the Messiah, their indifference to, or malignant contempt of, the Pentecostal Spirit, were only of a piece with their history throughout. Far yet from being the light of the blind heathen, the instructor of the benighted nations, they are the ringleader of the world's rebellion against God, uniform only in this from father to son throughout their generations.

“Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?” The prophets dealt with the people's sin, exposing it fearlessly in the light of truth, righteousness, and God's judgment, while looking onwards to the kingdom of God which should set aside all evil, and the suffering Messiah be exalted and extolled and very high. It was this confronting the wicked will of man with the light of God that condemned it, which drew out the enmity of Israel, and made the prophet an object of dishonor and hostility nowhere so much as in his own country. God was brought near; and guilty man will not have God at any price. Had Stephen gone outside the record, or misinterpreted its spirit? Jeremiah, who was not a whit behind the rest in the bitter contempt and positive persecution he had to bear from priests, prophets and princes, bears a plain testimony to God's sending on the one hand, and to Israel's rebellion on the other. So in 2 Chron. 36:15, 16 we read, “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 rose against His people, till there was no remedy.” Was Stephen then right in asking “Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute “?

But did not the Jews delight in the promised Messiah? Did they not eagerly anticipate His kingdom, when they will be delivered out of their enemies, and all that hate them be covered with shame and dismay, and glory dwell in their land, and blessing chase away the gross darkness of the earth? Whatever their thoughts afterward, their bitterest rancor broke out against those that announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One. If there was any difference, such “they slew.” It was a kingdom they wanted with ease and honor for themselves; not a king to reign in righteousness, and princes to rule in judgment. No care had they for the inalienable principles of His kingdom; no love, but heart-hatred of every quality of the divine nature, and of God's rights, which, if in abeyance, can never be abdicated. He was in none of their thoughts, nor His Anointed; and those who held Him before them were most obnoxious, so that the occasion failed not to work their violent death, And if their children built the tombs of the prophets, and flattered themselves that they were of wholly different temper and condition, the farthest remove from participation in the guilt of the prophets' blood, they only proved thereby that they were blinded by the enemy, and they witnessed to themselves that they were sons of those that slew them. For faith does not act in garnishing sepulchers, or in monumental tablets to the holy sufferers of days gone by; it walks and suffers reproach, if not worse persecution, in the days that are, looking for heaven and glory only when Christ appears.

Unbelief on the contrary seeks present satisfaction and credit in the honoring of those who render no more a living testimony to their consciences, and falls under the cheat of the enemy who builds up the higher that hypocritical temple of worldly religion where those once despised and slain as martyrs now fill a niche as idols.

And the Lord tested, as He always does, delusion and falsehood. He sends fresh testimony, and will till judgment. He sent His servants when on earth; He sent them from on high, as He continues to send. And the world hates the true and faithful, as it loves its own. But He Himself is ever the most searching of all tests; and how did He fare at their hands? “Of whom now ye became betrayers and murderers.”

It was possible to complain of others. No saint, no prophet, was immaculate or infallible. “In many things we all stumble” —I say not must, but do. And if it be so now since redemption and the gift of the Holy Spirit, it was assuredly so in the less privileged times that succeeded. The unfriendly eye of man could descry even in the most blessed of God's servants words and ways, which were sadly short of Christ, and might be perverted into an excuse for slighting their testimony. But what could they say or think of the Righteous One who appeals to them, “Which of you convinceth Me of sin?” “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?” He was indeed the Holy One of God, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, yet was He treated with altogether unprecedented and most aggravated scorn; and though lawless men had their hand in the cross, the heart and the will of the Jews were engaged in an incomparably deeper way. (John 19:11.) They were betrayers and murderers of their Messiah, Gel's Messiah; and Stephen only applies to the living Jews around him what the prophets had declared fully of old, what David had written in the Spirit long before Isaiah, and Micah, and Zechariah, to speak only of the plainest.

By one more characteristic does this most resolute witness of the Lord further explain their position and their guilt, “Which received the law as ordinances of angels and kept it not.” That law in which they boasted was their shame, certainly from no fault in it, for all the evil was in them. But so it is with man, and most of all with man professing to have a religion from God. His boast is most manifest condemnation. It matters little what he boasts in; it is at best worthless. There is indeed a resource given in God's infinite grace, where he may and ought to boast; but it is in the Lord; it is not in the law which he fondly flattered himself, he was keeping, when in fact he had utterly and miserably failed, and in all its parts, Godward and manward, in himself and toward others. The Lord he had definitively disdained; nor in truth does any soul receive Him till sense of sin before God breaks him down overwhelmingly, whilst notwithstanding he casts himself on God's mercy, till he sees the rich and perfect provision made for such as he is in the offering of the body of Christ once for all. Then he does truly boast in the Lord, as is meet.

The apostle's language in Gal. 3:19 materially helps to clear up the words of Stephen here, though it is (ε■ς διαταγ■ς ■γγ■λων) has been the occasion of strange perplexity and dispute among the learned to the depravation of the sense. Winer (32:4, 6,) refers to Matt. 12:41 as illustrative of the force here too of the preposition; but the difference of the phrases seems to render the desired sameness impossible. “Repenting at” the preaching of Jonah is very intelligible and clearly meant; not so “receiving” at ordinances of angels. Hence Alford, who follows this later suggestion of the German grammarian, understands it as “at the injunction” of angels. But this departs from the sense we had got for διαταγ■ς from Gal. 3 which signifies beyond just doubt “ordained” or administered through angels, not “enjoined” by them, a very distinct idea, as is also “promulgated.” Now what is the meaning of receiving the law at ordinances of angels? Those who take ε■ς here as “at” are obliged therefore, in order to make sense, to interpret δ. as “injunctions,” swerving in this from the true force of the participle in Gal. 3:19. It appears to me accordingly, that if it be

“ordinances” here in keeping with “ordained” there, we must understand ε■ς in the very common Hellenistic sense of “as” rather than “at,” the accusative of the predicate, to which Winer had inclined in earlier editions, and, as I believe, more rightly. Israel received the law, not as a code drawn up by human wisdom, but as administered by angels, and so, through their intervention, from God. Hence the solemnity of their failure to keep what was divine. The allusion seems to be to Deut. xxxiii. 2, Jehovah came from Sinai, rose up from Seir unto them; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came from myriads of holiness (or, holy myriads)—from His right hand a law of fire (or, fiery law) for them. Compare Psa. 68:17. It is needless to cite Josephus, Philo, or the Rabbis. What is of more moment, Heb. 2:2 quite falls in with the Galatians and our text. In the Septuagint we find singular confusion; for first instead of “holiness” they seem to have read it “Kadesh"; and yet, secondly, they bring “his angels” into the last clause, instead of “a law of fire"; so that this version errs greatly from the text.

The discourse thus is brought to a due conclusion, and this terse and pointed application does not sustain the notion of an abrupt stop which shut out words needful to complete Stephen's answer to the accusation. The facts adduced throughout, and now condensed in the final and most cutting appeal which laid bare their pride not more than their persistent rebellion and extreme ruin, appear to my mind singularly effective and complete. He begins with their habitual antagonism, fathers and sons alike, to the Holy Spirit; so that their prime religious badge had lost all meaning—their circumcision was become uncircumcision. They had persecuted the prophets, they had slain those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One; they had now actually betrayed and murdered Himself; and of course the law (received so solemnly through angels) they kept not, notwithstanding all these self-righteous pretensions, as if to have the law were to do it.

It was man, not left to himself, like the nations suffered to walk in their own ways, but governed as Israel was by God's law, enlightened by prophets, blessed with the coming of the Messiah, and according to the word that Jehovah covenanted when they came out of Egypt, so His Spirit stood among them: no people till then so privileged, none so guilty, and, we may add, so convicted; for they had broken the law, persecuted the prophets, slain the Messiah, and always resisted the Holy Ghost.

Chapter 54

On Acts 7:54-62

The closing scene of Stephen, and a very momentous turning point in God's ways, are brought before us vividly in the verses that follow.

“Now hearing these things they were deeply cut to their hearts, and gnashing their teeth at him. But being full of the Holy Spirit, looking fixedly into heaven, he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Lo, I behold the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. But they crying with a loud voice held their ears and rushed upon him with one accord, and cast out of the city and stoned [him]. And the witnesses laid aside their clothes at the feet of a young man called Saul, and stoned Stephen, invoking and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And kneeling down he cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And having said this he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting to the making him away” (7:54-60; 8:1).

It is for the truth told in love that those who are Christ's should suffer, for this only; and so it was now. For Stephen's love and faithfulness there was hatred, as with the Master.

But a more blessed picture nowhere appears of the Christian. The Jews resisted, he was full of, the Holy Spirit; his gaze was fixed on heaven, as ours should be; and he was given to see as we only by faith can see the glory of God and Jesus at His right hand.

It is true, there is a difference. It was as yet a transitional time and Jesus he saw “standing” there: He had not taken definitely His seat, but was still giving the Jews a final opportunity. Would they reject the testimony to Him gone on high indeed, but as a sign waiting if peradventure they might repent and He be sent to bring in the times of refreshing here below? Stephen in these last words accentuated the call, as he said, “Lo, I behold the heavens opened, and the Son of man” (for so He is attested, the rejected Messiah exalted in heaven for a far larger glory) “standing at the right hand of God” Thus not only does he look up as the characteristic outlook of the Christian, but the heavens he sees to be opened (another fact full of blessing to us), and Jesus is beheld as Son of man in the glory of God. He who came down Son of God in supreme love to die for us is gone up in righteousness, raised from the dead and glorified in heaven; and the believer filled with the Spirit and suffering, for His sake sees Him there. Once the heavens opened on Him here as He received the Holy Spirit and was acknowledged Son of God. By and by from the opened heaven He will come forth King of kings and Lord of lords to execute judgment on the quick. The place and privilege of the Christian is between these two, and Stephen here sets it forth in its fullest light.

“But they crying with a loud voice held their ears and rushed upon him with one accord, and cast out of the city and stoned [him], and the witnesses laid aside their clothes at the feet of a young man called Saul, and stoned Stephen invoking and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (ver. 57—56). Such was religious man, not secular or heathen, but now filled with murderous wrath, because he stands convicted of opposition to the present and full truth of God, utterly blind alike to His grace and His glory. And in that guilty scene was one not less dark and infuriated than the rest.

Saul of Tarsus, afterward to be the witness of the very Jesus whom he was then persecuting in Stephen's person; for he not only beheld, but took the part here assigned to him with those that stoned Stephen invoking and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

There is no ground for the addition in the Authorized Version, and a questionable need for that in the Revised Version. It was on the Lord that His dying servant called, as the blessed Lord dying commended His spirit to His Father's hands.

Each is exquisitely in place, which here is somewhat rudely disturbed by the common version. No one doubts that the usual address is to God, to the Father; but as little should it be forgotten that there are special circumstances where we not only may but ought to call on “the Lord,” as we see in the first chapter of the Acts, and also in 2 Cor. 12. But in no case is it sweeter than when the servant dies for his Master as here, though he rightly puts it as a prayer to the Lord to receive his spirit, not as the Lord Jesus so appropriately, and according to Scripture, commended His spirit into His Father's hands.

But this is far from all, blessed as it is. For “kneeling down he cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” There was nothing of consequence in calling with a loud voice on the Lord; for well he knew that. He would hear and answer the softest petition—that He would receive his spirit—as readily as in the loudest tones. His importunate earnestness was for others, divine love for his enemies then murdering him. It too was the reproduction of the spirit of Christ, the practical anticipation of what Peter exhorted later the saints to. “If ye do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently, this is acceptable [this is grace] with God.” Yea, it was more than taking patiently, as it was then simple suffering for well-doing. But it is set before us as the pattern for a believer now, practical grace rising above all injury and malice, present and perfect rest in the Savior, as become a heavenly man full of the Holy Spirit.

“ And having said this, he fell asleep.” Well he might: his work was done and well done; and his cup of suffering filled to the brim, but only so as to bring out his last and fervent cry, the intercession of love to the Lord on behalf of those who were slaying His servant. “And Saul,” it is added, “was consenting to the making him away.” He was not there accidentally, nor without full participation in the bloody business of that never-to-be-forgotten day.

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Chapter 56

On Alleged Neutrality and Real Sectarianism

May 15, 1882.

Dear Brother in Christ,—I presume the difficulty our sister felt is that the form in which you meet the call of Ventnor, or of others who subscribe the Park street decision, is said to be neutrality. But Phil. 3:15, 16, or Rom. 14 would be open to the same sort of charge from the violent brothers in the apostle's day. Neutrality where Christ's person is concerned, as in the Bethesda question, is great sin. The sin of Park St. and its followers is in making such a question as that of Ramsgate—an ecclesiastical difference—to be a test for assemblies, and even individuals, as I know is being done. Godly men might honestly stand in doubt of either A. H. or G. H. or both. To make a test of Ramsgate, therefore, is to split up assemblies, or to demoralize them by inducing many to accept for fellowship what they doubt about really. Quite apart from the merits of the question at Ramsgate, I believe it to be a departure from our fundamental principles, for Park street, or any other meeting, to take up such a dispute as this, and make it a question to divide the saints. The sin of division rests on those who seek so to force consciences. All but partisans would have agreed to leave G. H. and A. H. in the Lord's hands, and those of the assemblies where no vital question was at stake. I understand you to judge as such do, and as all brethren of weight and spiritual intelligence did, till this agitation made manifest a party bent on division, who were long felt to be desiring it secretly. For the person of Christ, or any like foundation truth, one would feel bound to reject, as we are commanded, those who bring not His doctrine. But to treat an assembly rupture as equivalent is to quit Scripture for tradition, which ever tends to put the church in Christ's place to God's dishonor. Those who do so are, in my judgment, a sect, and not to be owned as on God's ground—though one might receive saints from them for Christ's sake. Such is the way in which I regard all assemblies which accept the new test. Are you aware, is our sister aware, that we separated from Ebrington street (Plymouth), chiefly on ecclesiastical grounds, in 1845, two years before the heterodoxy of B. W. N. as to Christ became known and judged? During those two years saints going on with Mr. N. were allowed to break bread, if they wished it at the Lord's table with us; but after the proof of that terrible heterodoxy it was no longer allowed—they were utterly refused if they did not break with Mr. N. And this was what gave occasion to the guilty neutrality of Bethesda, which received those who did not bring the doctrine of Christ, and so became a partaker of their evil deeds. To call our position and yours Bethesdaism is, therefore, lack of knowledge and righteousness, of truth and charity. We abhor all neutrality where Christ is concerned, and own our responsibility to judge every evil thing, as I trust you do at Newport. Believe me, dear brother, to be yours faithfully in the Lord, W. K.

Chapter 57

The Approved

1 Cor. 11:19

How any intelligent soul could miss the apostle's meaning would be strange, if one did not know that a time of crisis overthrows the balance of many a mind. But it is a wrong when men mistake their measure because others flatter them, and give out inconsiderate sayings likely to sway the ignorant and confiding to God's dishonor.

Now “heresy” is not self-will, and is not the root but rather the fruit of “schism.” The exact rendering of the passage is “For first, when ye come together in assembly, i.e., as such, I hear that schisms exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must even be heresies, i.e., parties, among you, that the approved may be made manifest among you.” The splits already within, the schisms, indicated to the apostle's eye that heresies also, or parties without, would surely follow, which the Lord would turn to His glory, by manifesting the approved who would cleave to Him and set their faces against this party work. How different this from mischievous men going about and teaching that separations of this kind are wholesome, and would do the saints great good! How sad that they were allowed to act on it unrebuked abroad and at home.

The word “Self-will” (fti3Odc,a) does not occur in the N. T., and but once in the Septuagint. The adjective is found in Titus 1:7, and 2 Peter 2:10, self-pleasing literally rather than self-loving (cbiXavToQ, 2 Tim. 3:2), a headstrong perverse man, who is not selfish only but never so pleased with himself as when he snubs others. One has known such folk, and more among high than low who might fear to gratify their taste. The thing, self-will, alas! is common.

Had it been said that avoida, lawlessness, is the root of both schism and heresy, it would have been true, but certainly a rather safe and shallow remark, seeing that every one that does or practices sin practices also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

Now “heresy” in Scripture is not heterodoxy as in later ecclesiastical use, but the aggravated result of schism, when the party-spirited within try to form a faction or sect without. Hence “heresies,” sects, or schools of opinion, follow “divisions” or disputes in Gal. 5:20; as they follow “schisms” in 1 Cor. 11:19. Yet the reversal of this to my knowledge has of late gravely influenced godly but misdirected souls; and no wonder, when one of our most respected and aged brethren published, both in a separate tract and in an accredited periodical, the astounding statement— “HERESIES (the cause of the said divisions or sects)” with all the emphasis of capitals and italics. Every saint ought to know that this is not only to misrepresent but to invert the truth. Nevertheless some who assume to teach changed sides through this egregious error! Of course this and much more that was no better could have had no such effect, had it not fallen on ears which wished for a plea of Scripture at a time when others in the same ranks did not pretend to have any to go upon, yea avowed that they did not want Scripture! “Spiritual instincts” were enough, and theirs were all right! At least one of them who left his sweetness for this thorny affray ventured on another citation— “these be they who separate themselves,” Jude 19, with the mistaken comment that “it is

separation from the assembly that is meant.” Now the simple reading of this short epistle proves, if a Christian knew not a word of Greek, that these sensual or natural men, “not having the Spirit,” (which his amiable mind hesitates about, yet applies “in the abstract to the brethren in question,) did their mischief by coming in, not by going out. Their separating themselves was by making a coterie of high pretension within, and in no way by quitting the assembly to form a faction; whereas the “heretic” in Titus 3:10, having gone out, was just to be left alone (the true force of “reject") after a first or second admonition. For in general we cannot put out one who is gone out, the unscriptural device of “declaring out” those who did not go nor wish to go out being reserved for a later and more degenerate and willful day.

But one of the strangest vagaries in the way of interpreting Scripture, to which the divisionism of 1879-1881 gave rise is the statement not only that “heresy” is self-will, but that the apostle says, “Let a man approve himself! and so let him eat.” Not so; this is only what a man says, through the blinding spirit of party, perverting the mind of the Holy Ghost. The Authorized Version renders it “prove,” “try” and “examine,” which he says it is not, as also “discern,” “like,” “approve” or “allow.” Now the word really means to “put to the proof” (mentally or physically), and hence in a contextual meaning of a few cases, from “prove” to “approve.” But there has never been to my knowledge, in the whole history of God's church, a brother so wanting in spiritual tact as to understand the word here save as “prove” or “examine.”

One can see the propriety of the word probably advancing through the process to its result in such cases as Rom. 2:18, or xiv. 22; but to infer thence the lawfulness of so rendering the word in an instance like 1 Cor. 11:28 is distressingly erroneous. “Let a man approve himself!” Never does the Spirit so exhort a believer. Self-judgment is as right as self-approval is shockingly false; and I humbly think that the party for whom our brother wrote need no incentives from man, no perversion of God's word, to help them in a high opinion of their state. “When 'heresy' or self-will is working, and ‘schisms' are apparent as the result, we have to ‘approve' ourselves as regards our moral and spiritual condition, and so take our place at the table of the Lord, where the most prominent point is, not our rights and privileges or those of others, but the claims of Christ, as Lord of the assembly, and Head of the body.” I have cited this notable sentence literatim as it stands, that men of spiritual judgment, yea, that the writer himself, may have the patent proof before all eyes, how completely our brother has failed to purchase to himself a good degree in the faith that is in Christ. “Much boldness” in assertion we all see, and more inaccuracy than ever, since what he ventured to call his “fresh baptism with the Holy Ghost.” Let me assure him and our friends that “heresy” is not self-will, that “schisms” are rather the precursor and cause than the result, that we have to “prove” (not “approve") ourselves, that we should do well to beware of confounding the table of the Lord with that of a party, and that it is wholly unscriptural to speak of Christ as Lord “of the assembly.” Even in Eph. 5:29 it should be “Christ,” not “the Lord” as in the vulgar text and Authorized Version.

The aim of all this confusion is obviously to affix the stigma of “heresy,” under the erroneous notion of “self will,” on all who do not like themselves “bow” (this is the proper thing and fashionable word) to the Park Street decision as a true assembly judgment. When will these good people learn that only the decision of the gathered saints in London has any such character? This is and has been the avowed principle of brethren hitherto. To speak of the Park Street judgment therefore of itself reveals its independent or party character. And it was avowedly of Park Street only; but for the

information of others it was allowed on the notice paper. It was not a proposal submitted for the common decision of all the saints, which, alone in London, as every where else in such cases, has the authority of an assembly judgment. It was an independent act and position, the sequel of the independent Declaration in August, 1879, which was the parent not only of Guildford Hall in all its varying phases since that date, but of the entire movement of the party which bears on its brow the brand of distinct and self-condemned independency.

Chapter 58

On Assembly Action Where There Are Several Meetings in the Town

May 2nd, 1863

It seems to me unreasonable that gatherings should be called upon to give out names, with their own responsibility engaged thereby, and not have an opportunity of objecting or delaying. The Saturday meeting had for object, that those interested in the various gatherings should have an opportunity of fellowship or consultation, so as to effect concurrent action. That they bound anything is an utterly false accusation; and the way the enemy has sought to assail this meeting, through unprincipled attacks or personal feeling, is a proof to me that it is of God.

The reading out of the names even in the gatherings [the proposal] concludes nothing; for the very object is, that if there be objection it may be mentioned, and they are posted up with the request to do so to the persons whose names are attached, if there be such in any one's mind. It has happened that one in a gathering knew the previous walk of a person resident near another gathering, which the latter knew nothing of, and it was mentioned by the person who knew the circumstances, and a very ungodly person kept out. But it was long ago felt that it was desirable that a name should not be publicly given out until all practical inquiry was made; as it was very disagreeable to have a name publicly mentioned and demur made thereto on moral grounds, when it could be avoided. Hence the previous inquiry and consultation. Till they are announced to be received, nothing is officially done; but the previous inquiry is the ground on which that takes place.

Now, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the testimony of the local gatherings must be relied upon, and this is to be desired; but it would not be, if the others were precluded from saying anything where they may very possibly have something. And surely, if I am to give out people's names, I must have liberty to make a difficulty, if I have one; and I repeat the case has arisen, and the previous inquiry [is] just what gives efficiency to this process. If brethren who care for the saints were present from all the gatherings, mutual consultation and godly care could take place; and while they could not, and are not, meant to decide anything, they could bring the names, or anything else, before all the gatherings, with adequate previous inquiry, so that things should not be done rashly. Confidence would be produced in common action.

The notion of—I totally repudiate. London is not as large as Galatia. It is utterly false; and there was no agglomerated population, where a person could walk on a Sunday morning to another part of the town, perhaps when under questions of discipline where he resided. It is only a repetition of what — said, who does not practically know London and who likes local organization, which, after all, did not succeed with him. He often takes outward order and comeliness for inward power and unity according to the word. But I go on the facts: the analogy is wholly and practically false. The difficulties are practically great in London, but with cordial co-operation they disappear; and I believe in the power of the Spirit of God, to overcome the difficulties which arise from the immense size of the town, and to produce common action. If every one will go his own way, it cannot be; but you have independent churches, and members of them.

In Galatia a man was of a local church, and, if he went to another place, took a letter of commendation. Could I take one, say from the Priory, every Sunday morning I went down to Pimlico or Kennington? We are necessarily one body in London, and with grace can so walk.

I mourn these efforts to dislocate the united action hitherto carried out, but as yet will hope that we may not have the testimony that we have not enough of the power of God's Spirit to overcome the practical difficulties, but are obliged to confess that we give up the testimony to the unity of God's church in London. ——'s practical independency, or congregationalism, I repudiate with every energy I am capable of. What I earnestly desire is, the cordial co-operation of brethren to maintain common action in one body, according, to the scriptures and the unity of the Spirit of God; and I earnestly pray that the beloved brethren in London may be kept in grace seeking it, in the faithful desire of union, service in lowliness of heart; and I am sure of the faithfulness of God to help them, and carry it out in grace for them.

May the Lord bless and keep them. I have labored with them, and suffered with them, and trust the Lord that He will bless them in the unity of the Spirit of God. May they remember that there is one Spirit and one body.

2 August, 1877.

I do not think the plan mentioned in your letter, as pursued in the case there referred to, calculated to produce the co-operation desired at Bristol. The way to have things go on unitedly would be to have one (or two brethren, if preferred) from each of the four meetings, capable of adequately communicating the needed information in each case, meet in some place agreed upon outside all the gatherings, the proposed admissions and exclusions, or whatever else was the subject of interest, there communicated, and conference had upon them, and the result communicated to all the gatherings, not as a thing decided for them, but as the conclusion which those who had conferred had arrived at; and presented to each of the gatherings. Generally speaking, if the brethren who met were agreed, the matter would be concluded. If one of the gatherings disputed, there should be delay, and the Lord waited upon to make all clear. Better to wait on Him than to do things in a hurry.

3 August 15, 1877.

The local gathering would inquire locally, in some meeting of brethren for care, as to persons desiring communion, or cases of discipline; and the names and results carried to the general meeting; when, if all were clear and without further difficulty, the result would be carried to all the gatherings, and given out, not as decided, but as the result arrived at; and if the gatherings acquiesced, the matter would be closed. If there were any serious question or difficulty anywhere, the matter would have to be further gone into before the Lord.

In general the first local inquiry would settle it, but not always in places so near as those in Bristol, as more might be really known of persons in another gathering. Such has occurred in London, but here from the immense size of the town it is less frequent. No public announcement at all should be made till it went to all the gatherings from the central care-meeting.

If confidence is established, many preliminary communications may take place, even to form a local judgment of a case; as when a person has been recently living in another neighborhood, or

has had transactions there. Still the local gathering, where admission was sought or question of discipline raised, would first look into the case. The motive of common action before final decision is simple. If you receive at Clifton, you receive for all; and if it is one town, their Consciences are all immediately concerned in it. They met in houses in Jerusalem; but the five, thousand were all one assembly.

4

In London we are all “in one place,” however large. I never could have said, If the papers were given up. I might have said, if they were made independent churches, I could not go with them. The papers were a real means of hindering this, and with all defects they had worked well.

If brethren who cared for the saints in each gathering really in London met to carry out that care in unity, as servants to the different gatherings, it would be a most useful meeting; while admission and exclusion I hold to be the act of the whole assembly, and not rightly done otherwise. Practically, as I said in the letter you sent me, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, it is the local gathering which has to come to the conclusion; but unity is maintained by intercommunion in it, and in such a place as London it is a great safe-guard. And in special cases all are actually concerned in it together. A person may have been teaching false doctrine in many gatherings or troubling them in other ways. A little patience and weighing the matter before God all would be straight.

J. N. D.

Chapter 59

Assurance of Salvation Consistent With Fear and Trembling: Part 1

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” The blessed reason precedes: “He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification.” “For if Christ be not risen, your faith in vain, ye are yet in your sins.” But if He is, and if this work of the blessed Lord on the cross has not put away the sins of those that believe in Him, what is to do it? For without shedding of blood there is no remission, and there is no more sacrifice for sin. This forgiveness is in contrast with the legal state under Moses. By Him all that believe are justified from all things. (Acts xiii.) Repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in His name. His precursor John the Baptist came to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins. “To him give all the prophets witness that through his name whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of their sins.”

“ Her sins,” says the Savior, “which are many, are forgiven;” and to her he said: “Thy sins are forgiven, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” But it will be said, she loved much—no doubt, and repented deeply—and that was all right, for to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. We believe with the apostle Peter that Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and that thus “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth no sin.” Does this blessing come on any? We read that “faith is imputed for righteousness.” Was “thy faith hath saved thee” said exceptionally to the poor sinful woman, or written for our learning?

See what is said in Hebrews: “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge year consciences from dead works to serve the living God?” The service of the living God is a consequence, note, of a purged conscience. And, as it is reasoned in the same chapter, inasmuch as without shedding of blood there is no remission, if it was not wholly done on the cross, Christ must have often suffered; but now He has been once offered to bear the sins of many, and to them that look for Him He shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation. He has obtained an eternal redemption. Not only so; in consequence of this one sacrifice worshippers have no more conscience of sins. He does not say conflict with the flesh, but of sins imputed to us on the conscience; because Christ has borne them. The Jewish priests were ever standing up offering new sacrifices, interesting figures, yet such as could not put away sins; but Christ, having offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down. Why? For by one sacrifice He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. He has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, when He had by Himself purged our sins, and there He sits, as the glorified man, till His enemies be made His footstool.

As God's love and will was the source of this, and a divine work of atonement the ground of it, so a divine testimony assures us of it. The Holy Ghost is a witness, saying, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Further, it is written in Rom. 8 that we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry “Abba Father,” that is, we have the consciousness of being children, the Holy Ghost bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. So in Gal. 3, “We are all the children (sons) of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” and

(chap. iv.) “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” And elsewhere, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” The Lord Himself tells His disciples in John 14 that when the Comforter should be come, in that day we should know that He was in the Father, and we in Him, and He in us. Hence, according to Heb. 10, instead of (as in Heb. 9) there being a veil by which the Holy Ghost signified the way into the holiest was not made manifest, we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which He has consecrated, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and we are to draw near in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.

But I shall be told that we have to be humble. There is no safety without it. He resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. But nothing gives lowliness like the presence of God and communion with Himself. If we think of ourselves, we feel our own nothingness happy if this be so complete as to think of nothing but Him. But if the conscience be not purged, His presence Who is light awakens it, bringing the sense of the evil upon our souls; and confession is drawn out by confidence in His love. All this ministers to holiness, and there is no holiness without it. He makes us partakers of His holiness, even if He chastens us.

John wrote to all Christians “I write unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.” (1 John 2) What does this mean? Even the little children know the Father. As to being saved, I read: “He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling.” Again in Eph. 2:5, 9: “By grace ye are saved;” and this is not merely a principle, for the word is in the perfect passive, which declares the actual and abiding fact. The principle is there, of course, but a great deal more.

No intelligent Christian says he has no sin (1 John 8), the flesh in which no good thing is being ever there; but for salvation, if the Spirit of God dwell in us, we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, though the flesh be in us. But the words which precede are “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin,” the divine answer to the flesh being there. Perhaps it may be said in reply, “Yes; if we walk in the light.” This, though a very common, is a totally false view. But, if so, it is “in the light” as “He [God] is in the light.” Now if we walked according to the light as God is in it, we should want no cleansing at all.. Yet it is “If we walk in the light, as he is in it,” that is, the true full revelation of God who is light. (Compare chap. 8.) It is the Christian position, a reality. He walks in the true knowledge of God now revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. Failure is referred to in chap. ii. 1, 2.

We must not confound the flesh in us, and the imputation of sin, guilt, before God. How can I fear punishment if Christ has borne my sins? The Judge before whom I appear is the Savior that put them away. I speak of those who believe. The Christian is brought to be sure of salvation, because “He came to give the knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins.” Heb. 6:4-6 speaks not of conversion, nor forgiveness received at all, but the enjoyment of all the privileges of Christianity and open apostacy from it, and it is finally and hopelessly fatal: he meets fiery indignation which devours the adversaries. And this is not only so in this passage, but in every place where falling away is spoken of in the Hebrews, it is final and fatal, it is apostacy. It is impossible to renew them.

When the Galatians would add law to grace for justification, the apostle tells them they cannot be united, but that if they look to the law for justification, they cannot have Christ for it. The law specified and required man's righteousness for God most rightly and justly as a law, a perfect rule

for a child of Adam, with a curse if he did not keep it, which none ever did (Christ of course excepted). Thus as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse (for the law must be perfectly kept for righteousness under it); but in the gospel is the revelation of God's righteousness for men, because they had none for God. There was none righteous, no not one. Men are justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Now these two things cannot go together, that is, my accomplishment of law for righteousness, and God justifying me freely through Christ by His own righteousness through faith, because I have not done so. I will speak of holiness.; but you cannot have a man righteous by law-keeping, and righteous by grace through Christ's work, because he has not kept it, at the same time. If I make out righteousness by law, Christ is become of no effect to me, I have given up grace: for works of righteousness are not grace.

1 Cor. 10:19 is a most salutary warning too against light-minded presumption; but “thinketh he standeth” is nothing of “in Christ and Christ in us;” for such there is no condemnation. Nor will you find in the New Testament any word of a man being in Christ, or quickened, and lost. But this phrase does not necessarily involve final ruin. Any of us may fall if we are not watchful, and are on the way to do so, if we do not watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. God forbid any of us should take up these things lightly.

I will now take up another aspect of Christian truth and privileges—eternal life. This has a double aspect, and is spoken of accordingly, as is salvation, also in two ways. We have it, a life in Christ. It is also spoken of as the full result in glory: “the end, everlasting life.” There it is according to the counsels of God, when we shall be conformed to the image of his Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. This of course, I need not say, we have not got; we are not yet in glory. But eternal life we have. “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son; he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.” And John wrote that they might know that they had eternal life. God sent His only Son into the world that we might live through Him. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” (John 3:36.) Again, chapters v. 34; vi. 47-54, “Verily, verily, I say unto you: he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment], but is passed from death unto life” And again, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” (John 10:37, 38.) And the Lord insists on His Father's power, and, His interest in them. I can conceive nothing clearer than these passages.

John takes this side of divine truth—Christ come to be eternal life to us, Paul more of presenting us justified and accepted in Christ before God, though each speaks of both. Thus Paul says, “when Christ, who is our life,” &c. (Col. 3 and other passages.) “Christ liveth in me,” and “that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

But if the word of God be true, the believer is justified and has peace with God, and has everlasting life, and, if sealed with the Holy Ghost, knows he is in Christ, and Christ in him (John 14), has the witness in himself (1 John 4), has boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10), boldness in the day of judgment, because as Christ is, so is he in this world (1 John 4:17),(not surely in his personal perfection, how far from it! and I add the only Christian perfection is being like Christ in glory, but) in His relative place with God. Christ is gone to His

Father, and our Father, to His God and our God. We have received, not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.” Nothing can be clearer or more positive than scripture on the subject; we are reconciled to God, we have peace with God—how if our sins are not put away, it would be hard to tell if the fear of God be in our hearts.

Fear of sin has nothing to do with the possession of the forgiveness of sins unless that this cleansing of the conscience produces it; for who would fear to dirty himself, one who was quite clear to pay a visit to a superior, or one that was dirty already? But the whole thing is a mistake. The true fear of sin is the spirit of holiness, not justification, not the dread of punishment because of God's righteous wrath against sin, which in its place is just and useful, but because as having now a holy nature as born of God, I hate it in itself and as displeasing to God. A fear of wrath is not a fear of sin but of its consequences, which, though right in its place, is a very different thing.

Practical righteousness is the just judgment of good and evil, according to God's estimate of them and acting on and owning God's authority, and our responsibility in respect of it; it is made good in the judicial acts of God, of which the measure, as regards us, is our duty to God and our neighbor. In this we have failed, and now in grace through faith are dependent on Christ's work, not on ours; through that we rest on God's righteousness. On this, blessed as the teaching of scripture is on it, I do not now enter.

Holiness is the horror of evil, and delight in good, according to God's estimate of it (though of course our thoughts are imperfect) for its own sake, and as displeasing to God—supposing even there were no punishment at all—we must come by the first as sinners, but we get into the second, in principle, from the very beginning, but less sensibly till the conscience is purged, for we must come first as guilty sinners. But for this a new nature which does take God's estimate of good and evil for its guide and rule is necessary, and that new nature is a holy nature. This is connected with the recognition of God's authority, and, in its application to the conscience, will be connected in each with what he has actually done and been.

But there is no development of it in the affections, or communion, till justification and peace with God is settled. Its first effect of taking God's mind, His revelation of Himself in light, is to make us find out that we are guilty, unclean, and thus to work repentance. But for this I must learn confidence enough in God to be willing to open my heart to Him. And He has revealed Himself in love in Christ who is also this light to us. I see what I am before God, first rather what I have done, but His love leads me to confession of it, as the woman in the city that was a sinner, or Peter in the boat, or the prodigal unfit for God, knowing it, yet going to Him because He has revealed Himself to us. And this is genuine gospel repentance, fruit of God's quickening power, our being born of Him, and, His revealing Himself.

The first impressions may be more characterized on our coming to God by fear, if light predominates, more gently attractive, if the love does. But in all cases, in true repentance, there are both, because God is both; and God has revealed Himself and quickened me to see things, at least in principle, as He sees them, and judge them by a new nature and will: and my responsibility towards Him is felt. Now the first need here is not holiness in the delight of it. So in Deut. 16 the unleavened bread of the passover is the bread of affliction. There is the sense of the want of it, the new nature feels there ought to be holiness for God; it takes the character of not being accepted because of that want. What we crave is justification, forgiveness, and righteousness. But it is not

the question of holy affections and exercise, but the want of them pressing as guilt upon the soul. Now Christ's work meets all our guilt. If it does not, we are lost forever. God's holy authority in righteousness must be maintained. But it has been, and glorified on the cross, and His love at the same time fully, divinely, displayed.

A bad conscience cannot be in the exercise of loving affections. But the blood of Christ purges the conscience, making it perfect with God; and the sense of divine love which gave Christ to do it, and in which He gave Himself, possesses the soul by the Holy Ghost, by which the believer is then sealed. He delights in such a God, draws near to Him as his Father, dwells on His love shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, and knows he is in Christ and Christ is in him.

Christ too is precious to him; His lowly, lovely, perfect path on earth is the manna he feeds on; above all His dying, and perfect love there. And now he sees Him by faith at the right hand of God, in glory unveiled, and is thus changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. He knows that, when He shall appear, he will be like Him, seeing Him as He is; and he that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure.

Chapter 60

Assurance of Salvation Consistent With Fear and Trembling: Part 2

Holiness in life is the consequence of salvation. “He hath saved us and called us with a holy calling.” “Being made free from sin and become servants to God, we have our fruit unto holiness.” I admit that being born of God, and having received Christ as life, the principle of holiness is there (as all human nature is in a child of an hour old); but its conscious development and practical exercise is when the question of justification is settled. Desires there will be before, but ending in sorrow of heart, because the, desire is not satisfied: the heart is really under law. We must be holy; we feel that we are not.

Now at peace with God, and knowing that He who bore our sins is at the right hand of God (surely not bearing them now on Him, but sat down there when He had Himself purged our sins), we are sanctified by the truth, the Father's blessed word, Christ having sanctified Himself as man in glory that we might be sanctified through the truth. “Beholding with open face the glory of the Lord we are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” The affections of the heart are fixed on Christ as having so loved us and given Himself for us, and He is received into the heart, and we are thus, sanctified and grow up to Him, the Head in all things, His walk being the only true measure of ours.

And here it is that diligence of soul comes in, not in connection with redemption and justification. There is legal diligence as to that, but only to discover that we cannot succeed, not only that we are guilty and ungodly, which is the first thing, but that even if to will is present with us we cannot find how to perform that which is good; we first learn our sins in true repentance, and then ourselves, a deeper exercise yet. The former is treated in Romans i.-v. 11; the second in chapter v. 12 to the end of chapter viii.; in each part the answer of God in grace to our need being treated of. But supposing all this, there is still the working out our own salvation in fear and trembling.

Now it is perfectly evident that we cannot work out our redemption; we must, as the Psalm says, let that alone forever. Christ has finished the work and is as man at the right hand of God, because He has; and God has accepted it as complete. There is no more offering for sin. We have nothing to do with atonement; we cannot bear our sins, or we are lost forever. If we have a place with God, it is because Christ has borne them. That is settled forever. When He had made by Himself the purification of our sins, He sat down and is there continually, because all is done. But, further, we are in Christ, if sealed by the Holy Ghost, (that is, if real Christians), and we know it according to John 14.

Now there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. Also Christ is in us, found in the same eighth chapter of Romans, verse 10. Now as to Christ's having wrought redemption, borne my sins, I being in Him, and He in me, there is no working out by me. Exercised and brought to repentance we are surely, if it be a real work so as to feel our need, but then to believe in a finished work, and to know if we do that we are in Christ, and Christ in us, and so no possible condemnation for us. Scripture is plain. By One man's disobedience, the many are made righteous; and to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is

counted for righteousness.

Where then is the working out of salvation? The Christian is viewed in two ways in scripture, (1) as in Christ, and therefore as Christ before God, forgiven all the flesh's sins, no condemnation, boldness for the day of judgment, because as He (Christ) is, so are we in this world, and boldness to enter into the holiest now. But this supposes of course, and evidently, that his faith is genuine. But (2) as a fact, almost all Christians (the exceptions are rare) pass through a longer or shorter period of exercise and testing. They are men on the earth, even if ever so truly men in Christ. There is no doubt that if they are really in Christ, Christ will keep them; they will never perish; none shall pluck them out of the Savior's, hand He will confirm them to the end, that they may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful by whom they were called. Still they are tested and proved in their life down here, and, if ever so truly born of God, have much to hear, much to correct, much to learn of themselves, and of God's tender and faithful love, and what it is to be dead with Christ to sin and to the world; more to learn of the fullness of Christ, and to grow up unto Him in all things. A child a day old has as truly life as a man of thirty, and is just as much his father's child, and the object of his tender affections; but evidently his state is very different.

Now the work of Christ completes our salvation as to redemption, and making us His own. All true believers will be like Christ in glory. On this scripture leaves no shade or doubt. The perfection of His work is such, that while his conversion and faith were singularly bright, the thief with no time for progress cowl go straight to be Christ's companion the same day in Paradise. And we read in Col. 1, “Giving thanks to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;” but as a general rule, there is the race, the wilderness to cross, which makes part, not of the purpose, but in general of the ways of God. And, as to the course here below, salvation is spoken of as the full result in glory when Christ comes again (a salvation ready to be revealed), as well as the accomplished work of Christ at His first coming; and the Epistle to the Philippians always speaks of salvation in the former sense.

There is very little doctrine in this Epistle, but a most full and blessed development of the life of one living in the Spirit. Now, in this our course here below, the proof of reality is just the seriousness which works out the final salvation with fear and trembling, for the snares and dangers are real on the way, though there be the promise of being kept through them. That does not hinder their being there. The force of the passage however is misapprehended. Paul, when present, watched against and met the wiles of the enemy for them. He was now in prison. They were still in the conflict, and had to fight the good fight for themselves. But if they had lost Paul, they had not lost God. It was He that worked in them to will and to do. But it was a solemn thing to be the scene of conflict between God working in them and the power of darkness, though the victory of Him who wrought might be certain. But He works in us, we are kept by the power of God, through faith. Hence it is a moral process in the human soul; it is a testing, proving, sifting, teaching, helping: we learn ourselves and God, though the result in God's hands be not uncertain. But it bears most precious fruit. It teaches and maintains dependence, gives the experience of the sure faithfulness of God—of One who makes all things work together for good to them who love Him. We learn not only to glory in salvation, and in the hope of glory, but in tribulations, and finally in God Himself, whom we thus come to know, who withdraws not His eyes from the righteous.

It is not a question of righteousness. As to justifying righteousness, Christ is our righteousness; but God's constant unfailing watchfulness over, and care of, the righteous. Further, so far as we have learned of Him, we manifest the life of Christ in our mortal flesh; we are set as epistles of Christ. But how is it to be manifested if we have not got it? Let the reader here remark that all duties flow from the place we are already in, and are measured by it. Child, wife, servant, whatever the relation, I must be in it to be responsible for the duties of it. To be responsible to walk as a child of God, I must be one, and moreover, I must know it.

The Christian, every true believer, then, is redeemed and in Christ, where is no “if.” But he is also in fact on the road to glory, and must reach the goal to have it. He has the promise of being kept, but he is morally exercised along the road in dependence, in grace, in watchfulness and diligence, the true proof that it is a reality with him, that he knows himself and the God of love and the snares that surround him. It is a place that belongs to one who is redeemed, where he learns the ways of God, and His faithful unfailing love, and His holy government; and he works out his salvation in fear and trembling, for he is ever in danger as to his daily path to glory, though he is dependent and counts on the faithfulness of Him who keeps him. Christ's grace is sufficient for him, and His strength is made perfect in weakness.

Chapter 61

The Atonement Money

Ex. 30:11-16

The simpler our apprehension of “atonement,” or “reconciliation” (the same thing), the happier. It implies a change of condition towards God. Instead of being at a distance from Him, we are brought nigh—instead of being in a state of enmity, we are at peace with Him. Such is our condition. Whatever experience we may have of it, our condition is that of peace with God, when we have received the atonement which has been accomplished by the blood of the Cross.

But this reconciliation, this condition of peace with God, rests on the fact, that God finds His satisfaction in what Christ has done on the cross for us. My peace with God depends on His satisfaction in Christ. If God did not rest in Him and His work for me, I could not rest in God. If God's demand in righteousness against me had not been answered, I could have had no warrant for talking of reconciliation, or taking my place in peace before God. I was God's debtor—debtor to die under the penalty He had righteously put upon sin. Christ acted as my Surety with Him He undertook my cause as a sinner. If God had not been satisfied as to my responsibilities to Him, I should still be at a distance from Him, He would still have a question with me, a demand upon me and against me.

Therefore I ask, Has God been satisfied with what Christ has done for me? I answer, He has, for He has let me know this by the most wondrous, glorious, magnificent testimonies that can be conceived. He has published His satisfaction in the Cross of Christ, in Christ as the Purger of sins, by the mouth of the most unimpeachable witnesses that were ever heard in a Court where justice in full perfection presided to try the matter. He tells me that all His demands against me as a sinner are fully, righteously, discharged.

The rent veil declares it. The empty sepulcher declares it. The ascension of Christ declares it. The presence of the Holy Ghost here (gift as He is, and fruit, of the glorification of our Surety) declares it

Were ever such august testimonies delivered on the debating of a cause? Were witnesses of higher dignity, or of such unchallengeable credit, ever brought forward to give in their depositions? Were depositions ever rendered in such convincing style?

The sequel is well weighed. Peace with God is our condition, a condition settled by God Himself. For we plead the Cross of Christ as our title to peace, God Himself having declared that He and all His demands against us are satisfied in and by that Cross. God rests in Christ, and so do we.

My experience may be cold and feeble. It is so surely. It may be blotted by doubts and fears and other affections, of which I ought to be ashamed. But my condition is sure and strong—just as the throne of God itself. The Purger of sins has been raised from the death by which He answered for sins, and has been taken up to that throne as such a Purger; and if He can be moved, so must the throne where He sits. If He be disallowed there, the word and call and voice of God, that

summoned and seated Him there, must be gainsayed and disallowed also. “Being justified by faith we have peace with God,” is to be read as setting out our condition, rather than our experience. By faith in the death and resurrection of the Lamb of God, we are justified and in a state of acceptance with Him, standing in Divine righteousness, or “as the righteousness of God.” This is our state, our condition before Him, our relationship to Him Our experience may not measure it, but such it is; though surely our experience should be as our condition.

But let me look a little particularly at Ex. 30.

This ordinance of the atonement-money tells us, that God appropriates His elect to Himself, only as a ransomed people. And surely we know that to be so. If we be not ransomed, we are not His. If we are not in the value of the blood of Christ, we are not numbered to Him as of the lot of His inheritance, or as belonging to Him.

Before the institution of this ordinance, this had been a recognized truth. It was the first-born, whether of man or of beast, that was His in the land of Egypt, because it was the first-born who had been ransomed. (Ex. 12; 13) And after this time, in the day of the New Testament, we learn the same. The Lord Jesus says to Peter, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.” (John 13) And surely, again I may say, we know that this is so: only we have it here, among a thousand others, in the mouth of these three witnesses—by the testimony of the passover, by the testimony of this ordinance of the atonement-money, and of the word of his Lord to Peter in John 13.

But this ordinance not only tells us, that we are thus to find ourselves among the people of God, by being a ransomed people—a people who make mention before Him of the blood of Christ, and of that only, bringing with them into His presence the atonement-money and that only—but it also tells us, that He Himself has fixed and settled what that ransom or atonement-money shall be.

This is full of consolation, when we think of it. We learn all about the way of coming to God from Himself. We have not to reason about it, but to accept His account of the matter in all its characters. Every Israelite had to present himself to God with his half-shekel, which was called “the atonement money.” Whether he were rich or poor made no difference. He had not to measure his offering himself: the Lord had prescribed and settled what it was to be. And each and all appeared together in virtue of one and the same ransom.

So that we gather these conclusions in all clearness and decision and simplicity. It is the Divine good pleasure, and the sure revelation of God, that He will have His people with Him and before Him only as a ransomed people—the price and quality and measure of the ransom being settled entirely by Himself; so that they have not to object or to question, be they whom they may, rich or poor—and that in this way, all His people are not only thus reconciled and brought home to Him, but linked in one and the same salvation, and animated by one and the same spring of triumph and exultation.

The conscience of a believer, instructed by Scripture, may therefore indulge itself in these thoughts and assurances. The true half-shekel, the real atonement-money, and that is “the blood of the Lamb,” is the consideration, the full, adequate, settled consideration, on which the covenant of peace rests. It is a righteous ransom. God is just while He justifies he sinner who trusts in it. The Lord Himself says of it, “This is the new covenant in my blood.” It is called “the blood of the everlasting covenant;” and it is preached to us that, by virtue of it, God, as “the God of peace,” has

“brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,” a Savior-Shepherd for sinners (Heb. 13:20).

And I might add to this, and to what I have already said, that the adequacy of this mystic half-shekel, this precious blood of atonement, is finely set forth, in contrast with the insufficiency of all other sacrifices, in Heb. 10:1-18.

The insufficiency of all the Levitical offerings is there concluded from the testimony which they bear themselves. Out of their own mouth they are judged; and no judgment can be of a higher quality than that. Witness the fact that he who made those offerings, the priest in the Levitical sanctuary, only stood before God, having to go out again from the divine presence, in order to repeat the same sacrifice in the appointed time; the fact that such repetition was made year by year, thus keeping sin, and not the remission of it, in remembrance; the solemn recognition of the insufficiency of those sacrifices or offerings, by Christ Himself, when, in the volume of the book, He comes to present Himself as ready in the cause of sinners, to do God's will; and then, the impossibility of the thing itself, that the blood, of bulls and goats could take away sin.

In contrast with this, we get the adequacy of the blood of Christ strikingly testified and concluded by the fact that He is seated in the heavenly sanctuary, as having satisfied God by the sacrifice He has offered, and accordingly greeted and welcomed, and made to take His place forever before God as the Purger of sins; by the fact also, that He is now occupied with thoughts and expectations of His coming kingdom, needing no more to think about sin and the atonement for it; as He did, in the volume of the book, or in the day of settling the terms of the everlasting covenant; and by the further fact, that the Holy Ghost, in the new covenant which is sealed by the blood of Christ, tells of remission of sin; not, as did the Levitical priests over the sacrifices they offered, of the remembrance of it.

This is all encouraging and assuring. But I must add another thing. The adequacy of the true half-shekel, the true atonement-money, is not to be rested simply on the fact of its being appointed by God, but on its own nature. It is appointed of God, because of its nature, because of its intrinsic adequacy. It is a half-shekel “of the sanctuary,” having been weighed in the balances of the holy of holies, and found of full value before the throne of God. We are not to say, the blood of the Lamb is the appointed way, as though God might have chosen or taken some other. We are rather to say, it is the only way; for in that sacrifice, but in that only, God is just, and the Justifier of sinners! It is the price, the only price, which measures the debt, which satisfies the balances of the sanctuary, and which gives the sinner an answer to the throne of righteousness. Blessed mystery! it does all this. So that the Apostle loses himself in admiration, as he gazes at this great sight, as he meditates on that sacrifice which had in it the virtue of “spotlessness,” and of “the Eternal Spirit.” We see him treating with some scorn and indignity the thought of the blood of bulls and goats, saying: “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.” But with fervency of spirit, as one that was losing himself in wonder, love, and praise, looking at the cross of Christ, he says, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God"'? (Heb. 9:14; 10:4). J. G. B.

Chapter 62

The Barren Fig Tree

“ For the time of figs was not yet."-Mark 11:13.

IT seems to me that the above statement refers to the time of gathering figs, and not, as Dean Alford and others say, to the time of their being grown. If the latter “was not yet,” there would have been nothing strange in there being none on the tree. It would have been no proof of its barrenness, especially as there was a show of life in the presence of leaves upon it. For the Lord to have cursed the tree under such circumstances would have been quite unlike His equitable and patient dealings with Israel down to that moment, and still more unlike the grace that brought Him down into their midst. But if on the other hand the time for figs to have grown had arrived (figs appear before the leaves) and the time for gathering the crop had not come, the figs ought certainly to have been there.

As a type of Israel, this fig tree without fruit when there ought to have been is most striking and appropriate. Using this symbol, the Lord Jesus Christ says in Luke 13:7, “Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none.” Besides this, at the close of three successive dispensational cycles, He had previously assayed to bless Israel, to gather them together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and they would not.” Those occasions, which I believe to be specially referred to in His lamentation ovef Jerusalem (Luke 13:34) in the words “how often,” were—1st, at the Exodus: 2nd, at the dedication of the temple by Solomon; and 3rd, at the return from Babylon under Nehemiah. But now His personal ministry of digging about it and dunging it had given them another opportunity, and had run its course; but still there was no response to His forbearing goodness—no fruit to requite His labor of love. The words of Isaiah were fulfilled, “I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught and in vain (Isa. 49:4). The Lord therefore condemned the tree to its own barrenness forever. He did not make it barren, it was that already; but His sentence brought death” and presently the fig-tree withered away,” Matt. 21:19, 20. It was Israel after the flesh.

The Lord had been rejected at Jerusalem the day before, and had sought a lodging in Bethany. On the following morning He set out to pay another visit to the doomed city, and though the journey was short, He hungered by the way, a touching intimation He had taken no food, no morning meal. A fig would have refreshed Him, but alas! there was none. Think of this, and who and what He was!

The hour was come when the Son of man should be glorified: but “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” Instead of giving Him the crown and the scepter of the kingdom, they pierced His brow with a crown of thorns, and put a rush into His right hand for a scepter, spat in the face of the Holy one of God, and crucified Him. Thus they rejected Him, whom to have received would have been the fruit He sought at their hands for their blessing

The sentence the Lord pronounced on the fig-tree is the abiding sentence of God on Israel, on man in flesh, who can produce nothing acceptable to God. Except a man be born again, he cannot

see the kingdom of God. He cannot be improved out of his own sinnership. He cannot be developed into what He is not. He must be born quite anew. Happy is he who bows to this truth, and, ceasing to go about to establish human righteousness, submits himself to the righteousness of God. Such a soul will find in the world-rejected but risen and ascended Christ all that as a sinner his conscience needs, and all that as a believer his heart can desire. “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” G. O.

Chapter 63

The Bitten Israelite

Num. 21

Very happy it is to be discovering the glories of Scripture; specially in days when the infidel insolence of men is challenging it. Amalek, of old, dared to come out, and withstand the camp of Israel, though at that moment the cloud which carried the glory was resting on the camp; and, by-and-by, the great infidel confederacy of the last days will rise so high in pride and daring as to face the army of the white-horsed Rider descending from heaven. (Ex. 16, Rev. 19)

In like spirit is the heart of man now challenging the Book which carries the precious and mysterious glories of the wisdom of God. It is therefore good service to draw forth these glories, and let the oracles of God speak, in their own excellency, for the confusion of this iniquity. And one of these glories, a part of this excellency, is this, that it is found to be one breath that animates, one light that shines, one voice that is heard, in all the regions of this one Divine volume. For, in a manner, Moses may be said to re-appear in Paul, Isaiah in Peter, David in John, and the like. The light of the morning is the light of noonday and of evening, though, it is true, in different measures and conditions.

In turning now to the narrative, which this scripture gives us, we shall see this illustrated. We find in the first instance, that the Lord refuses to cancel the judgment that He had pronounced. The camp had sinned, and fiery serpents, messengers of death, were sent among them; and though Moses may pray and the people cry out in anguish of heart, the Lord will not remove those executioners of His righteous judgment. And this is His way in the gospel. The sentence of death pronounced at the beginning on sin is not reversed. That could not be. That would be the acknowledging of some mistake or infirmity; and that could not be. But God has His provisions in the face of the sentence of death. This is His way. Wonderful to tell it, He provides the sinner with an answer to His own demands in righteousness! At the beginning this was so, and so has it been again and again; so it is in this narrative.

God brought the bruised Seed of the woman into the death-stricken garden of Eden, and Adam, the self-ruined sinner, is provided for. Noah got from God the ark in the day of the flood, and Israel the sprinkled lintel in the day of the judgment of Egypt. David was told to raise an altar in the despised threshing-floor of an uncircumcised Jebusite; and that altar there had virtue to quiet the sword of the angel of death that was traveling on high over the doomed city. So the blood of Calvary had virtue to rend the vail from top to bottom, and open the high heavens to the captive of sin and death.

This is one of the beautiful unities in the revealed way of God.

It is not God canceling His judgments, but providing the sinner with an answer to them. This little narrative finely and vividly exhibits this. Israel had sinned, as we have seen, and fiery serpents were sent into the midst of them. They prayed that the serpents might be taken away; but no such prayer could prevail. The executioners of righteousness must remain in the camp—death must

follow sin, for God had said at the beginning, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” But the Lord commanded Moses to make a serpent of brass and set it on a pole, and then proclaim, as in the hearing of the whole camp, that every bitten Israelite who looked to that uplifted serpent should be healed and live.

This was life confronting death—a secret spring of life and healing in the midst of the powers of death; it was as the revelation of the bruised Seed of the woman in the freshly death-stricken garden of Eden. But this was not the withdrawing of the fiery serpents, as the camp had craved—it was not the canceling of the sentence which had been passed upon their sin; it was another, a different, and a higher thing; it was enabling the Israelite in the wilderness to triumph over that miserable estate in which he had involved himself. This is what it was. It was not simply an escape from it but a triumph over it; for an Israelite bitten by a fiery serpent, if he but looked at the brazen serpent, might then smile at the fiery serpents though still abroad in the camp; just as Noah long before, on the vantage-ground where grace and salvation had put him, might have smiled at the waters as they were rising around him; or as the Israelite in Egypt, under the sprinkled lintel, might have smiled at the sword of the destroying angel as he was passing through the land.

How excellent all this is! And this is still the gospel so consistent with itself is the way of God, and shadowed in like beauty in the story of Noah in the flood, or of the Israelite in Egypt, or of the bitten man of the camp in the wilderness who had looked at the serpent of brass. Such an one could not be bitten a second time; the sin against the Lord of the camp, which had quickened these ministers of death, had been met by the provisions of that same Lord of the camp Himself, and this was his security and his triumph. He was now in a better state than had he never been bitten. His state was then vulnerable, now it is impregnable; then he might have been wounded by the messenger of death, now he could not. So Adam clothed of God is beyond Adam in the nakedness of innocency: Adam the pardoned and accepted sinner, beyond Adam the upright creature.

God's riddle— “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness” —is expounded again and again. We have seen it before, and we see it here again. And in connection with all this, giving another look at Adam, I may say, that when his lips were opened over the woman the second time, they uttered a happier word than they had uttered the first time. “She shall be called Woman” did not express a joy equal to that he had tasted when, as we further read, “he called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.” To celebrate life from God, in the face of self-wrought death, is a far higher occupation for the heart, than to celebrate even the closing, crowning, gift of God in creation or in providence.

Now all this which we have traced in this little narrative in Num. 21, is again I say, the gospel. This is as the salvation of God. Nothing that was threatened had been canceled. All by the process of ruin and redemption is met and answered and satisfied. The blood of the everlasting covenant has given “the God of peace” to raise from the dead Jesus, as “the Shepherd of the sheep:” God Himself is righteously, gloriously, justified, and the sinner victoriously brought into a condition of certainty and impregnableness, and of holy thankful defiance of all the enmity and the attempts and the resources of the old destroyer.

But there is this further feature of the gospel impressed on this little narrative. The life or healing was to be individual—the bitten Israelite must look himself to the uplifted serpent. “Every one that

is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live," said the Lord to Moses; and then the history tells us, "If a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (verses 8, 9). So is it now as between us and God personally and individually in the gospel; and we may deeply bless Him that it is so. He individualizes and separates us to Himself, to talk to us about our sins, and settles the question of eternity with us. He sits with us alone at the well of Sychar, or sees us, our own very selves, under the fig tree, or feels our own touch in the midst of the busy crowd, or looks up to the sycamore tree to catch our eye, or meets us alone outside the camp, or on the floor of the Temple. His word in John 3 is like His word in Num. 21,— "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." A look will do it, but the look must be a personal individual act. Faith is the act of the soul in immediate dealing with God. Another cannot believe for me, nor can ordinances or human religious provisions take God's place in relation to me. I must look, and Christ must be lifted up. Blessed to tell it, He and I are to have to do one with another.

Thus it is, as reflected in this little narrative, and thus is it in the world-spread gospel. And surely these are wondrous witnesses of the way the grace and salvation of God have taken with us. God did not prevent sin. Nor has He canceled the judgment which He attached to it. Nor has He simply made things again as once they were. He gets out of the ruin something. better than that which had been ruined; and He has accomplished this in a way of unsullied righteousness, and of infinite display of His own name and glory. It is redemption and resurrection-life in victory, life won by Himself from the power of death.

But I must more particularly meditate on the Lord Jesus in the Gospel by John, as in connection with this.

The moment recorded in our narrative was no time for anything but a look; and that too, a look at the uplifted serpent. It would not have done for a bitten Israelite to occupy himself with any other object. Death was before him, if he did not look there. And it would have been the gracious service of any brother Israelite to have recalled him to that object, if he saw that his eye, or feared that his thoughts, were disposed to take up with any other.

It is such a part as this that the Lord Himself acts with Nicodemus in John 3 Nicodemus had come to Him as a Teacher. The Lord at once turns him into another direction, and lets him know that he must come to Him as a Savior or Life-giver. Nicodemus was seeking instruction. The Lord tells him that he needed life. And then He so orders His speech with him as to withdraw him from every thought and every object but the serpent of brass lifted on the pole in the wilderness. He lets him know, that he and all men, like bitten Israelites, were on their way to death, but that the brazen serpent, the Healer or Life-giver, God's salvation, was in the camp again, and that the look must again be given—must interpose again as between the bite and death, or the kingdom would be lost, and the sinner would perish.

Indeed it is according to this, or in the spirit of One who was withdrawing the eye of every who comes to Him from every object but the uplifted serpent, that the Lord Jesus conducts His ministry all through that Gospel by John. For He refuses to act in any character but that of a Savior. Men may come to Him in other relationships and for other ends, but He will not receive them. One may appeal to Him as a Doer of wonders, another man may flatter Him as a King, another may be for seating Him on a throne of judgment, another, like Nicodemus, may come to Him as a Revealer of the deep mysterious lessons of heaven. But He has no welcome for such; He does not entertain

approaches and appeals like these. He does not commit Himself to any or either of these. But when a convicted sinner comes to Him or stands before Him, when, in that way, a bitten Israelite looks to Him as the uplifted, the God-appointed Healer or Quickener of man, then He answers at once, and life and salvation are imparted.

What consolation! What grace in Him, what deliverance and blessing for us! What joy to meet God in such a character, and to see Him thus, as the Jesus of John's Gospel, so jealously holding Himself before us in that character, refusing to be received in any other. His loved Nicodemus was under long and patient training, ere he gave Him the look of a bitten Israelite. But he did at the end, and then did it blessedly and vigorously. (See John 19)

Precious truth indeed, and precious Savior who has provided us sinners with it! The look that was preached so long ago, in the midst of the camp of Israel in the wilderness, in the day of this twenty-first of Numbers, the Lord Jesus, the Jehovah of Israel, and the true Serpent of brass, preaches it still and again, and with all fervency and earnestness, in the Gospel by John.

But, again, the Lord lets us further know in that same Gospel, how He welcomes that look when it is given Him, and how immediately He answers it with the healing and salvation of God. Mark this in the case of Andrew and his companion, and of Nathanael in the first chapter. See this welcome finely and heartily expressed in His most gracious dealings with the Samaritan in the fourth chapter; and again read it in His words to the woman in the eighth chapter; and listen to it in His words to Peter in the sixth, when He turns to him upon the multitude refusing to give Him that look! And we have another witness of the same in chapter xii., when He speaks of Himself again as the uplifted brazen Serpent, and exults in the thought of gathering all men to Himself in that character. (See verse 32.)

Now these are characteristics in the true ordinance which we could not have gotten in the typical ordinance of Num. 21. We do not there find an Israelite, in the sweet affection as the Jesus of John, earnestly and carefully guiding the eye of his bitten brother to the uplifted Serpent. That was an affectionate exercise of heart that was reserved for the Savior Himself to practice and exhibit. Nor do we (for we could not) find the uplifted Serpent there welcoming and encouraging the eye that turned to it. But this also was reserved for the true, the living, the Divine, Healer of sinners ruined by the old fiery serpent of death. In Him we get these things. And thus, in a great sense, the half is not told us by the type—the original exceeds the fame that we had heard of it. Happy those poor sinners, who stand before the brazen Serpent who is now lifted up before their eyes in John's Gospel. They get the healing of God there, and a hearty welcome likewise.

We have, however, something more. We have this same earnestness and affection in the Holy Ghost as we have seen to be in the Son. We find it in the Epistle to the Galatians. How zealously is the Apostle Paul there, in the Spirit, occupied in either keeping the eye of the Galatians on Christ crucified, or turning them back to that object! He would alarm them by the fear of some witchery. He would challenge and rebuke them, and that sharply. He would yearn over them, and fain consent to travail in birth with them again. He would, in deepest affection, remind them of past days of blessedness, and solemnly contrast them with the present. He reasons with them also. And he tells them his own story, and the purpose of his heart touching this great object, the crucified Christ of God, the true uplifted Serpent of brass, how he had looked at it, and meant still to gaze, to live by the faith of it, and glory only in it.

All this is surely excellent. The Spirit in the Apostle is in company with the Son of the Evangelist; and the shadow is outdone by the substance. Affections are exercised in the Divine originals, which could never have been expressed in the typical ordinances.

Do we still discover a further secret, I may yet ask, when we compare this chapter in Numbers with St. John? Yes; the light that shines there, though the same light, is still brighter here. We discover this again in chapter 3.

There the Lord connects this look at the uplifted Serpent with the new birth. This had not been done in Num. 21, though it might have been derived from it. The now eternal life might have been discovered in the Israelite who had looked at that Serpent, because he was then breathing resurrection-life, which is eternal life. He was enjoying a life which had been provided for him by One who had met, in his behalf, the wounding of the old serpent who had the power of death. When he looked, he lived; and this life was a life won from death, a victorious life. In principle it was eternal life, such as the healing power of God, the salvation of God, the risen victorious Son breathes into the elect. I say not, that every Israelite who looked was introduced to this eternal life. It is not necessary to say that; but it is the expression of it. And this in its substance and reality we get in John 3 and are instructed by the Lord Himself to know that faith's look at the true brazen Serpent carries eternal life with it. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

And this truth is taught distinctly in 1 Peter 1 “Being born again,” says the inspired Apostle, “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.” And then he further teaches us where this word is to be found, where this seed of eternal life is to be picked up— “and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” the gospel being, as we know, the publication of the virtue of the true Serpent of brass, the Lamb of God, the Healer of sinners destroyed by the lie of the old serpent of death.

Chapter 64

Breaking Bread at the House of a Sick Person

Acts 2:46; 20:7 Cor. 11:20.

Q. A few, in a gathering, met on a week-day for the breaking of bread at the house, and at the request of a sick (perhaps dying) person, and another (who had previously expressed a desire to break bread, but who cannot go to the Lord's-day meetings for that purpose) is allowed to do so at the same time, both not having been publicly received at the Lord's table, and the gathering not having been previously acquainted with the intention thus to break bread.

1. Does this not in effect bring these two into fellowship?

2. Is it not irregular reception?

3. If the Lord's table is the expression of unity, should not intermediate meetings for breaking of bread he confined to those in fellowship?

A. Undoubtedly the breaking of bread is the sign of Christian fellowship, the communion of Christ's body and blood. And it is well, as a regular rule, to inform the assembly of any such act as breaking bread with a sick saint, as also of another expected to break bread there who could not usually, both being souls on adequate testimony recognized as members of Christ's body, against whom no valid objection existed. Otherwise the act, if done without such care, might become a plea for factious persons and real offenses against godly fellowship. Acts ii. 96 proves that there is no Scriptural hindrance. The saints at first used to break bread at home daily. A week-day, therefore, in a private house is no sufficient objection, though the Lord's-day be rightly owned as the constant claim of grace on all saints with the authority of the word in Acts 20:7, and in Cor. xi. xvi. But we have to take into account the present ruin of the church, and, while careful of order and zealous for edification, we must not forget the many members of Christ outside us as to whom we should act in gracious wisdom. Hence it is notorious that when at the close of many a conference breaking broad on a weekday, and in towns where there might or might not be saints gathered to Christ's name, we have gladly let known saints break bread with us though there had been no previous intimation. We should seek to apply the “one body and one Spirit” in grace, as well as stringently. Singleness of eye, with a heart of love, in subjection to the Lord, will have His guidance.

Chapter 65

Brief Thoughts on Ephesians 5

The character of the Epistle to the Ephesians is peculiar in this remarkable respect, that it sets the church already so entirely in Christ the Head, that it does not speak of the coming of the Lord. The reason is evident. It supposes the saint to be one with Christ, already sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Chr. 2:6), ever knowing the body to be united to the Head. As to blessing, it is “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” So as to testimony,—it is “that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.”

As to where we are put, we are not only “quickened together with Christ,” but “raised up together,” &e. Lastly, as to conflict, we are called to wrestle against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

If we look at the Lord as coming for His saints, we see them distinct from Him; and individually we are so, of course, and waiting for Him. If I am here and He is there, we are two and not one. But the truth in this Epistle rises higher, never looking at the saints as apart from, but as in, Christ. The whole body is seen so connected with the Head, by the power of the Spirit, that they cannot be separated— “members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” “No man hateth his own flesh.” Thus, then, in Ephesians, whether it is blessing, testimony, conflict, or where we are, all is heavenly, and the measure and standard of our conduct to be the heavenly man, “as the truth is in Jesus.”

In chap. 1 the counsels of God are considered. Chap. 2 is His power to usward who believe. Chap. 3 is the character of His blessing as to the Gentiles. Chap. 4 is the character of the saints as the body of Christ in heaven, and as the habitation of the Spirit down here; also the practice becoming such. In chapter 5 we have the exercise of Christ's love toward those so suited to Him. It is not only what is the plan of God that we need to know; but also what is the exercise of Christ's affections towards us in that plan. So here it is not the plans and thoughts of grace, but the exercise of grace. It shows us the way Christ feels in His relationship, whatever we are.

Divine teaching ever connects the commonest details of ordinary life with the highest privileges. That which loosens the bonds of common life is not the testimony of God, but strange doctrine which none should heed or spare. Whatever are the privileges of the saints, they are brought to the light; and it is by the light everything is tested. Those who have Christ can afford to have it so. Truth always justifies the conscience in a man in his commonplace duties (of course I mean a just conscience: there may be a morbid conscience). The truth ever would lead to the fulfillment of those common duties which all own to be duties; and this is the grace of Christ.

Again, whenever the grace and love of God act on a saint, it always goes back to God. Thus the incense in the Holy place ever ascended, but the fragrance was not for the priests but for God. It was done entirely for God, and the sweet savor was diffused all around. Whatever Christ did, He did to God, and it was a sweet savor. If it is not so with us, it is nothing but selfishness.

Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us. “Here is the greatest act of love to us,” but it was a sacrifice to God (verse 2) of a “sweet smelling savor.” Love cannot come down and act in this perfect—this heavenly—man, without its perfection being God-ward. Love, having God ever before it, can go on ever according to the mind of God, amidst all opposition. In its perfectness this could be found only in Christ. We have it, but mingled with much failure. Love comes down from God, and must return to God. We know how self-applause and many mixed motives creep in with us afterward, even if not at the time; but oh, beloved brethren, we should earnestly seek that our motives may be single and God-ward. It is a dreadful thing for the grace which God has given to be used for self. Never did Christ seek His own glory. It was His Father's glory. It is indispensable for internal (I speak not of external) holiness to have the heart exercised about this. This broad truth is laid down (verse 5), but rests not here. “Because of these things (verse 6) the wrath of God cometh, &c.” Mark, unbelief is the root of all sins; it is not the only sin, and all sins deny the character of God. All our privileges bring us to God. God has a certain character, and He cannot allow anything unsuitable to that. Ye were darkness, but now are ye light. It is not we have got light, but we are light: the very nature is light. Darkness and light can never be together.

Verse 8: “Ye were darkness,” &c. This principle having been laid down, we have the measure and standard of this light (verse 14), even Christ Himself. “Awake thou that sleepest, &c.” Christ is the standard. You are asleep a little, not dead actually, but practically as dead. Let me awake, and enjoy all I can in Christ. What do I get in Christ? Everything. This “awaking does not mean the conscience merely avoiding certain things; but it is the having Christ Himself, as” formed in us.” While I have the nature, I have also Christ the object before me, and He is Light. Light is before my soul, as well as within. Christ is my life, and I get in Christ divine perfectness as well as life. “Christ shall give thee light.” Let us take one instance. People think it a great matter if a man has what they call a “fine fortune” left him. But Christ says, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance,” &c. “We to them that are rich:” riches may be the ruin of a mat is that light?

Verse 15: “See that ye walk circumspectly, &c., not as fools, but as wise.” This is not only to avoid certain things, but there is something to be gained: divine wisdom to live Christ. We have to walk with all the wisdom God. Satan is seeking to trip us up, to dim our testimony, to cause that to be seen in us which is not Christ.

“Redeeming the time” (verse 16): we are called, in a world that is against us, to be awaiting every opportunity to seize for Christ. To live Christ before the world, that is wisdom; “redeeming the time” is not merely not wasting it. The devil seeks to pre-occupy men's thoughts and affections: we want to redeem time from this, by seeking every opportunity of introducing Christ

Verse 18: “Be filled with the Spirit” —nothing but the Spirit. It is a vessel filled with one thing—the Holy Ghost, the spring and source in the soul of all you do and Christ will be the object. The Spirit may give understanding, and the mind still be working, but when “filled with the Spirit” the whole man becomes the instrument in His hands, so that he thinks, feels, utter only what the Spirit gives. The word of God will govern for, mark, I speak here of power, not of revelation Thus “filled with the Spirit,” the flesh would not meddle with the things of God. But too often we mi up our own thoughts, and we introduce things at the wrong time. We want to be as clay molded by Him. What a deliverance is this from self! what a consciousness of the power of God in us when thus filled

with the Spirit! All must acknowledge how little of this there is in us. All is so mingled. There is so little of the complete setting aside of all that is of man. If we fail, the conscience has to be dealt with; but our normal condition is to be walking with God, “filled with the Spirit;” our proper joy is in God. So, verse 19, “Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” While looking up, looking down, “giving thanks to God and the Father.” What, for tribulation? Yes! because the Spirit gives me to see God in the tribulation. “Filled with the Spirit,” I am ever giving thanks to God. See how Christ rejoiced in spirit, saying “I thank Thee, Father” (Matt. 11), when still, as to circumstances of sorrow around, His heart was breaking. The secret of this was, that while grieved at Israel's rejection of Him, He was in perfect communion with His Father, and with the glorious thoughts of God about His Son.

Very often the flesh is not broken down enough to make a man take the place, and walk in the truth, which God Himself has revealed to the soul. Thus it was with Peter (Matt. 16:17, 21-23). Though he had just made the blessed confession of Christ which the Father had revealed to him, as the Christ, the Son of the living God, when the Lord spoke of His path of humiliation, as Son of man, Peter could not bear it, and beseeches Him not to speak thus. Peter's flesh was not broken down enough to walk in the power of the truth he had received and rejoiced in. So it is with us.

In verse 25, &c., God is bringing out what Christ is in His relationship to His body the church. As in Rom. 8, it is in the first part of the chapter God IN us, and in the latter part God FOR us (and thus we are said to be predestinated, justified, glorified, and sanctification is not spoken of); so here God speaks of what Christ is for the church. The spring of all is Christ's love. “He loved the church.” God showed Him that pearl of great price, and Christ must have it, though He give Himself for it! All that Christ is in the perfection of His holiness, wisdom, and grace, all that is Himself, all He gave for the church (the shedding of His blood is not spoken of here): not only what He had, not only His life, but Himself. A man cannot give more than himself. Thus wholly is Christ ours by Divine gift, and according to the perfectness with which God gives. Christ loved the church, but having a bride, He must have her according to His own mind. He does not sanctify her first and then make her His own, but He makes her His own in order to sanctify her (see verses 25, 26.) Hence the “washing of water by the word.” The written word is the mind of God. Thus Christ gives the expression of His own heart and mind to the church in the word, in order to make it like Himself. “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.” This testimony to all that God is in Christ is applied to the Church to conform her to Himself. God must have the Lamb's wife like Himself (partakers of the Divine nature). Even nature teaches this, and thus Christ applies the word which is the revelation of God in Christ, in order to bring us into this likeness to Himself, and to cause God's thoughts to be ours. See verses 2, 3 of chap. 1, “Holy and without blame before Him in love.” This is what God is, and this is what the love of Christ is doing for the church. “That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” The word cleanses a man's affections, and not only cleanses, but the end is to make glorious. Even now the glory shines in on us, and we are changed from glory to glory, &c. Thus the apostle; he saw the light—the light of Christ at the end, and each step as he approached he got more of that light. The power of the glory is applied by Christ through the word. Christ must have the church for himself. We get this principle in Song of Solomon (not that I think we have the church in Song of Solomon but the Jewish remnant; still, we get the principles of Christ's love there). The first thought is having got Christ; but then follows, “I am my Beloved's, and His desire is towards me.” I belong to

Christ. It is a remarkable and beautiful expression in Gen. 2:22 (with reference to Eve as a type of the church) “the Lord God builded” (see margin) “a woman.”

The Lord God presents this woman to Adam. The second Adam, being the Lord God, “presents” His glorious church without “spot” to “Himself.”

All the perfection of God became man in order that He might be satisfied as to His church. Ah! here the heart gets happy and humble. It is when I am dependent on the affection of another that my heart gets humbled, and learns to rest in a sanctified way upon the object of affection. Our hearts no longer thirst (see John 4:14). We get our life out of Christ, Gal. 2:20: “The life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” All through this time of our weakness we have the unceasing love of one who nourishes and cherishes us as His own flesh; and there is a kind of blessed necessity for this. “No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ the church: for we are members of His body, &c.

Verse 28. It is most sweet to take the motive of our duties from the pattern we have in Christ. There is not one relationship owned by God for which we fail to find a pattern in the things of God. In this passage it is the devotedness of love. It is not the blood, but all the perfect, the precious, tender, unceasing care of love (of His Son who gave Himself for us), until He shall present us to Himself a glorious church, holy and without blemish.

Beloved brethren, how our hearts need to be learning more of this love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Chapter 66

Burnt-Offering

The Book of Leviticus opens with Jehovah calling to Moses out of the Tabernacle. It is a question of approach to Himself the offerings being the means of typifying the work of Christ by which we are brought to God.

There is a definite distinction between the first two sacrifices we have here (to which the third is an appendix), and those for sin. The burnt-offering and the meat-offering stand alone, and dependent on them the peace (or communion) offering; and then follow those of another character, the sin and trespass offerings. Such are the two classes.

Wherever we meet the actual use and application of the offerings, it is in a different order from the revelation of them here. In the revelation we get them as God presents them, looking at Christ: but in the use of them man's need comes first. Here it is God's Fide, and the burnt-offering, like the meat and peace offerings, is a sacrifice by fire of a sweet savor to the Lord: an expression never used of the sin-offering, except in one single verse.

It gives a very definite character to these two first, that it is their aspect towards God, His character and nature. When we come as sinners, it is in respect of what our sins are; but our apprehension of the meaning and value of Christ's death is greatly enhanced by seeing God's part in it. I must confess my sins—it is the only true way of coming, but there is propitiation through faith in His blood; and then I find all that is essential in these sacrifices as regards God in their proper nature and value.

There is no particular sin here: it, was for sin of course, but it was not an individual confessing some particular sin. It is striking enough that until the institution of the law, you never get sin offerings; except in the case of Cain, of which I do not doubt myself (though I know it is a question of interpretation) that it is, “a sin-offering lieth at the door,” sin and sin-offering being the same word. But the word is never used again in that way, till the law. We have burnt-offerings and peace-offerings often.

The burnt-offering is the great basis, because it is God's glory in what has been done for sin. We must come, as has been said, by the sin-offering. “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” But it is another thing when I look at Christ's offering and sacrifice as glorifying God perfectly in all that He is, and that in respect of sin. He said, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life;” a very remarkable word, for none could give a “therefore” to God for His love but Christ. The difference between divine love and human love is, that God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us: whereas scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. If man gets sufficient motive, he will sacrifice his life; but without any motive Christ gave Himself, God gave His Son: it characterizes the love. In John 10:11 He lays down His life “for the sheep;” but in verse 17 He does not say it is for the sheep. He has glorified God in death, in the place of sin; and He is glorified as man at the right hand of God. He goes up into that place where we get morally what

the sacrifice was in God's sight.

Nothing is said about sins in this chapter, though sin was there, bloodshedding, death, showing sin was the thing in question; and yet the sacrifice was absolutely a sweet savor, that blessed character of the sacrifice of Christ which settles every question of good and evil in God's sight. The terrible fact was that in the creature of God's predilection sin had come in. People say that Adam learned to know evil, whereas he had only known good before; but that is not at all the point. “The man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil.” It is knowing the difference between right and wrong.

Man was the one in whom God was going to be perfectly glorified; His delights were with the sons of men. He did not take up angels, but the seed of Abraham. We are to be eternally conformed to the image of God's Son. In the mean time, Satan had prevailed over the first man; after lust came transgression, and all was over as regards his responsibility. His state was made to depend on one single thing that required obedience. He might have eaten of all the trees in the garden, if God had not forbidden one; it was not a question of any positive sin, but the claim of obedience. It was a thing to put angels to confusion, God's beautiful creature ruined! Lust and violence came in, till God had to destroy it all. Everybody knows what the evil is: you cannot go into a great city like this, without knowing that the evil is such that none but God Himself could have patience with it. It has been truly said, if trusted to one of us, we should destroy it in an hour. Man, in the hand of Satan, degraded himself end turned everything to confusion.

Another thing is to be observed: God tried man in every way. The question was raised, Was there any remedy for this? In the first place He destroyed them with a judgment; then He called Abraham; then came the test of the law. All the things required by the law were duties already. The law did not make them duties; but it was God's statement of the obligation of those duties and God's claim upon man to fulfill them. The sacrifices were introduced consequent upon that. As to the state of man's heart, nothing could have been more decided than when he cast God off for the one thing he was told not to do. Then came a totally distinct thing. Man being not only a sinner but a transgressor, God was here in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing trespasses. He came in perfect goodness close to man; He touched man, so to speak—holiness in all His walk, but divine love in everything He did. Made flesh He dwelt among us; not visiting merely as with Abraham, but He was down here as a man, manifesting what He is towards men. This was the last trial to which God put man, to see whether there was anything He could awaken in man towards God, come in goodness from His Father, walking amongst men in grace, so that there was no sorrow He did not meet. But we know how it ended for the time: He was totally rejected; and this closed man's history, his moral history. Not only had he sinned, so that he must be turned out of an innocent paradise because he was not innocent, but he had rejected God's Son come in love.

But now came the accomplishment of the divine work of redemption; There was a sacrifice. I get the blessed Son of God giving Himself, made sin in God's sight, totally alone, and, as to the suffering of His soul, forsaken of God. The sin is dealt with: I must come by my guilt; but this presents it from God's side and view. Absolute evil is in man; and God met man with the perfect revelation of good. But it drew out hatred—such was the effect: the carnal mind, enmity against God, hatred against Him manifested in goodness. Satan's power is complete over man, Christ's

own disciples forsaking Him, the rest wagging their heads at Him, glad to get rid of God and good. He had gone so low for our guilt and God's glory, that even the thief hung with Him could insult Him!

With the blessed Lord Himself is just the opposite: man in perfect goodness, love to the Father, and obedience at all cost. “That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.” Perfect in the place of sin, where this question had been brought to an issue, made pin in God's sight in perfect love to His Father and perfect obedience. But further, in the cross I see God in absolute righteousness against sin, yet in perfect love to the sinner; man in absolute badness, and Satan's power complete, but in Christ man in absolute obedience.

This laid the basis of it all; it brought angels desiring to look into it, to see the Just suffering for the unjust It was not weak mercy giving up holiness and righteousness, but the absolute expression of majesty and righteousness. “It became Him,” that if God's Son were made sin, He must be dealt with as such. There was no escape! He gave Himself for it; “a body hast thou prepared me.” Totally alone there, with none to comfort Him, and strong bulls of Bashan around, He says, “Be not thou far from me, O Lord,” and He had to be forsaken of God.

Such was the condition man was in that it was his delight to get rid of God—and God too, not come to judge man, but to reconcile him to Himself!

But God's eternal counsels were in it, and Christ gave Himself. All that God is was brought out and made good there, when man under Satan's power had succeeded in getting rid of Christ. He giving up Himself, God was glorified in Him. There was the secret work of God, who used it to accomplish the very thing by which Satan sought to frustrate it. Satan's power seemed to have its way when he got rid of Christ from the world; but all was then brought to an issue before God. And this gives the immutability of the blessing. All was finished on which everlasting righteousness is founded. It was not a state of innocence whose preservation hung on yet unsatisfied responsibility: the unchanging blessing of the new heavens and the new earth depends on that whose worth cannot change.

Morally speaking, the cross maintains it all. The question of good and evil, raised in the garden of Eden, was settled in the cross. We see the blessed Son of God never using His divine power to screen Himself from suffering, not using it to hinder the suffering but to sustain Him in it, enabling Him to bear what none could have gone through without it. When I come to God in this way, I apprehend what sin is, not merely my actual sins, but that in me dwelleth no good thing.

There is One hanging upon the cross, made sin before God at the very moment when the fall character of sin was manifested in the rejection of Christ. And there, where man was wholly a sinner and Christ stood in that place for him, all that God is was brought out: Where could you find full righteousness against sin? In no place but the cross, which gives perfect righteousness against sin and love to the sinner in that same blessed work, and this in a man, and when sin was brought out in its worst character.

Look at Him at the grave of Lazarus, a wonderful scene! The Lord was there in perfect obedience, for when they sent the tenderest message to Him (“Lord, he whom thou loveth is sick”), He abode still, two days where He was. Death was weighing upon their spirits: what made Him weep? He

was not weeping for Lazarus. Death was there, and it seemed all over; but no, “I am the resurrection and the life” —I am come into this scene where death is lying on your hearts; I am the resurrection and the life in the midst of it. And when this was shown, which even Thomas saw was on His path, He goes out Himself to die! There did not remain a slur or stain upon what God is. Not only was His righteous judgment against sin shown, as it could be nowhere else, but His love in that He spared not His own Son. That work and act of Christ went up as a sweet savor to God. He gives Himself in perfect devoted love to His Father. Perfect love was manifested, and all that God is. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” Outward dishonor, but moral glory; what was in the nature of God, and what was in man as hatred against God, was all brought out, Christ giving Himself up wholly and totally, that God should be perfectly glorified; so that in that sense of the word God was a debtor to man for the infinite glory brought to Him, and this where sin and death had come in! He hung there as made sin, and God is more glorified than if sin had never come in. It is a wonderful thing. There is nothing like it! He does bear our sins, blessed be His Name; but when we see the blessed Son of God made sin, is there anything like that? None of us can speak of it properly, but I trust your hearts will look at it and feed upon it.

But what I have not yet referred to is, that the offerer was to do it (not exactly “of his own voluntary will,” but) for his acceptance. I leave the offering now for the man who comes by it. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” Coming by that sacrifice—it is important our hearts should get hold of it—I am accepted in the Beloved; I go to God in the sweet savor of all that Christ is. It is not simply that my sins are put away—there I can stand in righteousness as to my sins before God—but, coming by that in which God delights, He delights in me as in it, and I am loved as Christ is loved. It brings into fellowship with God as to the value of Christ's place. I know He takes perfect delight in me. I am a worthless creature in myself, and the more I know it the better; but there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. I go to God in faith, in the perfect sweet savor of Christ. It is not a question of any particular sin, but I go to God with the consciousness of being received and delighted in; I go as the fruit of the travail of His soul. God sees in me the perfection of Christ's work, and it is forever and ever; but it rests upon our hearts now.

We must come by the sin-offering, but we have in the burnt-offering a great deal more. No actual sin is spoken of, but the sense of what His glory requires accomplished in Christ, where sin was; that there is nothing also in the character of God not perfectly glorified, and this in love to us. It is not merely that my sins are put away, but I go offering Christ, so to speak. I present Christ, and God testifies of the gift. What is the measure of my righteousness? Christ; and therefore we are received to the glory of God. And now, in weakness and infirmity here, speaking of our standing before God, it is in all the delight He had, not merely in Christ as a living Man, but in all the perfection of His work in the place of sin, where all that He is was glorified—obedient unto death.

One may not like saying, Where are your hearts about it? but—what I do desire for us all—Does my soul go to God, owning that righteousness of God, that love of God, the gift of God in it, and that He testifies of the gifts?

May He give us to see, though we never can fathom it, what it was to that Holy One, who was the delight of His Father's bosom, to be made sin; that our souls may feed on Him, eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and not only know that we are washed from our sins.

Chapter 67

Christian Liberty

The Christian is 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 lasts 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 and 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. 3:8). The believer, 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 employed, 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, but exacts, righteousness. 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. He 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 68

Christian Partnership

My dear Brother,—I take an early opportunity of replying to yours, as the contents interest me much; moreover I desire to answer to your wishes and anxiety to know and do the Lord's will as to business matters with your brother:—Whether Scripture is against your being united in common interest with a natural brother? Can you really be partners in business starting together, knowing the one to be converted to God, and the other not? How far too, you ask, does the latter end of 2 Cor. 6 bear upon it, together with the warning in 2 Tim. 3:1, of some who in the last days would be found void of natural affection?

It is well when there is exercise of soul as to any step in the path of the believer; for we may be sure that the smallest step is of interest to Him to whom we belong, and without whom He would not have us act in anything. Psa. 32:8 is a divine principle for guidance, though it does not exactly embrace the matter of association, neither may it rise up to the standard of the Christian, as set forth in the Gospels or Epistles.

The fact that, in natural relationship, you and your brother are united by one of the closest ties, I most fully admit. But the question is—now that you have life in Christ, are redeemed to God, and no less bought to be for Him whose precious blood was shed to that end—how far you can have common interests, and voluntarily unite yourself with one (though a brother in the flesh) who is without what grace has given you?

If God in grace has made the difference between you, can you form links where there is nothing in common, not merely as to eternity, but as to the present time, the alone given moment to glorify God? The point is, must business be done only for the bread that perisheth and simply in uprightness? or as having higher motives and objects threading through everything, such as no natural man can possibly have? For, consistently with a fallen nature and corrupt will, it must be, if at all, God second and self first. In this sense two so opposed in nature cannot possibly be partners, save by separating the interests of God and His claims from business, or by each acting dividedly in it, which would be a practical denial. Are we to live and act for Christ, as well as be controlled by truth in all matters of daily life? If so, how is it possible for an unconverted person to do this? In matters of mere right and wrong he may, but can a Christian reduce practice to this, even in buying and selling? If prayer and thanksgiving are to be connected with everything, how can two with opposed natures carry out this? How irksome to the one, whilst happy and strengthening to the other

I have begun therefore with the practical carrying out of such a union, though admitting how low Christians may be in their business habits as to these things; yet how much lower must they reduce themselves, to accept a position by forming associations that make Christian fellowship impossible! All this is independent in a sense of what Scripture directly teaches. In 1 Cor. 10 it is written, “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” This is very comprehensive for daily walk and action, embracing that which the body needs: an exhortation connecting with it the glory of God, which no unconverted person can answer to,

seeing that they are in their sins and do come short of the glory of God. In Eph. 4 the believer is to walk exactly opposite to those who are ignorant of the life of God. In Col. 3 the Christian, having been, looked upon as dead and risen with Christ, is as a result to seek the things above then further on, when embracing the very details; if life here, he is enjoined thus, “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

There is evidently no mistake as to how far this goes, and how impossible for two to walk together in heart and purpose, if one does not know the Christ of God, or possesses not life in Him. If God therefore makes a difference and gives responsibility to such (outside the thought, much less the reach, of others) what have we to do or say, but happily obey, commending that life with its blessedness to those still strangers to it? I am sure, dear brother, it is your desire to please the Lord at all cost, I also see your exercise, so as not to exceed Scripture on the one hand (as alas! we judge many have lately done), neither to ignore our responsibilities when plainly set forth. For my own part I have not a doubt, that real union in trade with one not actually converted to God, however close the tie, would be for neither the glory of God nor the real blessing of those so united. True, Christendom presents a sad spectacle in this, whether socially, ecclesiastically, or commercially; nevertheless Scripture remains the unalterable test and unerring rule. If the former shows a sad mixture of “woolen and linen,” the latter has forbidden it, and the approaching judgment of Christendom will be the righteous indignation of God upon its assumption and disobedience, though previously it may and will be salvation so as by fire to many, with loss brought about by unholy alliance and evil associations. I admit that many may be ignorant of what they do, and not willful; yet one can but think, that the very instincts of the new nature would teach otherwise, and preserve from what Scripture clearly forbids. To be when converted in the position is another matter; for as to wife, husband, or calling, Scripture plainly advises abiding there if with God.

As to the teaching and bearing of 2 Cor. 6 on the point, I can only see it to be in full character with what I have already said; and most clear and emphatic is the practical maintenance of the distinction of the two classes mentioned. Admitting many of the circumstances in that day, to be very different from those of to-day, we cannot but believe that the principle then given by the Lord's authority continues in force at all times.

Moreover of necessity the principle must rule with God for the believer, and hence govern circumstances at all times, whatever they may be. Now the word is plain, positive, and emphatic. “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” There is nothing here as to natural relationship, but two distinct classes, with the necessary accompaniments.

As far as you know and believe, your brother belongs to the one, and you to the other. Would then a partnership in every day life and transactions be, in the eye of God, an equal or unequal yoke? Could you go to God on common ground together about everything, when you have discerned motives and objects in relation to God, though thankfully admitting your brother to be a moral and upright man? Surely the conclusion must be, that the result would be worse than yoking diverse animals together, from whence I believe the figure is taken and application given. As the Corinthians were emerging out of idolatry and its sad accompaniments, one sees a state of things different from the present form of all professedly adopting Christianity. But this alters not the

standing truth: believer and unbeliever, the two being distinct, never can be brought to work together for the glory of God.

Probably some may confine this Scripture to an unequal, yoke in marriage, which of course is the strongest proof and act of disobedience, but I could not limit such a prohibition, believing it to apply on the broadest principle of an unequal yoking together. Some on the other hand may exceed Scripture, and apply it to seeing eye to eye in everything. Blessed as this is, the point remains, believer and unbeliever on that head, though ecclesiastically it may involve more.

It is important, as you say, that a Christian should not lose sight of natural affection; but ought it ever to take the place of the affection and responsibilities proper to the new creation? Both in Ephesians and in Colossians relationships are maintained, with affection and obedience (woe to those who slight or ignore them!) when exhorted to carry them out in a divine, and not a merely human, way. The word in 2. Tim. iii. “without natural affection” is a sad and solemn mark of the last days, the spirit of which may already be seen, but I judge cannot characteristically be seen in a Christian. May the Lord deliver us from the least spirit of it, whilst called to put Christ first and (if needs be in faithfulness to Him) forsake the closest natural ties to serve and follow Him.

It is sad to witness the efforts of the present day to lower Christianity on the one hand, and to elevate mere flesh on the other, and thus apparently amalgamate the two—all under the plea of service to God and doing good to man But God is and will be sovereign; and for the Christian the word is “Obedience is better than sacrifice” —to know the Lord's will and do it. Saul disobediently spared Agag, for which he was set aside; Samuel mourned over Saul, but the Lord told him He had another man, David His chosen resource. Whilst mourning the flesh and its actings, may we be in the secret of God about His Son, maintaining His honor and interests in our walk and associations, testing all by Him The day will come when the why and wherefore will be displayed; when all done to the Lord, in obedience to His word, will be owned, whilst even now it has its record on high. Meanwhile, may we be kept though in weakness, true to the name of the Lord and the associations which He has formed for us, seeking by prayer, practice, and loving invitation, to win our unsaved relatives to Him for whom we wait.

As to the point of (not going into partnership but) serving your brother, I see no difficulty, though in this you need your Lord's mind. Thus it is only a question of mutual happy arrangement, though (so to say) it is the reverse order for the elder to serve the younger. If the union would be a greater advantage, it would be all the better. The Lord can then see He has the first place, and perhaps in due time He will make it an occasion to give your brother to you, after the fashion or way He has ever owned the faith that honors Him. What joy you will then have together, with a binding power of God sweetened by the prospect of an eternal day together with Him your mutual Savior and Lord.

May it be so through the abounding grace of our God, is and will be the prayer of

Yours faithfully in the love of Christ our Lord,

G. G.

Chapter 69

Christians Should Bring the Lord Into Everything

A Christian is put in the most responsible relation. The highest privilege for the Christian is to have the Lord brought into everything, because thus his affection to Christ is tested in all. So the precept which forbids my purloining in a house brings God and His grace in saving to remembrance. (Titus 2:10.)

ERRATA IN No. 809, p. 32-Col. 1, for “inferior” read superior; col. 2, for “blessings” read blessing.

Chapter 70

Christ's Work, the Spirit's Power, and the Lord's Coming: Part 1

The more truth and the state of Christendom develop themselves, the more it becomes evident that the evangelical world (I cannot say has lost, but) has never had the full truth of the gospel, nor the present power and hope of God's assembly; nor the individual Christian his true present standing and calling before God; that the full development of the state of a redeemed soul with God, as given in the writings of the New Testament and especially in those of Paul and John, is not possessed, not even in theory—generally objected to, never possessed. At the utmost is forgiveness of sins and divine favor enjoyed (seldom that); and all that concerns their new position in Christ ignored; or alas! guarded against as dangerous. Men are placed under the new covenant which does not go beyond remission of sins and the law written in the heart, and even that rarely realized; but the being in Christ, and knowing it by the Holy Ghost, and what it involves now, and in hope, has dropped out of their creed altogether.

I recall what I have often stated long ago. The blessed Lord, as a Savior, is seen in three distinct positions: on the cross, accomplishing redemption; on the Father's throne, the Holy Ghost being sent down consequent upon Christ sitting there as man; and His coming again to receive the saints to Himself into the like glory, and thereupon take His own throne too.

After the long, dark, and indescribably wicked ages of popery, saturated as they were with iniquity which baffles recital, the work of God in the Reformation brought out the first point, though with at least one glaring defect, and all marred by a doctrine of the sacraments remaining over from popery, which vitiated and contradicted the truth they preached. The main points, in which that great deliverance was defective or carried evil and error with it, were these (and they are what are agitating the Christian world now, as in part they have done ever since): justification by faith was preached as we know, but the work of Christ was presented only as meeting and satisfying God's justice (a vital point surely'), but not as the fruit of God's love. I do not say that this never was felt—I do not doubt it was: but the theology of justification left God a judge, and presented Christ as the Savior in whom the love was. It said, The Son of man must be lifted up, but it did not say, ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son,’ as the blessed word of God does. This characterizes the work of that day.

The other point was, that people were born of God by baptism. This was the doctrine of all the reformed churches, Lutheran, Reformed, or Presbyterian, Anglicans All held this. The root of popish confusion was here, and it has carried more or less of its leaven with it even where the error is denied.

Baptism is not even a figure of being born, or getting life. We are baptized to Christ's death, and at the utmost are raised in a figure in coming out of the water, though this be connected, in the only place to be cited as speaking of it (Col. 2:12), with faith in the operation of God who raised Christ from the dead. Regeneration is not used in scripture for being born again.

It is just the opposite which characterizes revival preaching now.

Lutheran Cat.: minor, parts iv. first) second, third questions—major, part iv. 1-27. Appendix ad minorem, v. 20.

Anglican: public and private baptism of infants, thanksgiving after baptizing the child, the same, but less clear, in the baptism of those in riper years. So, in the second lineation of catechism.

All the formularies of the Reformed church teach the same doctrine, as does the Scotch Presbyterian article on baptism—

The Presbyterian Confession of Faith. (xxviii. 6) “The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered. Yet notwithstanding by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto according to the counsel of God's own will in His appointed time.”

The difference between these bodies is that Lutheranism and Anglicanism confer the grace on all, Presbyterianism only on the elect, and, if that come when one is forty years old, still it was in baptism. See section 5.

The same doctrine will be found in other local reformed thatches, as Dutch, &c.

It is only used twice: in Matt. 19 where it refers to the coming kingdom of Christ; and in Titus 3, where it refers, I have no doubt, to baptism, and is distinguished from the renewing of the Holy Ghost. I am in no way advocating Baptists' views here.

But with these qualifications (that its origin, and so the nature and character of God in love in it, was left out, and that superstition, ascribing being born again to a rite, not to the word and Spirit, as Scripture clearly does, was continued) that one blessed aspect of Christ's salvation, His dying for our sins, the efficacy of the work of the cross as justifying, came to light at the Reformation, by labors, and faith, and suffering which ought to draw out the heart of every Christian with thankfulness to God, and admiring joy in the grace that was given to these blessed and honored witnesses of the truth. If states laid hold of it to get rid of the incubus of the Pope's authority, this does not alter the reality of the grace and faith of those who brought the truth out. None could be farther than myself from despising these instruments of God in our deliverance from the deadly evil of Romanism. Still, in judging historically of what was taught, we find this great defect in their gospel on the one hand, and on the other the presence of a doctrine as to the sacraments which left the suckers of popery there, if not its stem.

With these qualifications then the value of Christ's work on the cross was brought to light. But the other two truths (the coming of the Holy Ghost and His dwelling in the saints individually, and in the assembly as the house of God, and forming the body of Christ down here; and Christ's coming again to receive the saints to Himself, that they may be with Him glorified where He is, and establish His throne and kingdom over the earth)—these, I say, were entirely left out or denied. These are the great truths which constitute the present character and specific future of the Christian and Christianity, and which God is now bringing out to awaken the saints of God to their true calling and character. I do not speak of them as mere acquirements of knowledge, nor do they form the foundation, as the person of Christ revealing the Father and His work do; but as constituting the true present distinctive character and power of the Christian and Christianity.

Modern evangelical Christianity has advanced one step. It has recognized that a man must be really born again to enter into God's kingdom; and that it is not by a rite but by the Spirit and word of God. But they who, in the original and larger Protestant bodies, have so far acknowledged and professed the truth are paralyzed by being tied to a system which declares the contrary, and in virtue of which they hold their place and ministry. It is not merely the tendency of failure we are all liable to; but they are obliged, in all the original Protestant bodies, in dealing with souls, to declare that to be deadly error which they have systematically accepted as true, and by which they hold their official place, and in some cases constantly put forward as truth. They may forget it more easily, as in Presbyterianism, where it is not constantly used as a formulary. Still such a course tends to demoralize those who are in it, and to break up, in the measure in which they testify the truth, the system to which they belong; and the various bodies are feeling the effect of this course as truth becomes more prominent, popery and infidelity making breaches in systems which have no divine strength.

Chapter 71

Christ's Work, the Spirit's Power, and the Lord's Coming: Part 2

That God has blessed the preached truth in spite of all this I gladly own; but it is an individual work, and the bonds of existing bodies are weakening on all sides. But even where amongst these, and Dissenting offsets front them, trite spiritual truth is individually owned, there even neither a clear full gospel, nor the fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost come down front heaven, nor the expectation of God's Son from heaven, form a part of their faith. I do not mean that they are not orthodox—that they do not own the Holy Ghost as a divine person, or the fact of His coming down on the day of Pentecost, and that Christ will come again some time or other, as at the end of the world: even Romanists are orthodox in these things. The fatal point with them in their teaching on this head is not failure as to the facts, but that the value of what is true is denied in its present reality, or (as far as owned) appropriated by sacraments and works, not by the power of God's word and Spirit; while in the mass they deny that by one sacrifice, once offered, Christ perfected forever those who are sanctified. Now the last point evangelical Christendom has lost too, and for the most part rejects; while the divine effect of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the present expectation of Christ are not owned at all, nay diligently opposed and these altogether.

On the first point they have gone back from the Reformation doctrine. The personal certainty of one's own salvation was alone held to be justifying faith, and was condemned in the council of Trent as the vain confidence of the heretics. It constituted the distinctive doctrine of the Reformation—what they held to be justification by faith. I am bound to add that I think they put it wrongly. They made assurance about oneself to be justifying faith—faith in something concerning myself; whereas faith is faith in something about Christ, and the Father's love that sent him. I believe that He is Son of God, that God has raised Him from the dead, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Now, I do not mean what I have learned by education (this is but the unlighted fuel in the fireplace, it is no fire at all); but where the Son as revealed in the word has been revealed in me, God pronounces me judicially justified and saved. But my faith is in Christ and by Him in God, not in anything as to myself. Still, though in an imperfect way, the Reformers all held personal assurance of salvation as the only true Christian place and state, and they were blessed.

This evangelical Christendom has utterly lost and in many cases, I may say, in general, condemns. It is reviving, thank God! but by an action of the Holy Ghost, in individuals outside the corporate system, tending consequently to break them up.

And now to turn to the two great points which the Reformation ignored or rejected. God dwells with men only in consequence of redemption. He did not dwell with Adam in his innocence, nor with Abraham walking by faith and called of God; but so soon as Israel was redeemed out of Egypt, we learn (Ex. 29) that He brought them up out of the land of Egypt that He might dwell among them. And He did so, sitting between the cherubim. When eternal redemption was accomplished, the same blessed result took place, as a present characteristic of it, by the coming of the Holy Ghost; nor will it be lost in eternal ages, but fulfilled in a more glorious and everlasting manner.

Redemption involves two things, perfect glory to God in all that He is, and clearing our sins away according to that glory, so as to bring us out of the condition in which we lay far from God, and with a nature contrary to and at enmity with His, into His own presence, to enjoy it in a nature morally speaking like His, partakers of the divine nature, holy and without blame before Him in love. But it did more, for the Word having been made flesh, man was in the place of Son, with God; and we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Hence when redemption was accomplished, the risen Lord sends word by Mary Magdalene to the apostles, “Go to my brethren; and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” The work on which redemption was founded was complete, its results of course as yet not all produced, but every question as to good and evil brought to an issue and solved, every truth as to them proved and made good man's absolute enmity against God manifested in goodness; Satan's complete power over man; in Christ, man's perfect obedience, and love to His Father; God's holy righteousness against sin in the highest way, and love to sinners. Here, and here only, could God's righteousness as against sin and love to sinners coincide and meet, His majesty be glorified (Heb. 10), or His truth be vindicated.

The double question of life given and secured to man, and responsibility, has been raised from man's creation, but never solved till now. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life in the midst of the garden, involved the two points; and all depended on man's obedience. He fell and was shut out from the tree of life; he was not to fill this world with undying sinful men—it would have been horrible. The sentence of human death was not to be reversed; judgment would come after. The law raised the same question with men in the flesh, only accomplishment of responsibility came first: “Do this and live.” It dealt with man's responsibility as a still open question, testing man with what was a perfect rule for a child of Adam; but he was a sinner and transgressed the law. The coming of Christ not only proved lawlessness and law-breaking; but, when these were already there, enmity against God manifested in goodness where they were. Promises withal were rejected as well as law broken. But then God's blessed work in grace comes out in the very act that proved this enmity. Christ on the cross not only (and thus in the very place of sin, where it was needed for that glory) glorified God in all that He was, but He met our failure in responsibility, bearing our sins, and became the life of them that believe in Him His death had a double character. He appeared once in the consummation of ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and “as it is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” That work on which the eternal state was founded, God being perfectly glorified, was accomplished, and the sins of those that believed in Him put away so that they were gone forever. This is a work in which responsibility was met, and in a work whose unchangeable value in the nature of things could not alter, the sure basis of eternal blessedness according to the nature of God.

But there is something more, the purpose of God. Christ by His sacrifice obtained for us, according to God's purpose, that we should be with Himself and in the same glory, though He be the Firstborn—that which God ordained before the world for our glory. If we look at ourselves, it is an inconceivable wonder, but intelligible when we read that in the ages to come He should show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus: the wonderful but blessed mystery, that He that sanctified and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren.

Let us see then where we stand now, how far the fruit of this great work, which stands alone in the history of eternity, and fills it in its counsels and its fruits, is accomplished, The work is done, finished completely and once for all. But more, it is accepted of God as adequate to His glory, as perfectly glorifying Him (John 13:31, 32; 17:4, 2), and Jesus the Christ has been raised from the dead, and set as man at the right hand of God in the glory He had with the Father before the world was. Man in righteousness, at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, sits there till His enemies are made His footstool—has overcome and is set down as Son on His Father's throne. Now first this meets perfectly the guilt of him that believes. Christ has borne his sins in His own body on the tree. They that are such are washed from their sins in His blood. All their responsibility as children of Adam—I do not speak of their responsibility to glorify the Lord as saints—but their guilt has been met. “When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens;” delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. And we, justified by faith, have peace with God. The work that clears us as children of Adam is finished. Believing, we are forgiven; our sins effaced; our conscience purged.

Chapter 72

Christ's Work, the Spirit's Power, and the Lord's Coming: Part 3

We are, as regards our conscience and standing, before God, perfected forever by that one offering; and God will remember our sins and iniquities no more. The believer, as man connected with the first Adam, has by the work of Christ on the cross the whole question of his responsibility (that is, of his guilt) settled. through faith, forever. He is justified and knows it, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ “who has made peace by the blood of his cross.” God has dealt with his sins there, and never fails to own the work of His Son who appears in the presence of God for us. Christ has said, “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” “Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.” The believer is perfectly clear before God.

But all this refers to his place as a responsible man, a sinner before God. But much more is involved in it. First, God's infinite love. “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.” And “hereby know we love, that he laid down his life for us.” But more, He has obtained glory for us, He is entered as our forerunner. The glory the Father has given Him as man, He has given us. We are to be conformed to His image; as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly, and while we are before God even our Father as sons, we shall reign, as joint-heirs with Christ of all that He has created and inherits as man, with Him whom God has appointed heir of all things.

Of this double character of blessing we have testimony in Luke's Gospel. In the transfiguration Moses and Elias were on earth in the same glory as and with Christ; and there was the cloud whence the Father's voice came, the excellent glory into which they entered also. So in Luke 41 there is the table spread in heaven for those who had watched for His coming, and rule over all for those who had served Him according to His will while away. But this is not fulfilled.

II. In 1 Peter 1:11, 13, we get the order of these things, at least as far as their development in this world goes. The Spirit of Christ in the prophets testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which should follow. They found it was not for their day; then the things are reported, not brought in, by those who had preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and Christians have to be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The prophetic dealings of God before the sufferings and glories; the gospel, when the sufferings were complete, and Christ glorified on high, though the results were not yet produced but reported, leading to sober hoping to the end for what was to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is true this does not present to us our portion within the cloud—the Father's house; still it gives us very definitely the progress and order of God's ways (the time of the gospel being the time of the Holy Ghost being sent down from heaven, and the appearing of Jesus Christ being the time looked forward to in hope). Nothing can be more definite, and the prophecy in which holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, distinguished as quite another epoch from the Holy Ghost being sent down from heaven; they had learned in their study of their own inspired prophecies, that they did not minister what they prophesied of for their own time. We get then, the sufferings now accomplished and over; the

glories which should follow not yet manifested; but the Holy Ghost sent down meanwhile, teaching us to wait for these glories, for the revelation of Jesus Christ. Nothing can be clearer or more definite: the coming of the Holy Ghost already fulfilled, and His abiding presence; and the waiting for the revelation of Jesus Christ, constitute and characterize the Christian position. One is the fact which has taken place, the other, what we are exhorted to expect and wait for; while they throw back the strongest light on the efficacy of the sufferings.

After, as we have seen, God had tried in every way the first man, and his responsibility had been fully put to the proof (first as innocent, then by all the means which God could use for his recovery), and failure in man had resulted in manifested enmity, God did His work through the man of His purpose and counsels, fully tested indeed, but by it His perfectness proved—the work of redemption, in which God was perfectly glorified, and what we needed according to that glory perfectly accomplished; and Man, according to the value of that work, raised by God, sat down in glory at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens: the blessed and eternal proof of the value of the work which He had wrought. A new estate to which the Lord often refers is man raised from the dead after the question of sin had been settled, death (brought in by it) overcome and left behind, Satan's power annulled—a state founded on God's righteousness, now fully revealed; not a state of happiness dependent on man's not failing, but a state of glory according to the whole nature and character of God who had been glorified in that nature and character, and this in the very place of sin (Christ made sin for us). Nothing remained to be done as to this. God put His seal of acceptance of the work in raising Christ, and showed the effect of it to faith in setting Him who had done it in His own glory, entered into the glory as our forerunner; the whole basis of eternal glory according to God's purpose in man, and of the new heavens and the new earth, laid, and God Himself glorified and known as revealed in redemption and love. Thereupon the Holy Ghost comes down, given to those who believe in Christ, and have part in this glorious work.

Let us see the definite statements of scripture as to this; the coming and presence of the Holy Ghost, not sent to the world which had rejected Christ, but to believers. Our theme is the presence of the Holy Ghost as now come, consequent on the exaltation of Christ as man to the right hand of God. Not as a Spirit moving the prophets or others, but come now (as the Son had come in the incarnation) another Comforter to take Christ's place, when He was gone, with the disciples.

In the Old Testament this was a prophetic promise: God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh in the last days; a promise, the fulfillment of which awaited, in the wisdom of God who knows all things, the accomplishment of redemption. Christ (in John 7, at the feast of tabernacles, the antitype of which in the rest of God's people is not yet come, on the last—the great—day of the feast which He could not keep, nor show Himself to the world) declares that whosoever should come to Him and drink as a thirsty one, out of his belly should flow rivers of living water. “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they which believed on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given], because Jesus was not yet glorified.” What was called the Holy Ghost as known in the church was not yet. Every orthodox Jew knew there was the Holy Ghost who inspired the prophets and came on many of their judges and Saul, and once moved on the face of the waters. But the Holy Ghost, as sent down from heaven on believers here, was not yet, and could not be, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Now as Jesus was “the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin [not sins] of the world,” so His other great work was baptizing with the Holy Ghost. (John 1:33.) And this character of Christ's work was the more remarkable because it is connected with the Holy Ghost descending

and abiding on Him as man. It sealed and anointed Him on the part of God and the Father. He was sealed by reason of His own perfectness; we could not be, till redemption was accomplished, when we are sealed as believers and anointed. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” So in the Old Testament the leper was washed with water, then sprinkled with blood, then anointed with oil. And the like essentially was the case in consecrating the priests. Aaron by himself was anointed without blood; when he and, his sons were brought, for they could not be dissociated from him, blood-sprinkling was employed.

But more: the Lord tells them in Acts 1 that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days after. Accordingly the day of Pentecost,—the second great feast of gathering, connected with Christ's resurrection (the first of the firstfruits), but withal a distinct feast, but firstfruits still—the Holy Ghost came down from heaven. But with this another revelation came by the mouth of Peter. Christ had received it to this end afresh, consequent on His exaltation to the right hand of God. “Being,” it is written in Acts 2:33, “by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, he hath shed forth this which ye see and hear.” It was not simply God, who put His Spirit into the prophets and others, but man exalted to glory, who received it to give it to others. Hence, in Psa. 68 it is said, “Received (be-adarn) in respect of man,” or as it is interpreted in Acts “for men;” but He received it as man for them. So, though the prophets and righteous men were in an inferior position to the apostles who had actually Christ with them, yet so great a thing was the coming of the Holy Ghost, that it was expedient for them that He should leave them. “For,” He says, “if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send him unto you.”

Chapter 73

Christ's Work, the Spirit's Power, and the Lord's Coming: Part 4

His coming was the testimony that man was at the right hand of God, redemption being accomplished, the world judged, and lying in sin, and Satan its prince, as having rejected the Son; but God's righteousness revealed, as the portion of believers, manifested in the Father setting the Christ in the divine glory at His right hand. (John 16:10.) Of this the Holy Spirit's presence was the witness. This was not for the world. Christ had come as its Savior, and they would not have Him; the Holy Ghost was for believers only, not as one working in them to make them believe, though that were true in its time, but because they did. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.” He guided them into all the truth; He made them know they were in Christ, and Christ in them; He shed the love of God abroad in their hearts for a witness with their spirit that they were sons. They were in the Spirit, as there stated, if so be the Spirit of God dwelt in them. If any man had not the Spirit of Christ, he was none of His. (Rom. 8) Christianity was the ministration of the Spirit as of righteousness. (2 Cor. 3) Paul (Acts 19), seeing something defective in some disciples, asks, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” For, after believing, men were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. It was a true real presence of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the saints. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?” says the apostle. “How,” he says to the Galatians, “did ye receive the Spirit?” Of that there was no question or doubt, bad as was their state. Fruits in grace were fruits of the Spirit; sanctification was sanctification by the Spirit. If convicted of sin, men asked what they were to do. “Repent; and be baptized...” is the answer, “for forgiveness of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,” anointed, sealed with the Holy Ghost by God, as Christ Himself had been. The Spirit was the earnest of their inheritance, revealed Christ to them, and helped their infirmities.

(Note: In John 14 the Father sends it in His name. In chapter 15 He sends it from the Father.)

That which had been prophesied of in the Old Testament as to the outpouring of the Spirit, was accomplished in the New. The Christians as such were after the Spirit and minded the things of the Spirit. They lived after it, were led by it, were sent out and guided by it in their service. The flesh lusted against it. He made intercession for them in their hearts, with groanings which could not be uttered. The whole Christian life and state is characterized by His presence and activity in them. They were not to grieve Him in their walk, nor quench Him in His gifts. The Spirit searches all things; the spiritual man discerns all things. It is “an unction from the Holy One,” by which we know all things. Christ is graven in the heart by the Spirit of the living God; they were changed into the same image by it. Love is “love in the Spirit;” fellowship was. “fellowship in the Spirit.” Their walk was to be a walk in the Spirit; by one Spirit Jew and Gentile had access to the Father through Christ. The presence of the Holy Ghost, clearly and dogmatically taught as coming consequent on Christ's exaltation as man, and not possible till then, characterizes in every detail the Christian life. His presence constitutes Christianity individually for a mean; he is born of the Spirit; it is a well of water in him, and flows as a river from him; it gives him the consciousness of his divine relationship and unites him to Christ: for “he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” Collectively, also, they are builded together as a habitation of God through the Spirit, being thereby the temple

of God collectively (1 Cor. 3) as individually (chap. 6)

I have not spoken of gifts, because there it is not denied that they were manifestations of the Spirit. Christianity is constituted and characterized by the presence of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, consequent on the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ there. The consequence for the Christian was that he knew his relationship to the Father, and knew Him—knew he was in Christ, and Christ in him; was united to Him, the exalted Head in heaven; yea—knew he was in God, and God in him. If he sinned even in thought, he grieved the Holy Ghost; if he committed the fornication, he defiled the temple of the Holy Ghost, and made the members of Christ the members of a harlot. (Compare 1 Thess. 4:8., as to sinning against a brother in this respect.) On the other hand, it was by the Spirit he mortified the deeds of the body and lived. Life, knowledge, spirituality, and power, all depended on the presence of the Spirit who dwelt in him; with Him they were to be filled. I do not speak of gifts: these were confessedly the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Such was then the present life and power of the Christian while Christ was sitting on the Father's throne. The Jew must wait till Christ comes out to see and own and know Him. The Christian not, because the Holy Ghost is come out, and associated him with Christ while He is within. When He comes out and appears, we shall appear with Him. What then is his hope if this be the Christian's present life and power? What is that in which he abounds in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost? The coming of the Bridegroom, when he will be conformed to the image of God's Son—be with Him forever, and like Him. When and how shall this effect which is before his heart be realized? When Christ comes. The coming of the Lord. This is the object, and with it, the state to which the Holy Ghost directs his mind in hope—to see Christ as He is, to be with Him, to be like Him; and this is at His coming. He is always confident meanwhile (2 Cor. 5:6), he knows that Christ being his life, if he dies before He comes, he will, absent from the body, be present with the Lord; but his desire is not to be unclothed, though in itself it be far better, but to be clothed upon, like Christ in glory—to see Christ who has so loved him, as He is, to be perfectly like Him, so that Christ shall see of the fruit of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. This fills his soul with hope, and he knows that all the raised saints (or changed, for we shall not all die) will be glorified with Him, yea, He glorified in them, and His heart, and surely ours, satisfied.

Chapter 74

Christ's Work, the Spirit's Power, and the Lord's Coming: Part 5

I shall now show, not only that this hope is thus set before us, but that it entwines itself with all the states and thoughts and motives of the Christian life. The Lord in leaving His disciples comforts them first of all with the assurance that He would come again and receive them to Himself. When He was going up, the angels asked the disciples why they were gazing up; that He would come in like manner as He had gone away. The last parting word of Revelation is, “Behold I come quickly, Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.” Having Jesus again, whom in a personal sense they had lost, was the bright and blessed hope set before them.

We will now see that all is referred to this, that every feeling and motive is connected with it; it is interwoven with every gospel feeling, and enters into its whole texture. In 1 Thess. 1 they were exhorted to wait for God's Son from heaven. It was, as to hope and the future, the effect of their conversion. His person was before their minds, and waiting for Him was the state they were called into. Next (1 Thess. 2), as to the joy of service and ministry: “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” To what is holiness referred? “Unblameable in holiness before God, even our,—Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." What the comfort as to a saint fallen asleep? “Them also which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him;” and then it is fully revealed how we shall all be with Him in order so to come. We are withal “of the day” that it should not overtake us as a thief.”

I do not go into warnings to the world, because my object is the saints; but that day will come upon it as a thief in the night. But we are thoroughly associated with Christ in glory now. As yet our life is hid with Christ in God; but He will appear, and we shall appear with Him in glory. We see Him through the Holy Ghost by faith. We are now children of God, and the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but as He that sanctifieth and thay who are sanctified are all one, we know that “when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is;” and hence he that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is puce. We are changed into the same image from glory to glory. Our conversation (living associations) is in heaven, from whence we look for, as Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile bodies and fashion them like His glorious body.

The Lord's statement, as to the true character of the Christian (Luke 12), is that he is waiting for the Lord; the blessing rests on those who are found watching. And this specifically; for the watching is distinguished from service while He is away, and the reward distinct (see verses 37, 43, 44): for the watcher, the joy of heaven ministered by Christ; for the servants, rule over all. Again, the Christian calling is represented as originally going out to meet the Bridegroom; failure as going to sleep and forgetting it. What again roused the saint and set them in their true place was the cry at midnight: Behold the Bridegroom Then they arose and trimmed their lamps. “Occupy till I come” was the direction to the servants when He went away. What led to worldliness and ecclesiastical oppression in Christendom was saying in the heart, “My Lord delayeth his coming;” and judgment and cutting off as unbelievers and hypocrites was the consequence. No

time was declared—midnight, cock-crowing, or in the morning it might be—so that they were constantly to wait and watch. The dead saints would be raised, the living changed, and hence Paul, being alive, says, “We which are alive and remain;” for he was then of that class. People have been bold enough to say he made a mistake. He made none, but will fully reap the fruit of his thus walking, waiting for the Lord, as he had told them to do. Peter knew he would die soon, before the Lord came. But how strongly does this show the truth I insist on? Who would think of a special revelation for anyone now that he would die?

There is a striking scriptural circumstance connected with this, that the Lord or His apostles never speak beforehand of the coming as beyond the life of those concerned, or to whom they address themselves. The virgins who fell asleep are the same who awoke; the servants who get the talents, as those who were judged. So, when He would give a moral history of the professing church to the end, He takes seven existing churches to picture the successive states. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, but long-suffering to usward. But those who were to be judged when He came had already appeared when Jude and John wrote. “These are they,” says Jude, “of whom Enoch prophesied.” That was corruption in Christendom. John tells us that they knew it was the last time, because antichrists were already there.

People talk of death as Christ's coming to us; but this leaves out all the thoughts and purposes of God. Our spirits, absent from the body, go to Him; but when He comes, the dead saints will rise, not die, and all of them; and, further, they will be raised in glory or, if alive, changed into His likeness. We shall see Him as He is, and be like Him; the two great features of blessedness being that we shall be with Him, face to face, and be like Him, and so ever with the Lord. Christ's coming to saints is resurrection (or change), not death. The Corinthians, bad as their state was, were waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1) The oppressed were to be patient until the coming of the Lord Jesus. (James 5) The prophets learned what they prophesied of was not for them, but for us to whom the things are reported with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven: wherefore we are to be sober, and gird up the loins of our mind, and hope to the end for the grace to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1) It was the Son of man coming in His kingdom which was shown to the three who were to be pillars, to strengthen their faith. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son, that He may be the first-born among many brethren; but this is as He is in glory, not as when He died and His body was in the tomb. We have borne the image of the earthy, and are to bear the image of the heavenly—see Him as He is, and be like Him when He appears, and appear with Him when He appears, caught up to meet Him in the air, and then brought with Him in glory.

And present holiness, note it well, is always identified with this likeness to Christ in glory, perfected when we are raised. “Beholding with open (unveiled) face the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. as by the Spirit of the Lord.” So in John: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; and he that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” (1 John 3:2, 3.) So in the passage already quoted from the Thessalonians: the holiness now sought is in its true perfectness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. And so in Ephesians “He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot,” &c. (Verses 35-27.) Holiness

is always identified with our correspondence to Christ in glory when He comes—being like Him then.

Every book in the New Testament but two—Galatians and Ephesians—specifically and distinctly presents the coming of Christ as the known constant hope, characterizing the Christian. The saying, “My Lord delayeth his coming,” is noted as the cause of the church's worldliness and ruin; the denial of it, as characteristic of the scoffers of the last days. It is identified with every element of the Christian life and service. They were to be as men that waited and watched for their Lord. The Galatians had got, in their minds, away from the faith; the apostle had to travail with them in birth as to justification by faith. Ephesians gives us the counsels of God, a new creation in which all is perfected, not the way of bringing it about in His ways. All the other books either teach the coming (sometimes for the saints, sometimes with them to judge the world), or minister to conscience and hope by it, or speak of it as the known, and one full hope of the Christian. What characterizes the Christian is the hope of Christ's coming, the waiting for God's Son from heaven; and that in the present power of the indwelling Spirit sent down from heaven, consequent on the perfect fulfillment of redemption. Reader, are you waiting for Him? I do not ask you if you hold the Lord's corning; but are you waiting for Him? The church in general has lost the object, as to what is before us in hope, to which they were converted. Are you walking in the power of the indwelling Spirit, who makes us have our conversation, our living associations, what we belong to, in heaven? The waiting for God's Son is the normal state of the Christian because he does belong there; and when He does come, he will be there with Him. Then, too, he will be like Him; God our Father will rest in His love, Christ will be perfectly glorified, all the saints perfect, with and like Himself; Christ will possess what He is worthy of in glory. Till then all is imperfection, this earthen vessel dimming the sight of what God has prepared for them that love Him while we are down here, or perhaps with the Lord indeed with no body at all, He expecting still and we with Him till His and our full glory is accomplished. Are you waiting for God's Son from heaven? Christ is expecting on the Father's throne, the Holy Ghost is come down to reveal Him—the Man in glory to whom we belong, to whom we shall be like, with whom we shall be forever. The living presence of the Holy Ghost, and the waiting for Christ, characterize Christianity and the Christian state. Not to be thus is to have lost it.

Chapter 75

The Church in a Place, City or Town: Letter 1

Dear Brother, As you desire to have in a plain and printed form for yourself and others what, in common with those we have regarded as most truly taught of God, I gather to be His revealed mind on this question, here it is.

This principle flows from the great and precious truth that we are called of God to walk on the ground of the “one body” of Christ. If we do not p walk, we cannot certainly be zealous to keep “the unity of the Spirit.”

If, as is often the case, the saints who in faith take this only divine stand, as gathered to Christ's name, are only one company in a place, all is clear. No one among us questions their title or their competency any more than their responsibility. If they were but two or three, the privilege abides. They are not the assembly and do not pretend to be, in the present ruin of the church, where so many members of Christ are scattered everywhere in the religious societies, established or not, great or small. But they are bound, none the less, to walk together on that principle according to the Lord in the blessed Spirit who abides forever, encouraged and sustained by that gracious resource for the evil day, the assurance of the Lord's presence to validate their acts as truly as when the church stood as yet unbroken. Matt. 18:18-20. They might have to wait on Him as in weakness, and surely in humility and patience, and love, but in the confiding expectation of His guidance by His word and Spirit. Impossible that the Lord could fail those who are thus gathered in dependence and faith. If will or haste work in leaders or led, there is no guarantee that mistake or even unrighteousness may not soon ensue to the sorrow and shame of all that love Him, and to the dishonor of His own name.

The question of unity is necessarily raised, not merely in a general way by the fact that Scripture recognizes but “one body,” the church, all over the world, but in a practical way by its never speaking of assemblies, or churches, in a city or town. Of churches in a country or province we do read, but of “the church” in Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus or any other. Even dissensions or schisms within are strongly denounced; still more solemnly “heresies” or sects as Scripture calls parties without. Unity must be kept, and is of the highest price, provided it be not carnal or worldly but “of the Spirit.” It is bound up with Christ's name and glory, not to speak of its rich blessing spiritually for the mind and heart and conscience too of the saints who so walk.

Now the circumstances of the earliest saints thus called put unity to the test in a very manifest way. For by the unexampled power of the Holy Ghost thousands were brought to Christ's name in a day, and in such a sort as to mark them out for the Lord beyond ordinary times. They could not, from the nature of the case, possess public buildings, even if they desired such means of congregating largely; indeed as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, rather, for distribution to such as had need. If they continued as yet in the temple, as being not quite delivered from their old associations, they broke bread at home—not “from house to house” as the Authorized Version says, so liable to give the notion of slipshod disorder. Rooms were available, often “upper rooms,” of no inconsiderable size. But though they thus met, Jews now Christian from

every nation under heaven, and doubtless they met in many different houses, the uniform language of the Holy Ghost is “the church” or assembly, never the assemblies. Indeed “the whole multitude” of the believers are expressly shown in chap. vi. to have found means of common action, though we are told ere this that the number of the—men &tact-60 came to be about five thousand. Is it too much to suppose that the believing women may have even then made it double?

I grant that the appointment of “the seven” was not an ordinary matter; and more extraordinary was the occasion which brought “all the multitude” together in Acts 15. I cite them as undeniable disclosures of that common action, by whatever means secured, of “the assembly” in a city, even when many thousands were concerned, is the sanctioned practice of Scripture from the beginning.

Now if there be any duty which attaches to the assembly more inalienably than another, it is the reception, as we call it, and the exclusion, according to the word, of those who bore the Lord's name. Is it by an assembly, or is it on the principle of “the” assembly? I speak not of a place where all the gathered saints are actually under one roof, but of a city or town where they are numerous enough, as in Jerusalem, to break bread in ever so many different houses. Scripture never recognizes church action save in unity. 1 Cor. 5 is not for Corinth only, but for “all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, both theirs and ours.”

I own and insist in the fullest way on local responsibility where the case occurs and is known, but not to the practical denial of unity in the town or city. Action to be of God must be really, and not in mere form, unless we allow local infallibility, of all the saints gathered on divine ground. If all this take part, it would be unrighteous to share the responsibility of action without an opportunity of conscientious acquiescence or the consequent liberty to inquire or even remonstrate in a godly way.

But the isolated action of some saints or “an” assembly without the rest in one city or place, is practical independency, and wholly opposed to both spirit and letter of God's word. In a province the assemblies here or there act each; and all saints prima facie accept the action of each. But there is from the nature of the case, according to the Word, no common action. They are not “the assembly in Galatia,” but the assemblies of that country. It is never so in a town or city, where, if a local company have the responsibility of the case and of proposing the Scriptural act, all the saints have the privilege and duty of joint action. Otherwise it is no longer the assembly in Jerusalem or in London, but a human sort of congregational union after the act, which is in this matter a denial of unity.

I say no more now than that I am as ever,

Yours affectionately in Christ, W. K.

To R. A. S.

Chapter 76

The Church in a Place, City or Town: Letter 2

Dear Brother, Objections of various kinds are made by those who more or less follow the traditions of Christendom. Under this head cannot be honestly classed the common action which flows from the unity which is so urgently of the Holy Spirit everywhere in the New Testament, and here kept up by that remarkable phrase of Scripture, “the church in Jerusalem,” in Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, or any other. But reasons which even seem to be based on the word of God are entitled to a grave hearing. For Scripture must surely tally with Scripture, though one in no way pretends to solve, to the satisfaction of each objector, every difficulty that may be raised on this question or any other.

Thus it is argued that “the church at the house” (Kcve atcov) of this or that person, of Aquila and Prizes, of Nymphas, of Philemon, is proof of “churches” in a city. Nay, rather is it, when duly weighed with other Scriptures, distinct disproof of any such divisive idea. It then becomes part of the evidence for unity; for,—while no one denies “the church” in ever so many houses of a city, the saints there are notwithstanding invariably designated “the” assembly in (iv) the city. The notion of some Greek fathers, and of Calvin &c. since, that it means only a Christian household, strikes one as a mere evasion owing to their traditionalprejudices. Neander, though right in the main, shows his inattention to the precision of Scripture by citing 7) -KK TO [a _v Tli Zak, carrot,. Now it is never so written, though it might have been perhaps had all the saints met in one house. The Spirit uses 4v only of all the saints in a city. It is always _ KaT' 07000V, absolutely as in Acts 2:46 ("at home"), or relatively as in the four houses we are now reviewing.

It will not be questioned by any fair and intelligent enquirer that the church in Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia, had been planted before the first epistle to the Corinthians was written thence. Evidently too “the church at Aquila's” (1 Cor. 16:19) existed then in that city. “All the brethren greet you,” in verse 20, supposes souls gathered elsewhere, and the main body too. The active grace of God gathers freely and in all simplicity; but as the Holy Spirit is one and impresses unity on all saints here below, so is there care in a place like Ephesus, not assuredly to hinder the gathering of saints to the Lord's name in more houses than one, but also to guard them all in unity. There may be the assembly here or the assembly there; but the aggregate of the saints in the place were “the assembly in Ephesus,” never the assemblies in it or of it. Unity is the governing truth according to the will of our Lord, the Head of the church. So runs His word, which cannot be broken. To have them all meeting under one roof is an earthly notion: the presence and power of the Spirit rises wholly and essentially above diversity of place. Only it is indispensable that as Christ's body they be all gathered to His name in the liberty and unity of the Spirit.

From Rom. 16:3-5 it appears that Aquila and his wife were at Rome when the apostle wrote his great epistle to the saints there from Corinth (A.n. 57 or 58;) and here again we read of “the church at their house.” It may be said doubtless that the saints in Rome are addressed as such throughout, and never in Scripture spoken of as the church in Rome. For my part I admire the perfectness of Scripture and the wisdom of God in so speaking. But it is at once a human and a

weak inference that the saints were not the church of God there, because they are not so spoken of. Just consider those at Philippi or at Colorise, in which cities none would be so hardy as to deny them church character. Why then; it may be inquired, were the saints in those places not styled “the church “? Not because they were not; for such a denial would be ridiculous where we hear as at Philippi of bishops or overseers and deacons—a fullness of order which many true assemblies might not yet possess (see Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). The truth taught in the Epistle to the Philippians brought individual experience and Christian life into relief, rather than ecclesiastical relationship; as the subject-matter in the Epistle to the Colossians is not the regulation of the church, but the recall of the saints to Christ the Head when in danger of losing the true sense of His glory. So even the Ephesian disciples are addressed as “the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus that are in Ephesus,” rather than as “the assembly” there, which last we are absolutely sure they were long before (Acts 20:17, 28). The reason is, that, though the church is handled in this Epistle from the highest point of view and in all the extent of its privileges, the utmost care is taken first and foremost to treat of the blessings of the saints in Christ, which leads to the individuality of their title in the address.

Yet more obvious is the key to the address in the Epistle to the Romans. It is due to its character as laying down, not church order, but the broad and deep foundations of divine righteousness in the gospel (with the guilt and evil of man that requires it), its consistency with the special promises to Israel, and the practical life of the Christian that flows from it, suits and is due to it. The spiritual mind feels that to address such an epistle to “the church” in Rome would be out of harmony with the truth in question. For Paul, apostle by call, to address all that were in Rome saints by call seems to be perfection; not because they did not compose the assembly or church there, but because the style adopted is in keeping, as “the assembly” would have been quite incongruous, with the drift of the Epistle. It would be indeed remarkable if the inspired apostle had written otherwise. That they were not the church in Rome is an unfounded deduction or strange doctrine. That there may have been several companies in that great city even then is in no way improbable: verses 14 and 15 seem to indicate groups; and there are, besides, many names recorded in the chapter, unconnected either with these verses or with 5, where we hear expressly of the assembly at the house of Prisc(ill)a and Aquila. Yet the analogy of Jerusalem, to speak of no other, would not only warrant but require the conclusion, that, whatever the number of companies meeting in Rome, all the saints in it formed the assembly there. Of course it was “the assembly” in this house, and “the assembly” in that; but the saints as a whole constituted “the assembly in Jerusalem,” Ephesus, Rome, &c., as the case might be. All stood on one divine ground; and it abides for us. Had there been “churches” in Jerusalem without common action, it would have been not “the” but “an” assembly here and another there, not unity but independency, the most opposed of all principles to that of God's church.

Still more manifest and to the point is the evidence yielded by Col. 4:15, “Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the assembly that is at his [or, according to some of the more ancient copies, their] house.” It is in vain to assume that this was the only gathering of the saints in Laodicea. Properly viewed it would even of itself imply the contrary; for had this been the only company gathered to the Lord's name in the city, it would have been naturally calledthe church “in Laodicea” rather than “at Nymphas' house,” (or according to the Vatican &c., adopted by Lachmarm, and Westcott and Hort, Nympha's house). It might be argued of course that we are

told in ver.13 of “those that are in Laodicea,” as if they were only so many individual saints not gathered at all. But there is really no room for such speculation; for in the next verse following (15) we read of “the assembly (or church) of Laodiceans,” just as we might speak of the assembly of Londoners, meaning the assembly in London. “The” Laodiceans as in the Authorized and Revised Versions would be too much; and so with “the” Thessalonians in 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1. But the case is of moment, in that it shuts us up to a clear issue as to the unity of the church in a city, against the independency of the churches therein.. The apostle does not at all identify the church at Nymphal with the assembly of Laodiceans. Nor does he speak of the churches, but of the church of Laodiceans, suggestive of common, not several, action.

Accordingly “the assembly of Laodiceans” expressly goes beyond those meeting at that house; while the unity of all the saints in Laodicea in no way hinders or denies the assembly at a certain saint's house. Does not this answer well to what has been so happily maintained among us hitherto, the unity of the saints in a city with local gatherings here or there in it? That they all met under one roof (save on extraordinary occasions), and that unity is only to be secured in this material way, is natural enough for those who do not believe in the unity of the Spirit; but it is really a crass idea and a delusion opposed to Scripture. Brethren may have assembled in this or that brother's house; but there was also the capital truth of the assembly “of Laodiceans” or “in Laodicea” (Rev. 3:14, where the commonly received reading “of Laodiceans” rests only, as far as is known; on the Codex Reuchlini, which Erasmus used, out of some 110 MSS., five uncials, and 105 cursives.) Each meeting had no doubt its local responsibility; but none the less was there unity for all in the city. And who that knows what the church of God is could doubt that what appears in Col iv. 15, 16, was equally true everywhere else, if there were more meetings than one?

Philem. 1:2 remains for brief consideration, “the church, or assembly, at thy house.” By comparison with Col. 4:9 and other corroborating evidence, it does not admit of doubt that Philemon. s house was in Colossai. But it were an eccentric conclusion that this was the sole meeting of saints in the city. It was “the church at Philemon's house “; but it could not be, or it would have been called, the church in Colossaa. Other gatherings, one or more, existed there. Here again, if we have proof of a local meeting and of course responsibility, we have not a word to weaken the unity of God's assembly in the city, but rather what distinctly implies it.

Thus every case of the church in a house fails as a solid objection, and rather tends to confirm by other connected facts, (which the Holy Spirit carefully states as if to exclude independency), that unity along with local responsibility is of God, and to hold both is essential to all sound and spiritual conception of the church of God. One is far from referring to the late A. Neander as an accurate reflection of God's mind, revealed in His word, on the constitution of the church. Still he honestly states, in general beyond others, what is found there, even if it condemn his own Lutheranism as well as the rest of Christendom. And thus, in the “History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles” (Book III., ch. iii., a chapter most damaging to traditional usages), he admits that while companies met in particular houses, without separating themselves from the whole, “the Epistles of the apostle Paul give the clearest evidence that all the Christians of one city originally formed one whole church.”

Another scripture has been cited with some confidence, not indeed to prove assemblies with independent action in a city, but to destroy the force of “the” assembly in a city by a citation meant

to show its application to provinces. The insinuation therefore is that, if “the church” can be predicated of a province as of a city, the phrase cannot carry with it such unity as leads to common action in a city, because this is clearly out of the question in a province. But is it true that there is any single instance of such equivalence? Acts 9:31 is alleged, where the Authorized Version based on the received text says that “Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria,” &c.

Now it does not seem upright to plead in bar of this that the uncial MSS. E H L P with the great mass of cursives, two ancient versions, and some Greek and Latin fathers, oppose A B C, some dozen cursives, most of the very ancient versions and several ecclesiastical writers. For it is my judgment that “the church,” as it has the best and oldest testimony, so also ought to be frankly accepted as the true reading. It was probably changed by scribes, who were struck with its peculiarity and did not understand its force, into conformity with Acts 16:5, where the plural is as right as here it seems weaker than the singular. “The church, then, throughout (Kati with the genitive) the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace,” &c. It is a phrase wholly distinct from that which those want who advocate separate action in a city; and hence it is absolutely worthless for their purpose. For it is a simple intimation that the church viewed as a whole, wherever it had extended, had peace; and hence it is in sense equivalent to the church of God in its entirety here below. For at that time, though there may have been individual members disseminated more widely, gathering to Christ's name as yet was unknown beyond the lands here defined.

Had the phrase been “the church (or assembly) of Judea and Galilee and Samaria,” or “the church in Judea” &c., it might indeed have been lawfully used to neutralize the language on which so much stress is justly laid by those who for truth and practice cleave to the written word. As it stands, the marked difference of phrase destroys the wished for application; while its unforced sense falls in exactly with the truth of the facts and the interpretation just now given. It is the church as far as it then existed on earth, the church throughout the designated lands, the church as a unity in this world; a sense which none of us questions elsewhere, and of the deepest moment to hold fast, though not the point at present in dispute. Only ignorance could cite it to weaken “the assembly” in a city, or “the assemblies” of a province. Unity in the comprehensive sense is conceded on all hands.

I feel thankful for this little research into the wondrous word of God, the perfectness of which ever grows on the Christian who digs into it in faith. May we use its every word to the glory of the Lord Jesus in deed and in truth.

Yours affectionately in Him,

W. K.

Chapter 77

The Church in a Place, City or Town: Letter 3

Dear Brother, In this communication I propose to set out as clearly as I can the evidence of Scripture on the question whether the saints in a city were called to meet in the same room, in order thereby to maintain that unity, which in name is universally allowed in our midst, as it is in deed and truth asserted or assumed in the written word. There is a phrase of not uncommon occurrence in the New Testament, which has been supposed to imply the fact, and hence the duty, of the saints' assembling in one and the same company. Is this then the only scriptural way to express unity in a city?

Let us examine err; Td aim; in the Acts and the Epistles that we may gather whether the usage there necessitates the meeting in a single place for common action. On the face of the words no such restriction of meaning is taught; for their primitive or literal import is “for the same thing.” Sameness of place is not expressed, but rather of object; though it is entirely allowed that the same purpose might be carried out in the same place, or at the same time, and this be implied contextually in the application of the phrase. Hence “together” is a legitimately derived signification, and indeed the most habitual sense in which it occurs in the New Testament. The nature of the ease alone determines whether there was also the same time or place. Thus it is probable that it was in the same place when the Pharisees assembled “together” (e7r; 7;1 la,Td) to question the Lord (Matt. 22:34), as it could hardly be otherwise with two women grinding “together.” But this we shall see might or might not be. The words in themselves do not settle it, but the circumstances or the context. The phrase itself therefore in no way shuts us up to one “place” in the physical sense. A moral force prevails generally, if not always, save in bare outward facts.

The first instance is Acts 1:15, where the parenthesis informs us that there was a crowd of names “together” about a hundred and twenty. Now there is nothing here to hinder our supposing the 120 gathered into the same apartment; for that Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren was said just before, and immediately after we have his address. The natural inference is that they were all there to hear. But the true meaning of the words is a muster of names “together,” and not their being “gathered,” as the Revised Version puts it. In the second occurrence, Acts 2:1, I see no reason to doubt that the disciples were assembled in the same place together. But here besides we find 4a0i;, (the critical correction of 4,a0Ovitaii4e, “with one accord,") which is used properly of place, “at the same place,” though it too acquires the meaning of “together,” even where the notion of place is lost. The brethren were thus waiting for the promise of the Father, as the Lord had enjoined; and all the facts point to their being gathered in one place at this time, when they were baptized of the Spirit in the wondrous grace of God.

But the phrase occurs again in verse 44: “And all that believed were together and had all things common.” Now we know the sudden and immense spread of the truth even on that day alone. Are we to conceive they, were all gathered into one room The Spirit of God is describing their habitual life in unity, not here their assembling merely, as it would appear. It is in verse 42 that we find the

general fact and formal principle, as verse 46 states the particulars, which lent a bright and blessed character even to their every-day life.

In the close of verse 47 we have another and more conclusive disproof of a mere gathering under one roof, to which some would limit the phrase. It is well known that the true text of the last clause is: “And the Lord kept adding daily together those to be saved.” For want of understanding this, 7ij eicreXlabi,"to the church,” crept in as an explanation; and en-; Tf «In-(i got relegated to the beginning of chapter iii. But, however taken, it is clear that the words do not mean “in the same place.” The Lord was adding His own “together,” quite apart from their being collected into “one place.” That they would assemble together as much as possible and enjoy the fellowship of saints is beyond controversy;

Since writing this letter I have lit on the following note on the verse in the pious and learned Dr. John Lightfoot's Works (Pitman's edition, viii. 61): “This Greek word ez; TO akt; is of frequent and of various use in the Septuagint. It sometimes betokens the meeting of persons in the same company; so of beasts; sometimes their concurring in the same action, though not in the same company or place; sometimes their concurring in the same condition; and sometimes their knitting together, though in several companies;—as Joab's and Abner's men, though they sat at a distance, and the pool of Gibeon between them, yet they said auvaurriv e7r; TO ttimi. And in this sense is the word to be understood in this story: for it is past all imagination or conceiving, that all those thousands of believers, that were now in Jerusalem, should keep all of one company and knot, and not part asunder; for what house would hold them? But they kept in several companies or congregations, according as their languages, nations, or other references, did knit them together. And this joining together, because it was apart from those that believed not, and because it was in the same profession, and practice of the duties of religion; therefore it is said to be Cr; TV de m:, though it were in several companies or congregations.” I have omitted the author's references, as they of course, appear included in the much fuller list from the Septuagint, which is given elsewhere in this letter. but these were practical results of what the Lord was then doing in His grace. For there is one body and one Spirit. It is certain that the most solemn witness and sweet pledge of their fellowship as one, the breaking of bread, was not observed in one vast place capable of thousands participating, but war' orKov, “at home,” in contrast with the temple. They took the Lord's supper in the houses of one and another of the saints. See again chap. v. 42, where a similar contrast re-appears, though here teaching and preaching are the point rather than the Lord's Supper. They as yet had no public building suited to such a purpose, but just used their private houses throughout the city. Solomon's porch might be excellent as long as it was available for speaking and testifying to the mass of Jews who frequented it as a sort of religious lounge and promenade; but it is as unfounded as ridiculous to suppose that all the saints could or would have met there for meetings of the assembly. It is certain therefore that the context refutes the idea that “together” here has anything to do with their assembling in one “place.” For if this had been sought, it must have been preeminently in the breaking of bread, and here we learn expressly that it was not so.

The fact is that the phrase is used adverbially in classical or ordinary Greek writers, just as we have seen in the New Testament, for “together.” Thus Thucidides, though not using it often, does thereby express (i. 79, vi. 106) concurrence in sentiment or, in falsehood without reference to place. For other purposes he with marked precision employs C/• Tf, ep T. karit TV T01, a 1,70ii, le.

1. X. Su Polybius (ii. 326) uses it for “together,” Dion3-s. Hal. (Aut. Rom. 3), Cl. Ptol. (Geogr. i. 12), and Plutarch frequently, not to speak of other heathen authors.

But it is evidently to the Septuagint, Philo, and Josephus, we must look for more direct and sure illustration of New Testament phraseology; and there the formula occurs freely, and habitually for “together,” &c. Occasionally, of course the place or time, may be the same; but, as in the New Testament, the usage is wider and often admits of difference in these respects where there is community of act or design. Compare Ex. 26:9; 36:13, neut. xxii. 10, xxv. 5, 11, Josh. 9:2; 11:5, Judg. 6:3.3, xix. 6, 2 Sam. 2:13; 10:15; 12:3; 21:9, Ezra 4:3, Neh. 4:8; 6:2, 7, Pas. ii. 2, iv. 9, xviii. (Heb. xix. and so in the following) 10, xxxiii. 3, xxxvi. 40, xl. 7, xlvii. 4, xlviii. 2, 9, liv. 15, lxi. 9, Lxx. 11, lxiii. 7, 9, lxxxii. 15, ci. 23, cxxi. 2, cxxxii. 1, Eccl. 11:6, lsa. lxvi. 17, Jer. 3:18; 6:12; 46:12, 1. 4, Hos. 1:11, Amos 1:15; 3:3, Mark 2:12. Comment on these occurences of the Septuagint is needless: though they will naturally be of chief interest to the student of the Greek Bible, it is hoped that the English reader may find the search not without profit, as it fully confirms the fact that the phrase admits of sameness of purpose for several companies in as many places.

Here we might leave the question with its decisive answer from God's word; but it may help doubtful minds if we pursue it further. Acts 4:26 is the next example: “The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, EV; TO avid, against the Lord and against his Christ.” Of this we have the revealed application in the next verses: “for of a truth in this city against Thy holy Servant Jesus whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel foreordained to come to pass.” Now it is very certain that this gathering e7r; TO airrd of Herod and of Pilate, of the Gentiles and of Israel, does not convey, or bear, the inference that they were all assembled “in one place.” Scripture declares that they were gathered “together,” 47T; TO” airT; yet scripture expressly demonstrates, as every reader of the Gospels knows, that they met in quite different places. The chief priests and scribes led Christ to their own council,—indeed to Annas first and then to Caiaphas; the whole multitude of them led Him to Pilate and the Prcetorium; then Pilate remitted Him to Herod; and finally Pilate chastised Him in his own place before the cross. The argument therefore founded on this phrase is a proved fallacy, and the deduction from it falls to the ground, as not only without reality but opposed to the sure teaching of scripture.

1 Cor. 7:5 also clearly disproves “in one place,” and shows that the regular union of married life is there meant. They might even be “in one place,” when they were not E7r; TO avid. In every way the notion is wrong.

Hence there is no solid reason for drawing more from 1 Cor. 11:20 than the Revisers say: “When therefore ye assemble yourselves together,” &c. This would be true if the saints in Corinth met in more buildings than one, though it is assuredly addressed to all the assembly in the city, and not to a part in one place.

Another passage which has been impressed for the service of the assumption that all met in a single place is 1 Cor. 14:23-25. But it seems surprising that any one should fail to see that the apostle is not describing facts as they were or ought to be, but only supposes a case where “the whole assembly” should meet “together” (eri TO avid), and here by implication it would be in one place. If all were to speak with tongues, it would expose them to the charge of madness; if all were to prophesy, it would force, even on the unbeliever or simple man that came in, the conviction of

God's being indeed in or among them. But as we know expressly from 1 Cor. 12:29, 30, that “all” are not prophets, and do not speak with tongues, so this passage rightly understood would rather point to the conclusion that “the whole church” did not as a fact gather into a single place. Here only is it put, and this simply as an hypothesis, to correct the unspirituality of the Corinthian saints in preferring the more showy sign-gifts to that really higher exercise of divine power which sets the soul morally in the presence of God under His grace and truth.

The same principle applies to 1 Cor. 5, save indeed that it is a weaker case. If the Corinthian assembly met in several houses, they none the less assembled themselves together, and none more than another put out from among themselves the wicked person. The church in Jerusalem had unity as much as the church in Corinth; yet it is certain that they met in many houses to break bread. So therefore it may have been in Corinth without the least prejudice to their unity. The unity of the Spirit is a reality for principle and practice, and not a mere hope for heaven as independency makes it; but it is quite superior to the accidents of time and place. Is it seriously supposed that for putting away they temporarily abandoned the various places of meeting, and that all met in one building for such a purpose as this, whenever a case of church action occurred? Scripture gives no indication of such a thing, for discipline but shows breaking bread at home distributed over a city. We have already seen in Col. 4 the clear proof, on the one hand, of more than one meeting in Laodicea, and on the other of the unity of all the saints therein as the assembly of Laodiceans. Local responsibility is of the utmost practical value; but it must not be exercised so as to swamp the governing truth of unity in a city or town. And excision is unquestionably laid down in 1 Cor. 5 as incumbent on the “assembly in Corinth,” not merely on the church in somebody's house, which of course was (or might be) but part. The local brethren would naturally occupy themselves with the details, and this neither jealously nor suspected, if grace wrought; but on the assembly in the city, it is as certain from scripture as anything can be, falls the duty of approving themselves to be clear in the matter, The isolation of the assembly in such a one's house from the assembly elsewhere in the town never occurs to the apostle's mind; and we must bear in mind that the Lord had “much people” in Corinth (Acts 18:10). It is the fruit of old habits or traditional error, strengthened by the growing self-will of the day, and claiming “the voice of God” from passing circumstances, as clericalism does for its party-work.

Mere notification after the act of excision, for example, in no way meets the word of God, but is quite consistent with the congregational system. Scripture requires that the assembly in the city should put away, and not the local meeting independently of the rest. To notify it to other saints not concerned in that solemn duty is a subordinate point, and not what scripture demands; but scripture is imperative that the assembly in the city, and not the local meeting only, should clear the Lord's name. Of course, “the churches” of the province or country would in some way or another learn the fact and act on the decision, and so everywhere, unless unity were given up in every respect. But unity would be given up in a city, if the saints gathered therein to Christ's name (whether meeting in one room or in ten) did not take part as a whole in putting away the wicked person. The independent action of the meeting in somebody's house, where the offender might be, is not the injunction of the Holy Spirit, but his exclusion by all the gathered saints, as in Corinth. Plurality of meeting-places in a town does not change the divine principle, but makes the unity more impressive.

But here I must pause, and remain, ever yours affectionately in Christ,

To R. A. S.

P.S. As some readers of Letter 2 in the last “Bible Treasury” think I had overlooked the fact of disciples in Damascus (Acts 9:19, 25), let them be assured that it is not so: the letter shows the contrary. But “disciples” do not necessarily mean “assembly” any more now than then. Even supposing however that the disciples in Damascus or elsewhere were gathered and walked;. X_v _KK 11Clieb this would only modify some words quite independently of the argument, but not shake the great substantial fact pressed, that the phrase is altogether peculiar as expressive of another thought. It in no way weakens the difference between the assembly in a town and the assemblies of a country, which a false view of unity will always be found to confound or destroy. That marked and weighty difference is not more indelible in Scripture than bound up with the essential nature of God's assembly on earth; and every saint is responsible at least not to oppose and thwart the Lord's authority concerned in it, even if he be not intelligent enough to comprehend and appreciate it duly. I am quite content to leave the expression in Acts 9:13 as meaning no more than the assembly throughout these lands, i.e., the church thus limited; but the difference abides intact, even if the church were actually said, which it is not, to have then existed elsewhere.

Chapter 78

The Church in a Place, City or Town: Letter 4

Dear Brother, The principle then, on which within a given sphere church action according to scripture takes place, is the unity of the saints therein. It is the assembly (i.e., of all the gathered saints) in the city, which is commanded to put away from among themselves the wicked person. 1 Cor. 5 is conclusive as to this, especially as confirmed by Col. 4:15, 16. In those early days to meet in private houses was even more common than in later times. The saints assembled, some here and some there, and the word notices this fact; but nowhere is there a hint of some in the city taking action and the rest not. Scripture, as we have seen, is careful, while owning the saints gathered in this or that private house, to speak of the assembly as a whole in the place, and to mark that on the assembly as a whole devolves the obligation to purge out the old leaven. Nobody dreams of a central weekly meeting doing any work of the sort; its business is to facilitate, in a wise and godly way, the common action of all the saints in the place. Whether the saints in Corinth met as a fact in one room or in several is not intimated, as it is quite immaterial in principle; and it might be hazardous to affirm one way or another. Doubtless this very silence is to be respected, and we can turn the Lord's command to so much the more ready and universal obedience, because there is no notice of that circumstantial difference. It is the assembly in Corinth, and equally, whether the saints congregated in several smaller rooms or in one large enough. But if the saints met in several, it was not the particular meeting where the incestuous man went most frequently, which alone acted in putting the defiled person out, but all the saints in Corinth. To the assembly therein, and not only to the portion of the saints who might be more immediately concerned in the details of the case, was the charge given. The assembly as a whole is that which Scripture shows to be called and bound of the Lord to act in His name.

Here again unbelief is at work as of old, and, after ruining the practical testimony of Christ in the church, it denies that you can carry out this Scripture or any other about the assembly, because in this time of ruin there are but a dew here and there gathered to His name. Ecclesiastically, it is the old enemy of despair. But Matt. 18:20 meets this objection fully and precisely. Before the church began, the grace and wisdom of Christ cut off all real ground for it, giving the authority of His presence to that which is done even by “two or three” so gathered. What tender mercy, and provident care! But this only when the saints are gathered to His name. They have just the same ratification of heaven, as if all the saints were there; for even then what can compare with the Lord's presence in their midst? And this He expressly declares to be no less assured to “two or three” if they are gathered to His name. To feel and own the ruin-state is of God; to enfeeble the word or its practical authority thereby is evil and of the enemy. It is not “display” that is wanted, or “organization,” but obedience in faith without which all is vain.

Far be the thought that His presence is made good at the expense of His word, or to the dishonor of His Spirit. To be gathered unto His name is the condition of the promised blessing; but they are not so gathered who meet on any other principle than the one body of Christ. Thus is all truth bound together. There is no license either to scatter the saints or to be indifferent about such a sin or its effects. Those who walk heedless of the one body on earth cannot be keeping the unity of

the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Since ever in London various gatherings existed, it has been the known and invariable practice for all the saints there to act simultaneously in matters of the assembly, both in receiving and in puffing away. When a local meeting agreed to present a name for fellowship, it was carried to the central meeting on the Saturday evening, and, if no valid objection appeared, it was entered on the notice paper, and copied for each meeting in London. After a week's delay for the satisfaction of all, if no godly reason held good to the contrary; the person was received, the name being again and simultaneously before all. Until recently the cases for putting away were named but once, the effect of which was to afford insufficient opportunity of inquiry or objection even to the brethren at the Saturday meeting, and none whatever to the mass of saints in London, who must nevertheless take common part in the extreme act. This, being a plain and injurious anomaly, was at length rectified; and as all were to join in putting out, so all had due notice a clear week before excision, and so could with less hurry and more intelligence and equity take the action required. But, even before this becoming opportunity was afforded, no meeting ever assumed title to act apart from all the saints in London gathered to the Lord's name. The acknowledged principle was that all on the ground of God's church join in the act. His assembly there, not a part of it without the others equally gathered to the Lord's name, was called of the Lord to vindicate His will. It is not a correction in detail, nor even an innovation merely, but another principle, as opposed to Scripture truth as it is to our practice hitherto, to claim for each local meeting in London competency to act, apart from all the other gathered saints, in receiving or excommunicating. If brethren were rash enough to allow so radical a change, it would be no less than revolution. To restrict the Lord's presence to the local meeting, where a plurality of gatherings exists in a place, is assuredly not faith in, or sound understanding of, Matt. 18 and 1 Cor 5. It is equally and divinely true, whether there be in a place one meeting, or thirty; and all believe it is “when” and “where” the saints, whether two or three, or whether two or three thousand, are gathered together to His name. To set up independent church-action for each local meeting, in a place where there are many, is to destroy the force of Scripture, which charges it on the assembly in the place, never on some but on all the saints gathered to Christ's name. It is to deny the assembly in a city, which is scriptural, and to imply assemblies of a city which is unscriptural. It is independency, not unity, of man's will and contrary to God's word. “What! came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.” 1 Cor. 14

It is true that for many years there was looseness as to the circle embraced by the Saturday-evening meeting in London. The desire after help and fellowship blunted the perception of brethren to the fact that Croydon, Barking, Buckhurst Hill, &c., are in no sense included in London. Still all the gathered saints in Lnndon did act together; and this was the great matter, even if some outside acted with them, which was a work of supererogation. Better knowledge corrected this comparatively small anomaly; and it was—very properly left to the exterior gatherings to take themselves off. Then came a painful procedure—arbitrary interference backed by party, contrary to express understanding, to coerce certain meetings in Sent, notwithstanding the conviction in some or all that they formed part of London as legitimately as Notting Hill, Finsbury Park, or Clapton. No intelligent brother doubts that there is a limit ecclesiastically to London, as to Rome,

Ephesus, or any other place; and if will did not work, the saints would have no great difficulty in coming to a sound judgment. Within it the saints gathered to the Lord are bound to act together, as they are equally in every other place according to Scripture.

Nor has any man of weight ever contended for either the weekly central meeting or the common paper as “the principle,” as some imagine. Not so. The joint action of the assembly in a place is the vital point; and this seems to necessitate, in the judgment of the wisest and most spiritual who have ever been with us, both that meeting and the papers. After years of reflection none has suggested a better means; nor has any suggestion been made which would not infringe on divine principle. One has proposed the communication of what each local meeting has done to London and elsewhere! another who admits London unity would relegate all to the central meeting, which would make a clergy and deny the assembly! So little do those who desire change agree, save in excluding the vital responsibility of that common action of the gathered saints which is due to Christ and imperatively claimed by His word.

But lo! another voice breaks on the ear from afar. One must make allowance for men accustomed to places where was only one meeting. They are apt to err in venturing to speak in an off-hand way of such a place as London. One of these invented the sneer of “paper unity,” which others were not ashamed to echo. But what has this new voice to tell us? I do not wonder that the Editor of “Words of Faith” apologizes, though mildly, for so fresh and bold a contradiction of the known judgment of their departed leader, nor that the writer claims “simply desire to edify!” by suggesting his rash thoughts, which will do nothing if they do not” raise questions.” For, without denying the breaking of bread in various parts of a large city containing many saints, as Rome, Jerusalem, &c., he insinuates that there was one place, marked out by the Lord, and recognized by all, as the center or assembly! for all purposes of administration!! No more distressing assault was ever made by any one called a brother on the very nature, dignity, and responsibility of God's church; never greater though unconscious contempt—I say not for all we have hitherto learned, confessed, valued, acted on, but for God's revelation on a subject so precious to Christ. In the previous page he had gone so far as to speak of one place recognized as the gathering-place of the assembly, and all was connected with that, both for ministry!! and administration. God has taken care by Col. 4:16 to refute this mischievous nonsense founded on the misuse of ver. 15, and of other like cases.

Thus we are in presence of two efforts of Satan to damage or destroy. One is the radical form of independency, which would abuse local responsibility to overthrow the true unity of the church as a present reality, always binding on faith and practice, whatever the departure of Christendom. But next we have, not merely a party falling into independent action, inconsistent with their own confession of unity, in their eager will to carry division, but one of their avowed converts, and of course loud and bitter advocates, essaying to justify the giving up of action to one place in a large city, “as the center and assembly for all purposes of administration.” If this be not the clerical form of independency, adulterating Scripture for its ambitions and evil aim, it will be hard to find it in Christendom. The organs either of dissent or Anglicanism have never propounded a more aspiring scheme to draw the saints, and even whole gatherings, out of their responsibility. What spirit can be at work to suggest such thoughts? Not the Holy Ghost.

It may surprise (as it should warn) some to learn that a line of argument similar to their own is adopted by Dr. S. Davidson (“Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament unfolded"), who went over to Independency from Presbyterianism. Not that one supposes the writers or speakers, for the separate action of each local assembly in a place where there are several, to have drawn their shafts from that quiver. It is a far more serious consideration, that it is the same root of unbelief as to the real unity of God's church for present and practical action. The Congregational divine, with the same strange misuse of Solomon's porch, equally urges that all were necessarily and literally together in one place, and equally deceives himself that the unity of the church consists with that human system. No wonder the imputation of independency is felt, which it would not be, if it were not the fact, though of course unconsciously.

Ever yours, W. K.

To R. A. S.

Chapter 79

The Church in a Place, City or Town: Letter 5

Dear Brother, It may be helpful in more ways than one if we now test recent proceedings of the gravest consequence by that unity of action, which we have all hitherto professed, and which I believe to be the only Scriptural principle, whatever the number of meetings in a place. Some seem by no means alive to the import of what is at stake. In places where brethren are used to but one meeting, they might easily go wrong if they judged from their own circumstances which do not raise the question; as others may err who have yielded to feeling against that which touched them personally, or awakened their indignation. But truth is not learned or kept thus.

In August 1879, the Park Street meeting shocked with a slight exception the spiritual intelligence and even the consciences of brethren generally by a Declaration sent out independently of the rest of the saints in London. In that document they committed themselves to refusing fellowship, not only to a brother whose case was before another meeting, but to that meeting for what it agreed to do that very evening! and to all others, individuals or meetings, which did not clear themselves directly or indirectly from association with either the brother or the meeting, in question!! They added that they disowned the present constitution of the weekly meeting as a medium of communication between the local meetings in London!!!

Now such an action as this taken in the Lord's name, even in itself (apart from the fundamental breach in sending it out as an assembly decision, without so much as seeking the acceptance of the saints in London), was not only unheard of in our midst but opposed to what had uniformly been our bearing of old. It was not so as to Plymouth in 1845-6, though the evil there was beyond comparison worse than anything alleged against the brother or meeting accused in London. It was not so after the Bethesda matter as to Bath, where a new meeting, outside that which had the previous sanction of G. V. W. &c., was begun with the sanction of J. N. D. &c. It was not so later still as to Jersey, whence saints from two meetings (till one collapsed), who had no intercommunion there, were allowed to break bread at the Priory, and so elsewhere, with the consent of the same persons who denounced a less fault in the Ramsgate case as the destruction of the testimony, &c. It was not so as to Newton Abbot, where, a party outside the then and still acknowledged assembly were sustained vehemently in word and deed by the same elder brother who from the first would have no less than the expulsion of his still more aged brother; yet was the offense very like his own. It was not so as to Christchurch (N. Z.), where G. V. W. had stood with the meeting on the one hand, and on the other J. N. D., after hearing two sisters, wrote his sympathy with their seceding friends; yet nobody thought of declaring him out, though surely responsible. Such cases, two of them recent, prove how contrary to all our habitual forbearance with godly brothers in conflicting circumstances were the proceedings of Park Street. They were due to a fierce party-spirit rising up to a not undesired crisis of division, as against brethren who could not consent to such extreme courses, believing them to be alien to Christ and Scripture.

But even if the aim of Park Street had been consistent, righteous, and godly, we are now to see how the hitherto constantly practiced principle of the assembly's united action in a place bears on

the recent acts, and so on all who accept them.

The Declaration of 19th August 1879 was sent out in all directions by Park Street, as if it had been the sole gathering to the Lord's name in London. Can any intelligent believer deny that this was in direct violation of the principle we owned? It is in vain to plead the fault of Kennington or any other. The saints in Park Street were bound, if they. claimed (as they did) assembly character, to have submitted their proposal to all the gathered saints in London, even if they arrogated to themselves the sudden title to blot out with a stroke of their pen the intermediate weekly meeting, which no sober person could deem justifiable. It was really an act not only independent but revolutionary; unless it be assumed that the assembly even in a small corner of a city can do no wrong, or that the sin of independency is impossible among brethren because they do not call themselves Independents.

Never was a document from an assembly in fellowship so generally blamed and rejected as the Declaration of Park Street. Every one knows there were not a few nor inconsiderable circumstances tending to make anything emanating from that meeting acceptable to all brethren. Even from the least assembly a solemn act would on the face of it be received with the utmost respect. What then must have been the chagrin and amazement of the Park Street meeting, if they over knew it from their present leaders, that (with scarce an exception beyond the not many daring and determined promoters of division, striving after “the reins” here and there,) brethren throughout Great Britain and Ireland, the Channel Islands, &c., not only rejected the judgment so peremptorily passed by Park Street, but hid away or destroyed the document, some even remonstrating with that meeting more severely than any other had ever experienced in our previous history

Then followed before the close of August 1879 the notable second document from Park Street, dropping the Declaration, under the pressure of the same strong hand which forced the acceptance of the Kennington judgment on a most reluctant party. Yet it was that abandoned Declaration (in every way an error and an object of censure and shame both in its intrinsic contents, and in sending it out so independently, that it did not even claim to emanate from the assembly in London), which was the occasion of the Guildford Hall agitation, and in effect, though dropped, the policy of the Park Street party.

Turn we now, from the sorrowful and humbling details that intervened, to April 1881, when Park Street made the letter from Guildford Hall the reason for judging the Ramsgate case. Let us forget if we can the strong bias in favor of the Guildford Hall leader and his company who had fallen into the ditch through zeal for their Declaration, and stuck to it as of God when Park Street itself was compelled to give it up. Let us ignore even the private encouragement given by chiefs of the Park Street party to Guildford Hall in beginning for the third time that phase of the meeting which it was their known resolve to accredit as God's assembly in Ramsgate to the rejection of Abbot's Hill, and so get rid of all who could not accede to such harsh and partial measures. Let us assume that the Park Street meeting had neither prejudice nor prepossession, was without will or plan, without heat or underhand ways, but all simple and loving, righteous and holy, as suits the Lord's presence. Let us conceive adequate testimony heard and weighed without effort to sway the saints, and the total absence of influence or threat first or last from high quarters.

Supposing then all otherwise to be unimpeachable both before the meetings and during them, there stands before all the solemn fact of independency reappearing once more, and if possible more widely, deeply, and unanswerably. For Park Street took up the Ramsgate question after another local meeting (Hornsey Rise) had gone into the matter and presumed to have the Lord's mind on one half at least (Abbot's Hill), though (strange to say) they did not broach the other half (Guildford Hall) for more than a month after.

What then can be thought of any one not only saying but printing, or allowing others to print, for the guidance of souls, that “it was forced upon them (Park Street), and they were obliged to go into it"? What is the meaning of London brethren circulating the statement that “the same thing might have happened at any other meeting in London or elsewhere, and we should have accepted their decision"? One may account perhaps for such words on the score of ignorance of the facts and the rash supposition of what was just the reverse; but what of those living in town or visiting (as many then did) to become conversant with what was going on, who know that all this is unfounded? They must be aware that our brother wrote under a delusion as to all this; and yet they allow positively false impressions to spread at home and abroad, without any effectual appeal to disabuse the writer's mind. Are Christian men fallen so low as to say not a word because such statements have been or may be useful in gaining the unwary? There are hundreds of his associates who must know that Hornsey Rise in part had judged the matter, as already explained. The statement evidently presents what ought to have been, not at all the fact as it was. If the case had been sound, vain repetition could not have ensued. When a matter is known to be judged as before God, no one thinks of reopening it. Bexley Heath, &c. were notoriously enthusiastic partisans of Guildford Hall. Nobody but enthusiasts heeded their judgment. What a sign of the state of the assembly then! Not even Hornsey Rise could be satisfied, else they would have “accepted their decision,” instead of beginning judgment as they did and formally disowning Abbot's Hill. This again did not satisfy; and therefore up rose Park Street which discussed Abbot's Hill on April 21st and 28th, and Guildford Hall on May3rd, deciding to refuse the one and receive the other.

But the extraordinary fact remains that not only did fruitless independent action mark the meetings in town or country that preceded the intervention of Park Street, but when Park Street did take it up, the same leaven of independency fatally betrayed its presence; for it was expressly given out that Park Street only acted for itself, and when its notice was with difficulty entered on the paper, it was said to be only binding on themselves, with information of this given to others! a thing absolutely unprecedented in our doings and sayings, again letting out the sad reality of independency. Now this was a subversion of the united action of God's assembly. There was no proposal to the saints all over London, still less any acceptance by them when it becomes truly the judgment of the assembly in London. It was Park Street only acting for itself, and getting it on the paper solely as notifying that fact to the rest after it was done! Unity of action was no longer the rule.

The saints in London who espoused Guildford Hall were thus betaking themselves pro hac vice to independent devices. It was the sin of Park Street in 1879 reproducing itself more desperately, yea, irremediably for the present, in 1881. An independent act had been cleverly, but without real conscience work, got rid of in 1879; it reappeared with portentous virus in 1881, and it never ceased its activity till the poison was diffused through all the meetings of that party in London.

Think of thankfully accepting such a judgment as of God!

For so imaginatively incorrect is the picture, that not one local meeting throughout London simply accepted the Park Street decision. They each separately judged the matter, “resolving themselves into fragmentary independent meetings;” and each sent a separate decision in a way wholly unexampled to Cheapside for the notice paper. And so it has been in many assemblies throughout Great Britain and abroad. Independency supplanted unity save with brethren who could not follow Park Street in this open departure, adhering to the ground on which Brethren have hitherto stood by grace. And none so zealously impressed on the country meetings the duty of a fresh and conscientious judgment for themselves than emissaries of Park Street or men who had attended the judicial meetings there, (in the most direct antagonism to such as the writer of the letters, who fear to face the facts, paint the case as it should be, and call on the saints to do no more than “thankfully to accept the judgment of our Brethren gathered at Park Street"). Witness the shameful proceeding at Birmingham.

Every brother, however, who in this serious trial cleaves to the truth as we have learned and practiced it, knows that according to the word a decision has no claim on the acceptance of the saints till it can be truly and in godly order the judgment of the assembly in a city, and not only in one part of it. He who employs Matt. 18 to justify independent not only mistakes the Lord's promise, but has already in heart abandoned the divine ground of God's church for a unity which is only invisible, as Protestants generally make it.

The conduct of Park Street and of its followers among the other local meetings in London is the more strange, as the resort to independent action, though so aggravated and general, was simply in order to do this one business. As unity had ever prevailed before, so to unity they immediately returned, after employing independency to effect a purpose which, it is to be supposed, they despaired of accomplishing otherwise. Now I reject this playing fast and loose with a divine principle as unworthy of men of God. Is it not a plain undeniable warning for simple souls, unacquainted either with the details of Ryde and Ramsgate, of Kennington and Park Street, or with the rank and wild growth of party and personal feeling, which was the true source of the mischief and had long been seeking a plausible pretext for division? And I cherish the conviction that the mass of the saints, carried away by fear, favor, influence, companionship, and a crowd of other motives, do in their hearts detect as well as deplore this division; which stands in the most marked contrast with the separation from Bethesda &c., instead of having any analogy, as some have wantonly said.

Ever yours affectionately in Christ, W. K.

To R. A. S.

P.S. My informant declares that the expression in the Bible Treasury for March, 236, col. 2, “fresh baptism with the Holy Spirit,” was his, not the brother's own, as reported: so I gladly correct.

Chapter 80

The Church in a Place, City or Town: Letter 6

Letter 6 on “the Church” in a Place, City or Town

Dear Brother, When we come to the means of carrying out unity in a place, we must not be surprised that Scripture, though it knows no other principle, leaves open the means which must necessarily apply with some difference of form where the circumstances differ. How little is said as to the mode of receiving souls Yet is this confessedly a most important question, and sure to test the intelligence and heart of all who love the church of God, especially in the actual state of Christendom, and the sectarian habits of many saints. But notwithstanding endless variety in the circumstances, whether of individuals who present themselves, or of places large and small where meetings co-exist, there are landmarks of divine truth, which must be jealously maintained, if we would avoid the rocks of sectarianism or the shallows of independency.

In the case before us it is evident that the extremes of independency, clerical and radical, tight and lax, meet in the dislike of a central weekly meeting intended to promote the common action of the saints gathered to Christ's name, as in London. It is not only leading men who are restive if their views are challenged. Quite as impatient, or more so, are those who, conscious of feebleness, ever tend to strive after results by dint of private pressure, and the combination which diligently excited prejudice forms. Thence they fear to submit their proposals to the conscientious hearing of other brethren, though these have just the same interests and responsibility as themselves. If we have no confidence save in our immediate circle, the bond is already broken. No wise or faithful soul can trust those who only trust themselves.

Without grace it is impossible that this meeting or any other could flourish. When brethren are in a good state, it will be, as it has been, a great blessing; if they fall into the bitterness of party violence, it cannot but suffer greatly, but proportionately no more than every other meeting. If there be not love actively working and guided by the word of the Lord, the local proposals are sure to be faulty, perhaps worse; if brothers from the other meetings do not feel and act in the like subjection of grace, their suggestions can by of little worth, and may be mischievous. In both local and central meetings there are snares through unwatchfulness and other causes; as each if led of the Lord would contribute what the other might not so readily do to happy results. It is of all moment on the one hand that the exact knowledge of facts and persons which the local meeting should possess be fully appreciated; as on the other hand, if God has cast our lot where there are other meetings immediately concerned, the brethren are not to be envied who would forego the advantage of mature and close scrutiny that the decision be to the Lord's glory and the godly satisfaction of all who are called of Him to share it. He stands by His own order and is faithful to His promise. Were there but “two or three” in a place gathered to His name, they would in the sense of weakness wait the more on Him; but none the less would they count on His guidance and His full sanction. If they were two or three thousand, they would as truly need Him; but they would not slight His will that all saints in the city gathered to His name, whether in one or in twenty places, should carry out that will in unity according to His word. In order to do this not as a dead form but livingly, as all that

concerns God's assembly is bound to be, suitable and sufficient means of knowing circumstances beforehand is requisite that they may act together, not in the dark but with holy intelligence.

A central weekly meeting is the only means as yet pointed out which ever commended itself widely to those who labor in the word and doctrine, or more generally to those who seek the edification and order of God's church. Other schemes have been proposed which seldom obtained credit beyond the originator or at most a knot of his friends. They fail, when examined, because more than one would involve sacrifice of divine principle, reducing common action from a reality to show if not worse; or else it would introduce a machinery even slower more cumbrous, and less satisfactory, than that which, whatever the defects, has served the interests of Christ and His saints for so many years.

There is no need to say more of the openly independent way, which desires simultaneous action in a place where several meetings coexist. Brethren in general are most decided against this ecclesiastical error. In ecclesiastical action to ignore other saints in the place, alike gathered to Christ's name, is to sin against the Lord and His word in foundation principles. Think of the apostle's indignation, if the church at Nymphas' had alone acted without securing the joint act of the assembly of Laodiceans! To obey the word of the Lord it was for the assembly in Corinth, and not merely for some of the saints in a particular quarter of the city, to put away from among themselves the wicked person. Only to notify the fact afterward gives up the practical unity of the saints in a place, and is quite consistent with the most rigid independency, especially if care were taken to make it known without the city as well as within. Nobody objects to notification outside if the reality and scriptural breadth of common action be maintained. But such a making known is mere information and apart from the question.

It has been suggested, however, to send all names proposed for reception or exclusion to the weekly central meeting, without bringing them before the gathered saints at the several meetings in the same city. But this, if a reality, would make the church unchurch itself, and invest the brothers' meeting with the authority which belongs only to the assembly having the Lord in the midst; and what could be more objectionable? It would thus supersede the church to constitute a clergy in the most dominant sense, if the brothers who met there, however wise or gracious, decided who should be received and who should be excluded. If they merely accepted without question the local proposals, where would be the value of such a meeting? For all in this case is really done independently; and there is not even the empty parade of notification. to the saints at large, for it is to save this that the central announcement weekly to a few brothers is supposed to take place. It is hard to conceive a plan more destructive of scriptural truth, whilst theoretically owning the Unity of the saints in a city, and the advisability of a central meeting every week. We may dismiss this as (like its predecessor) a giving up of the duty of the gathered saints in a city to act in unity, but (unlike it) erecting a novel ecclesiastical tribunal, which if real would be a nuisance, and if unreal a nullity.

But next, those who admit practical unity seek to meet or mitigate some objectors to the central meeting, by placing all the local meetings in direct communication, and acting in one without the intermediate meeting. How would this compromise work? Either as a show of unity without power, if there were no means of intermediate inquiry (and this it is the very design to extinguish); or if conscience were aroused by any self-evident irregularity, a dead-lock would be put on common

action till a correspondence with the meeting that proposed the questionable course led to some satisfactory conclusion? The other meetings meanwhile would be kept in painful suspense, till they knew that the proposal was either quashed or corrected, if not carried out in its primitive integrity. In all probability, too, what excited doubts in one meeting might awaken anxieties in others; and so there might arise several distinct lines of objection leading to correspondence, to the great trial of the assembly proposing the action. The general tendency would be to foreclose questions and induce acceptance of dubious measures, to the very possible dishonor of the Lord and lowering of spiritual judgment all round, because of dislike to give trouble or of unwillingness to appear officious.

And why all this tedious, vexatious, and unsatisfactory beating about the bush? It is not only within the means but the only well-proved practice of brethren, for competent men from the various meetings in a place to meet matters face to face. There a fuller explanation makes evident in general the right or the wrong of the proposal. If wrong either in the substance or in the form, how happy for the local meeting to have not an alteration by authority, but a suggestion for revisal! For, if wrongly decided, a matter becomes dangerous, as it is a sin and shame. Defects are always possible. If mere clerk brothers come, or (lower than this) messenger youths to bring a notice and fetch the paper, whose fault is this? Of course one earnestly desires the wisest brothers, one at least or more, from the respective meetings (without hindering any); so as not only to state circumstances when a question arises, but to give grave and holy counsel according to scripture, and thus to promote the fellowship and godly common walk of the saints. Full blessing in any respect can only be where faith works by love; and in this central meeting wisdom and devotedness and humility are deeply called for.

It is quite a mistake that the central meeting necessitates any delay in reception or anything else. Thus, in places where there is but one meeting, it is usual to bring the name of one seeking fellowship before the brothers, whether at the close of the Usual prayer-meeting or at a meeting appropriated to such matters, with adequate testimony of those who have visited the person. If no objection lie, the person is proposed on the following Lord's day and received on the next. The central meeting does not interpose one moment's delay; for it intervenes on the Friday or Saturday evening before the proposal to communicate the case to all the saints gathered to the Lord in the place, if there be ever so many meetings. If delay occur, it is (as the rule) in the particular meeting whence the proposal emanates, rarely if ever from others without the strongest reason which no upright conscience could despise, and therefore carrying general conviction as imperative.

Further, still less does the central meeting even seem to hinder the full and happy liberty of the saints at any particular meeting in according fellowship to such as desire to break bread if thoroughly commended as sound and godly, who may have no intention at the moment of severing their ties with their old associations (one does not speak of those that are heterodox). Such cases do not properly come within the range of the weekly meeting, which simply, as far as this is concerned, takes cognizance of those proposed for reception, and in no way interferes with such as may break bread passingly: a privilege which brethren cannot deny without gainsaying their practice from the first and really changing divine principles. Nothing more clearly indicated beforehand the division now come than the unworthy evasion of duty in this respect, which was growing up for years, chiefly of course among those who compose the new party, but, one grieves to add, not confined to them. It was either narrowness of heart or unbelief, wherever it was found,

and, I am thankful to say, to none more odious uniformly than to the late J. N. D., whatever may be the thoughts or ways of those who profess to follow him

Although familiar with the London Saturday evening meeting for many years, I never saw the least sound reason to question its propriety and value. Mistakes not a few naturally occurred in its course; and just corrections also followed as to composition, character, and working. Even in its least happy condition no local meeting ever repudiated it; and never was it in a more satisfactory and harmonious state than just before the recent party movement, which was wholly independent of it, though availing itself of all it could for its own ends, after the vain effort of Park Street against it. For years previously it never forgot its due relation to the assembly, usurping no function beyond its own and acting alike salutarily and without assumption, in aid both of the local meetings and of the saints as a whole, to glorify the Lord in unity, where so many occasions arise to perplex or dislocate, especially in an area of Christians so vast as that of London.

But even then jealousy, which in this division exceeded cruel wrath and outrageous anger, regarded with green eyes the desire to turn the weekly meeting to the best account. Local self-importance was wounded at finding that the brethren from all other parts of London wished (not through suspicion but in love and fellowship) to know every case for reception or exclusion as truly as if arising in their own particular meeting. Thus unity of action became full of interest and vitality. Such as loved not unity but independency resented anything but a bare acceptance of names or notices. Hence they sought to ridicule any approach to a real acquaintance with each common matter, as if it were “a Methodist class for relating experience “; and they vented their dislike more undisguisedly and fatally on the willing ears of an honored man abroad, that “certain people were having it all their own way at London-bridge.” The sound or suspicion of such a thing was intolerable; and confirmatory gossip soon prepared the way for the final effort. But the Saturday evening meeting resisted it, and would have done so longer, but itself got swamped by reinforcements, not only from the firebrands of the town rarely seen there before, but from the heated partisans of the country, in support of an independent and divisive course, due much more after all to the local meetings than to the central meeting even at its worst.

No argument then seems weaker, or less worthy of believers, than laying such a catastrophe at the door of the Saturday evening meeting. Given all manner of destructive forces, with a match for the train, and the explosion is sure. The fact is that the local meetings were far more defenseless and sent the inflammable material into the central one, and thus made the rupture inevitable. The Saturday evening meeting stayed the mischief for a long while, instead of precipitating it. And if there should arise anywhere such spirits at work with a similar end, and animated with a like will, division must ensue, with or without a central weekly meeting. An extraordinary crisis is no safe criterion: how did the meeting work habitually? I am satisfied that, for the ordinary walk of the saints with several meetings in a city, a central meeting, if duly supported from all parts, is of exceeding value for the godly solution of difficulties, with the least loss of time and the most effectual check on personal prejudice or local bias. If any can suggest a real correction on our past method truly and lovingly carried out, it will be welcome to none so much as those who feel that God guided in that meeting, and that the lack of it leaves a blank of great and real danger. Those who claim to go forward on the same divine ground as before can least afford to allow of change, natural as it is in a sect; and those who love and reverence the elder brethren who anticipated them in the path of Christ should beware of seeming even to their adversaries like a young and

adventurous group of mariners at this time of day starting in quest of discoveries. By the grace of God I am one of those who dare not either retrograde or innovate, but would persevere, till Christ come, on the lines which I believe grace gave us to occupy for so many years, to the comfort and edification, the blessing and order, of the saints.

Ever yours affectionately in Christ, W. K.

To R. A. S.

Chapter 81

The Church in a Place, City or Town: Letter 7

Dear Brother, Having now stated the principle (1), met the objections professedly based on scripture (2), disposed of the theory of mere local unity (3), shown that the ruin state in no way affects our duty (4), applied it to recent proceedings in proof of its vital importance (5), and examined every way one has heard suggested to carry out the principle, different from that which we have uniformly followed since the coexistence of several meetings in one place (6), I must now conclude with a few words of appeal to the conscience of brethren who object without giving a single ground of objection, solid or not. This is easy: is it wise, comely, or gracious?

Singular to say, these objectors are found among the nominal supporters of the Park Street test, which has laid the new ground of fellowship (however much some may seek to disguise or even deny it) for that confederacy. They cannot wholly agree with a central meeting: to their mind it savors of -ism. The principle of unity is divine; its consequent maintenance by a central meeting of brethren is another thing, and goes beyond scripture. Such are their thoughts, and they are no more than thoughts. For what can be less true or even plausible than that a central meeting savors of -ism? In fact, all tradition in “the camp” stands opposed; and no Christians wish for it, save those who believe in “one body and one Spirit.” It is well to own that unity is a divine principle; it is better still to carry it out faithfully; and how is unity to be made good in practice, where there are several meetings in a place, without a central means to help it? Why do our objecting brethren preserve so obstinate a silence on this head? If they had the least light, surely love would lead them to impart it. With Acts 21:18 before me, I dare not say that a central meeting goes beyond scripture. It looks like this at James's.

But the fact, which strikes a simple mind forcibly, they cannot deny: they are themselves at this moment sanctioning a central meeting of their own—the very one whose ways have brought discredit on the institution! Now if their company had accepted the Park Street Declaration, Cheapside clause and all, if they were really rejecting such a central meeting in London, Bristol, Edinburgh, or any other place where they had always carried it out before, we might give credit for present consistency, though lamenting their error, and believing it to be an unquestionable symptom of unsuspected independency, which with logical minds must work to “loose brethren-ism,” or the religious world. No upright person can in peace continue, saying one thing and doing another. What we practice has a graver character than what we merely profess in words and practically deny. It is an evident and habitual compromise, which tends to sap ecclesiastical honesty, as dishonorable to the Lord as degrading to ourselves and our brethren, from whom we really differ while in act appearing to agree on so important a matter. For it is surely all over with us and the Lord's glory if we fail, not merely in spiritual apprehension and unworldly devotedness to Him and His own, but even in sincerity and truth, with which unleavened bread alone it is our bounden duty to keep the feast.

Yet I understand that abroad this unbelief prevails still more widely than at home, and that not a few brethren in France, Switzerland, Germany, &c., would thus evade the force of what has been

in these pages and elsewhere pressed on their conscience. For they avow that they do not believe in the united action of the gathered saints in a city, and they consequently seek on this plea to justify the Park Street decision as a true assembly judgment!

It is hard to conceive that any accepted (as guides, rulers, or “chief men among the brethren") could be either so far behind in the truth, or so extraordinarily dull, as not to feel the self-condemnatory falseness of such a position. I do not speak of their presumption in thus openly contradicting the well-known convictions of those they always seemed to venerate when in the full and free and happy exercise of their spiritual judgment through a long life. Of whom is the judgment, if grounds be withheld, most entitled to respect? Of such as G. V. W., &c., who heartily and as before God stood by this meeting? or of those who in a crisis take up a dislike to it, and yet go on with it all the same? For its action is of course felt by and weighs with their adherents throughout the world.

But they too should learn, if they do not know, that the new confederacy which they espouse never now, any more than before the recent proceedings, even in the most ordinary question that concerns the saints, think of arrogating to Park Street, or to any other local meeting in London, the right of an assembly decision apart from all the other, saints gathered to Christ's name in this place. They still maintain as before (and, as I believe, so far, rightly) the obligation that all the gathered saints throughout the metropolis should act together, in order to judge with the authority of the Lord and His word: a unity impossible without the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and only possible now for such saints as, gathered to Christ's name, believe in His presence and look for His free action by the word in the assembly. Matt. 18:20 does not treat of this unity, nor consequently in the least degree give it up; but it provides the great resource of grace for a day of ruin, certainly not an excuse for disorder nor for setting aside other scriptures equally needful in their season.

Either, then, as I believe, the recent proceedings were a plain and flagrant departure from the divine principle of unity to bring about the wished-for division; or, as these brethren believe, the common action in unity by means of the central meeting (which always ruled before the Park Street innovation, and which has ruled since as it does now) is a mere tradition of man; and therefore not only devoid of claim as of God on any conscience, but to be eschewed as a sin against the word and Spirit of God. Why then, as honest men, persevere in what they do not believe? Yet, by this arrangement, merely human in their eyes, all in London &c. is regulated, which concerns the weightiest interests of Christ's name, among those whom they regard as guided by the Holy Ghost on the ground of the one body of Christ! Where is their faith or fidelity?

From either point of view their ground is indefensible; but of the two the lowest morally is the latter. For what can be less worthy of respect than the idea that Brethren in London were never ecclesiastically right save during the two short fits of independency we have noticed already? First, in 1879, those in Park Street issued the strange circular called the Declaration; soon afterward dropped, on the plea that Kennington had acted. Secondly, and still worse in 1881, they took up the Ramsgate case to decide for themselves apart from all others in London, who as the general rule followed in due course, each meeting separately concluding on this matter! Thus it went forth, to be accepted on the responsibility of Park Street, or to be independently judged, as the local authorities might prefer, all over the world!

The general character reported of the Park Street meetings, because many attended there from the rest of London as well as from the country, is utterly if not intentionally misleading, and chiefly due to female correspondence or to itinerant advocates of the party. They were expressly for Park Street alone, to decide for themselves, whoever might be present. Park Street accordingly cannot claim the force or name of an assembly judgment, until Brethren give up unity and sink into congregationalism. The whole affair was a disastrous blunder, fraught with bitter and humbling results; which none but “men speaking perverse things” would wish to be permanent, in order to draw away the disciples after them.

For my part I believe that. Brethren in London as elsewhere were guided by God during the past in maintaining unity as they have ever done, not as a lifeless theory but as a living practice, and by means of a central meeting where several co-existing meetings recognized it. And were this abandoned deliberately for independent meetings in the same place, I should feel as deliberately bound to abandon those who must be regarded by me as distinctly unfaithful to their trust, and no longer in heart gathered to Christ's name in unity; a mere aggregate of Christian societies, and no more saints assembled on the ground of God's church in the place. To this by grace I adhere, assured that this alone is according to the word of God, and that the Holy Spirit is here to give it efficacy for Christ's glory in a true sphere, however circumscribed through the unbelief of Christendom and, not least of all, our own fault. But sense of failure is only the more urgent a call for all who fear God to cleave to Christ and the truth, in dependence on His grace.

Ever yours affectionately in Him, W. K.

To R. A. S.

Chapter 82

The Cloudy Pillar

We are all of us in wealthier places than we are aware of, and have far richer interest in Christ than we are disposed to allow. Many quickened souls scarcely dare to stand in the justification of their persons; and yet they read of “justification of life.” (Rom. 5:18.) “The glory of God,” in their own history as sinners who have received Jesus, has still to be learned in some of ins further brightness.

This suggests to my remembrance the cloudy pillar that accompanied the camp of Israel and I am too much attracted by this object, not to turn aside and look at it for a little space.

Israel in Egypt had wondrous witness of what God was to them. Plague upon plague, in which they had been preserved, had swept through that land; and in the night of the Destroying Angel the blood on the lintel had sheltered them. The cloudy pillar had also begun to lead them on the way out of the land. Still after all this, when they came to stand between the host of Egypt and the Red sea, all this was as a thing forgotten. They feared and murmured.

How dull we are to learn, how slow of heart to believe, the secrets of grace and the faithfulness of God! Whether Israel stand at the edge of the wilderness in presence of the cloudy pillar, or, as I may say, whether disciples stand at the grave of Lazarus in the presence of Jesus (Ex. 14, John 11), we see this.

But again and again He proves that it is not in Him we are straitened.

That mystic pillar, as I may call it, accompanied the camp all along the road from the very heart of the land of Egypt to the very borders of the land of Canaan—that is, as soon as it was wanted till it was wanted no more.

It lets us know likewise, that it had many and various virtues in it, and all of them suited to the rising and changeful exigencies of the people. It did not travel along that road but for the sake of Israel. It was there, because Israel was there. It was therefore what Israel wanted it to be. It was the condition of the camp, be this what it may, that drew out its secret glories and virtues. This was its character. Thus we read its history.

As soon as Israel have been redeemed by the blood on the lintel, and have started on their journey, this pillar meets them, and sets itself before them to be their guide. They are about to enter on a trackless waste. No man dwelt where Israel was soon to travel. There were no land-marks, no sign-posts there. Its barrenness would demand bread from heaven, its drought water from the rock, but its pathlessless would as surely need a Leader. And He who was to open angel's stores for them, and rivers in rocks, would raise for them a pillar to be cloud by day and fire by night, that they might still be on their way, whether by night or day. And thus they would be independent of highways and signposts in the trackless desert, as they would be of cornfields and vineyards in the barren desert.

But the pillar was much, besides this, to Israel. It was not merely cloud and fire alternately, as day and night succeeded each other, it was also light and darkness at the same moment, when Israel needed such a thing.

The host of Egypt had come out and were pressing on the heels of the children of Israel; and then the pillar puts itself between the two hosts; and instead of being lighted and luminous throughout, it becomes darkness on the side turned to the Egyptians, and light on the side turned to the Israelites, so that the one could not come nigh the other. It was a shield now, as it had been a conductor before. It is just whatever the people wanted. This is the due account to give of it. This was its way. It expressed the grace of Him that had now saved Israel. It is alternate cloud and fire, if the camp need that; light and darkness at the very self-same moment, if they need that.

And much more still. There is One who has made that cloud His dwelling-place, whose look will prove the overthrow of all those who plot mischief against the camp. The flower of Egypt withers under it; and Pharaoh's horses and chariots are drowned in the Red sea before it. “The Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily.”

What glories fill that wondrous place—what energies as well as virtues for Israel's use! And how do these disclose themselves as Israel needs them!

And further. It can express rebuke and resentment when this becomes healthful discipline for Israel. In the days of their murmurings again and again, the glory in the cloud lets them know that its rest had been disturbed. It appears to them in the day of the manna, and of the spies, and of the rebellion of Korah; and they see it in the consciousness of Divine and righteous anger. It is like the resentment of the grieved Spirit which the saint of God is now conscious of. And all this shows that the cloud was not simply the companion, but the interested companion of the camp. It felt with, as well as for, their condition.

But again we find that, if it thus rebuked and resented when discipline was called for, it was ready with all readiness to welcome and answer the approaches of faith. When the tabernacle was reared up by the willing and obedient people, and in them faith had accepted the communications which the Lord had made to them by Moses touching the order and furniture and services of His house, how did the glory at once and with evident delight fill that house and the cloud rest upon it! (Ex. 40) With what wholeness of heart and soul did the Lord own the place where faith had met the rich provisions of His grace!

Oh, what various glory and virtue are thus seen in this mystic companion of the camp of Israel. It has light for its guidance, terror for its enemies, a shield as impenetrable as the thick darkness itself for its security; it has rebukes for its waywardness, and the richest, readiest encouragements and consolations for its faith; and further still it is unwearied even to the end, and will wait on Israel till they need it no more.

This we see in Deut. 31. There the patient gracious faithful pillar, as I may call it, is seen again, just as the journey of the wilderness is closing.

The camp had brought upon itself a pilgrimage of forty years, when they might have had but a journey of a few months. They are sent back from Kadeshbarnea to the Red sea, because of their

sin and provocation, but the pillar will surely go back with them. It will compass one waste mountain after another, and take the road from one wilderness to another, if Israel had subjected themselves to these desert-wanderings. And it is unwearied. We see it at the end, as we have said, in Deut. 31, as we saw it at the beginning in Ex. 13.

And now the application of all this easily suggests itself.

As we read in the blessed story of the Evangelists, the disciples saw the doings of the Lord day by day; and yet in spite of all that, they were at their wits' end again and again, when fresh difficulties arose. The hunger of the multitude on the shore was too much for them; the winds and the waves on the lake were too much for them. The Lord had to disclose again and again, like the pillar of the desert, the secret virtues which were in Him for their rebuke and illumination. His glories in grace and in power, His sovereignty over the forces of nature, and His resources in the face of the bareness of nature, all were brought forth according to the demand of the moment.

And, like the pillar, He was unwearied. He went with the disciples from the beginning to the end. And it was surely patient, suffering, unweariedness. He took them up as ignorant fishermen on the shores of the sea of Galilee, and He never leaves them, though at the end he found them pretty much the same ignorant fishermen still. “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?” He had to say just at the closing of His sojourn with them. But then, a fresh disclosure of Himself is made in answer to this; another ray of His glory is let out, and He adds, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

And so is it again, after the same manner, on the eminent occasion as the eleventh chapter of John. The Lord lets the sickness of Lazarus end in death. He stays where He was till he could say, “Lazarus sleepeth” —for then he could bring forth Himself in this form of Divine glory, “I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” It was at the grave, and not merely at the sick bed, that He was to be displayed or glorified. It was in the place of the full fruit and apparent temporary triumph of sin, that “the glory of God” was to be seen. No less spot could give occasion to the manifestation of that glory in its brightest form. And there, too, disciples were to learn the exhaustless stores which He carried in Himself for the meeting of all their need, and the consummation of all their blessing.

Much of the Divine glory, in the person and works of Christ, had been already revealed to the family of Bethany, and to the disciples who are now gathered at the grave of Lazarus. Andrew and Philip had, long before this, left the presence of the Lamb of God, satisfied and happy. (John 1) Peter had owned Him as the One that had the words of eternal life. (John 6) John and James, as well as Peter, had seen the transfiguration. (Matt. 17:) The poor household at Bethany had welcomed and entertained Him, served Him with their best, and heard His words as with ravished hearts. (Luke 10) These are among the many witnesses that had already given in their several testimonies to what He was and who He was, in the presence of that people who were now around the grave of Lazarus. And yet they were, one and all of them, betraying their ignorance of the full glory that belonged to Him and of the Divine energies that had their springs in Him, and were ready to exercise themselves at His good pleasure. None of them as yet knew that He could say of Himself, “I am the resurrection and the life.” They were all talking of death. There was virtue in “the last day,” they could acknowledge (verse 24); but none of them was in the secret of “the first resurrection.” They had known Him as the Christ, and gone to Him as sinners, seeing His glory (as I may take leave to express it) at the grave of their souls, but they had not as yet counted on

seeing it at the grave of their bodies, whenever it was His good-pleasure to have it so.

There was a further treasure in Him, and in Him for them, that hitherto they had not apprehended. The cloudy pillar where the glory dwelt had virtues in it for the use of Israel, which this New Testament Israel, like their brethren of old, had not reckoned on. For we are all in wealthier places than we are aware of. And the patient gracious Master still goes on with us even to the banks of the Jordan. Peter had found out his death-stricken condition without the Son of the living God, and he had said to Him therefore, “To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life “; but Peter has still to learn that the sepulcher in the garden is empty (John 20), and that the sepulcher at Bethany shall be so. For he shall be in the company of his Divine Master even to the end, though as yet he knows so imperfectly the glories and virtues that lie hid in that pillar of this desert ruined world.

Chapter 83

Coming Short of God's Glory

God being revealed, sin is measured by the glory of God. We are so used to this that we overlook its force. How strange to say, “and come short of the glory of God"! Man might say, Why of course we do; but, morally speaking, this has been revealed, and if one cannot stand before it according to it, we cannot subsist before God at all. Of course it does not mean of His essential glory—all creatures come short of that of course—but of that which was fitting for, according to, could stand in His presence. If we cannot stand there—fitly “walk in the light as God is in the light,” we cannot be with God at all. There is no veil now.

Chapter 84

Communion

We may contrast the communion to which John in the first chapter of his first Epistle, introduces the soul with what Paul gives us at the close of Rom. 8, and also with that which the same apostle gives us at the close of Rom. 11.

In Rom. 1-8 the apostle is instructing us in the secret of peace, which the blood of Christ has provided for the conscience; and, at the end of that scripture, he prepares a triumph for the conscience, or rich exulting communion with God over the work of Christ for His people.

In Rom. 9-11 he is instructing us in the counsels and dispensational wisdom of God; and at the end of that scripture, he prepares a triumph for the delighted and enlarged understanding of the saint, or communion with God over the riches of His wisdom and knowledge.

But in 1 John 1 it is neither of these. It is not communion because of the all-sufficient work of Christ for sinners, or because of the all-glorious and wonderful ways of God. It is communion with Himself, personal communion, because of a well-known relationship between Him and ourselves. This is of another kind, and somewhat of a higher kind.

And we may mark this further.

This last communion to which John introduces us, does not, like the two former, conduct the soul into triumph and exultation, but into calm satisfaction of heart, called “the fullness of joy.” It is rather the exercise of the heart in the sense of personal relationship, not the exercise of the conscience in its assertion of freedom and victory because of the blood of Christ, nor the exercise of the mind, the renewed understanding, in admiring, worshipping delight, because of the treasures of God's revealed wisdom.

Chapter 85

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 16. History of Faith

In glancing backward along the line which has marked the course of man from the, fall, it is evident how immense is the power of evil. Nothing surpasses it, save the patience of God that bears with it. From the expulsion of Adam from Eden to the cross of Christ, one word gives the character of each age of wickedness, as compared with the preceding—worse. Evil as nature is, does it account for all the perversity and rebellion which the Bible records? Nay, the flesh is not the sole reason. There is not one good thing in it, and therefore a most fitting means for Satan to show his enmity against God, which took the shape of hindering, if possible, the coming of the Seed of the woman, which was to bruise his head. This is the arch-foe, and man, haying become his captive, is a well-adapted instrument in Satan's hand to carry out his plans, Satan not more willing to tempt than man to be tempted—indeed, this antagonism of Satan against God is the key to the continued opposition of man to God. He was first the tempter, now the master, of man, and ever since he has tried to nullify the sentence pronounced upon him by God in the garden. When there were but two sons, he made one murder the other, as if he would destroy the race at the beginning. Who the Seed was, or when He might appear, Satan knew not; so he begins at once: Abel is killed—would God permit the murderer to live? Yea, though a special curse came upon him; men multiplied. His next great attempt was to contaminate the whole race, which of necessity caused the deluge. There was one righteous man found, and he became a fresh starting-point for the race. If the flood had cleansed the earth from the defilement of the antediluvian world, it did not change or purge the heart. The tide of iniquity still rushed onward. At Satan's suggestion, man, to exalt himself, began to build Babel. It was Satan's craft, that himself might be worshipped, and then, or soon after, the debasing slavery of Satan was seen in man making, and then worshipping, idols.

When God called out Abram, and separated him from his old associations, then Satan knew that the One who was to bruise his head would be in that line, for God had given Abraham the promise that in his seed the earth should be blessed. Hence the special effort of Satan was always against this race, and the nations outside are comparatively left alone, save that, as in Sodom, he took pleasure in stirring up the vilest abominations. Where God worked for the accomplishment of His purposes of grace, there Satan put forth his energy to hinder. No doubt he well knew the meaning of the promise made to Abraham. To corrupt the seed, he seduced Abraham to go down into Egypt, to tell a lie about his wife, and thus be brought Sarah into Pharaoh's house. He attempted this again, and for the third time tried it upon Isaac. God, in His watchful care, frustrated the aim of Satan. When he learns that Jacob is the chosen one, lie stirs up Esau with murderous resolve. It was his constant aim to make that people forfeit the promised blessing. This is seen in Dinah's case, first to mingle the chosen race with the idolatrous Gentile; then, that failing, to extirpate them by the Gentile's sword, through revenge for the treachery of Simeon and Levi. We know how God made them a means for greater blessing for Jacob, and Satan is again foiled in his purpose. When the family are in Egypt, he forms a master-plan to destroy them all. God overrules this, and makes

it an immense step toward the accomplishment of His purpose. Satan attempts to crown all his previous efforts by causing the king to command all the male children to be cast into the river. “Let us deal wisely with them,” said the blinded king. It was very shortsighted wisdom on Pharaoh's part, to plan the destruction of a nation of laborers. How manifest that it was not even human policy! for by it he would impoverish his own nation. It was Satanic wisdom, his attempt to render abortive the declared purpose of God. It was a grand, consummately skilful device. If he could have succeeded then! There was only one reason why it did not, could not, succeed: Satan pitted himself against God, and, whatever the wisdom of Satan, or the folly of man, not one of the words of God can fail. God made Pharaoh's suicidal decree subservient to His will. His wise and controlling hand held both the motive and the action, and made the wickedness of man to praise Him. Satan blinded the king to his own interest, but Satan himself was blind, and, as always, his malice defeats his own end.

So, all through the subsequent history of the people, the hand of Satan is visible. When all was grace, they murmured; when under law, they were disobedient; when in the land, they worshipped the gods of the surrounding nations. They rejected God as their King, and they had one according to their desire. This is Matthew's second period, and is as marked by their perversity as the previous; for very soon ten tribes rebel, and refuse Rehoboam, and the kingdom, as such, is ruined. A remnant is preserved to the house of David, which exceed in iniquity those who had been carried away by the Assyrian, and they are carried to Babylon. Then begins Matthew's third period. At the appointed time a remnant returns, and a new aspect is given to their trial. This returned remnant sink deeper in iniquity, and thus prove that, after all the warning they have had, they have not learned righteousness. Tested in every way, under priest, under prophet, under king, as an independent nation, then as tributary to a Gentile, the only result is a deeper evil. No exhibition of patience, no expostulation of love, no difference of circumstances availed for them. As hypocrites, they were worse than idolaters; and we find them more and more guilty as we follow their course from the beginning—from the calf at Sinai to the cross on Calvary.

Was all this the outbursts of a rebellious nature merely? We know that there is no evil of which man is incapable, but there is more in this than the in subjection of man's will to God, or of his heart's enmity. It presents one consistent whole, from first to last, of Satan's opposition to God, and his effort to prevent the fulfillment of God's promise. Whatever differences are seen in the form of man's sin, the endeavor of Satan is uniform. Men, both ancient and modern, have ignorantly talked of the eternal battle between the principles of good and evil. In the East, their Ormuzd and Ahriman; in the West, the eternity of matter, which was so evil that the principle of good could not overcome it. A vain attempt to account for the evil they could not get rid of. That otherwise insoluble enigma to man is plainly resolved in the book of God. There we learn that there is not only a principle of evil; there is an evil one, the primary cause of every evil. And though he is allowed for a season to work his will, and apparently delay the purpose of God's mercy, it is but for a time, it is only apparently; for God uses Him and his enmity to fulfill His own word. In spite of the communication given to the Gentile that there was a God in heaven, notwithstanding the revelation to Israel that He was Governor of the earth, and, as such, blessing the righteous and judging the guilty, the whole world had sunk into the darkest ignorance. The true God was ignored, and, where outwardly owned as among the Jews, so much hypocrisy and sin were found, that their outward confession was worse than Gentile ignorance.

Such was man when the Lord Jesus came, the greatest and final test, which brings out in yet deeper shade man's incurable evil, and, more, his ineradicable hatred of God. This is the fourth epoch in Matthew's Gospel, and given in the first twelve chapters. It is the presentation of Messiah. Jesus, the King, is born in Bethlehem, and the kingdom announced. He came to His own, and they rejected Him—more guilty than the world that knew Him not. How awful the manner of His rejection! His holy Person scorned, His works of love and mercy, delivering from demoniacal possession, ascribed to Beelzebub! Their day closed, and the children of the kingdom were cast out. But there and then a new work commences, not a new form of trial—all trial is over. It would be an impeachment of God's righteousness if another trial took place after the slaying of His Son. There was no more sending to the husbandmen for the fruit of the vineyard when they had killed the Heir. Nothing now remained for these guilty men but the judgment forced from their own lips—"He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." The effect of the Jews' rejection of their Lord was to open the door to admit strangers and foreigners. And this was the purpose of God, which is unassailable. If man will be evil, then God will use his evil for His own purpose. Redemption was God's purpose, but that man's evil should be used to be the cause of slaying Him, whose blood thus shed paid the ransom even for His murderers, is a display of divine wisdom which overwhelms the soul. The greatest crime that man committed provides the divine remedy for every crime for all sin, and opens the door for God's free grace to be preached to all men—not for the Jew only, but for the Gentile also, for the whole world. Hence the reason why Gentile and Jew are found united. Both are in arms against the Lord's Anointed. The nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing. But there is more than the world becoming most guilty—the prince of it is also judged. He and the promised Seed had at last met; Satan is overcome, his prey taken from him, his well-barred house broken open by the stronger Man, and he is judged by and in that very act which he thought secured to him the eternal bondage of man.

If the difference between Jew and Gentile is lost in their common guilt, sovereign grace has provided a common salvation, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, but all are one in Christ Jesus. To Him all the past pointed, and now bears witness to Him. In Him every type meets, every shadow finds its substance. But in receiving Him, every believer receives more than the fullest type ever shadowed forth, for no type in the old economy ever intimated the fact that we should have the place of children. Now it is declared, To as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the children of God. On the unbelieving world sentence is pronounced, and the present time is but the interval between the sentence and the execution. God delays the execution, and His long-suffering is salvation. For now He is causing the dead to hear the quickening voice of the Son of God, and leading those that hear and live through this world on to a place of heavenly glory. Yet, not that those so quickened, and so led, are untested. Every branch is purged, every son is disciplined; then why, if possessed of life, are they tried? They are not tried to see whether they can obtain life, but to prove its reality, and that all found to be inconsistent with eternal life might be judged. And herein is manifest one of the great differences between law and grace—the process of law discovers the evil, that of grace is to put it away. So the gold is put into a crucible, not to see if it be gold, but to burn up the dross.

One great part of God's moral process with man is now ended; the result is, he is proved to be worthless, guilty, and therefore he is now condemned. Trial is over. There is an essential

distinction between being under trial, and being condemned. Man's trial terminated in the cross; then sentence of condemnation was passed upon him; by the cross the condition of the natural man was fixed and determined. But it did more, for it cleared the arena for the full action of grace on God's part. So long as law was in force, and responsibility on that ground, grace was hindered. There were gracious dealings, there were tender mercies, but grace as the sole principle marking God's dealings could not be till law was set aside. It would have been unrighteous. Now God is righteous in setting law aside, in acting towards man solely on the principle of grace; and as law can in nowise answer to grace, it is set aside, and faith—divinely given—takes its place, as the only fitting response to the grace of God. That marvelous grace, which reaches down to the lowest and raises to the highest, and that faith which never sees but always believes, produces what the law never could—holiness. The law commanded it, and dealt death to the disobedient. The thunders of Sinai said, Do. The cross of Christ, in accents of infinite love, calls to all, Come, and to all coming gives life and power. In revealing Himself to man through the cross God proclaims Himself a Savior-God. After He has saved us, He makes us obedient. Where His grace unhinderedly acts, the result is the answer to His own heart. To display the riches of grace, to have an object of delight before Him, God called the church into being. No other creation can so declare the Savior-God as His church. It is creative power in a more wondrous way than Gen. 1 tells of: a body so united, that they are members one of another by the one Spirit, and each by the same Spirit a member of Christ; each one an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ; and the whole is the habitation of God by the Spirit, who is both the bond of unity and the power of testimony. It was the purpose of God when our names were written in the book of life of the slain Lamb, that by the church the riches and the glory of His grace should be displayed to an admiring universe. When the new Jerusalem appears from heaven, what a sight will be presented to the eyes of the millennial nations! The most precious things that men value are the symbols used to describe its brightness and glory. There will be nothing like it in the whole universe, neither in heaven, nor on the earth.

Beside the calling and formation of the church of God, this present age has a dispensational aspect. The church itself is above and beyond all dispensation; but for man, the present time is the dispensation of faith in contrast with law. It was ushered in as the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven, heralded by the Baptist, proclaimed by the Lord; but when Christ was rejected, the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven changed its character, and became the dispensation of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; that is, such a form as necessarily resulted from the rejection of Christ—no other aspect was possible. For when the Son of God humbled Himself to become a man, there was immediately a necessity that He should as risen Man have the kingdom. Even had there been no church formed, there must be space left for the gathering of true and obedient disciples, and therefore judgment is deferred until such are gathered; otherwise the purpose of God concerning Christ and the world would have been frustrated. God's decree had gone forth (Psa. 2), His King was set upon the holy hill of Zion, and not only Israel, but the heathen, were to be the King's inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth His possession. There will, of course, be judgment; but where would be the inheritance and the possession, if all were consumed, if there were no preserved remnant? And then, upon what principle are true disciples to be made, when the utter failure of law-works to make them such had been so clearly demonstrated The past failure, the present dominancy of iniquity, and the absence of the King, prove that only upon one principle could man be brought into the kingdom, and enjoy its blessings

when manifested in power. That one principle is faith. Hence “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” suppose pre-eminently a dispensation of faith. The grace, the wisdom, and the power of God have so controlled the world in its sin and rebellion, as to provide both place and season where the energy and the endurance of faith may have free scope, and reap all the blessedness that God has indissolubly joined to it; and the Christian can now say, in face of every trial, and all suffering, “The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage;” for now is the season of victory, and of such sort as is peculiar to the saints of the church; now is the special application of the promise, in its sevenfold character, to the overcomer. (Rev. 2; 3)

The inbringing of the present dispensation was a momentous change from the former, which demanded and sought for fruit. This present is marked by sowing seed. There is nothing in the ground, nothing can be had from it save the evidence of its own badness. Therefore the Lord Jesus sows good seed. He will put that in it which, if unhindered, will produce fruit unto God. But it is God giving, not man repaying. The parable of the sower is given in the three synoptical Gospels. It is the commencement of this age, so widely distinguished from the preceding. The dispensation of law was necessary to prove the hopeless condition of man, and to prepare the ground for the sowing of the good seed. It was as necessarily set aside when the gospel of grace was preached, and another—a dispensational necessity—resulted indirectly from grace, that man should be left seemingly to himself. Would he accept mercy, after having been proved hopelessly bad, and now under condemnation?

Chapter 86

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 17. History of Faith

Grace, and its correlative faith, are the characteristics of the present economy. But Matt. 13 gives the history. It began in sovereign grace; but because it was grace man despised it, and it ends in judgment. Faith was the substitute for law, and man has become firmer in unbelief than before, and increased his condemnation. True, Satan had first to bring within the sphere of the kingdom his own material, and unwatchful man soon gave the opportunity. Men slept and the devil sowed tares, which give character to the whole field, and the harvest as a whole is a harvest of tares. Thus judgment is the public end of the field where the good seed was sown. Terrible is the perversion of the good given, when He who in grace gave is forced to judge the place that received it. The authority of the word has been used to shelter the birds of the air, and the truth of the word leavened with corruption.

Satan was foiled in his attempt to turn the King aside from His divine path, but he succeeded with the servants; and so the highest and best gift of God has been the occasion for the development of the worst evil. For man under the responsibilities which flow from this dispensation of grace has done worse than during that of law. The wickedness of Israel caused the heathen to blaspheme the name of Jehovah. But now, within the sphere of Christian profession, a worse thing is found. The Jew always professed reverence for the law, though he practically disobeyed. What do we see now in so-called Christian lands? The word of God is esteemed by some no other than a myth, classed with the legends of paganism. By others the Lord is spoken of as a good, though mistaken man, esteemed as a hero who really wished to raise man morally, but who allowed His disciples to believe and propagate a lie to accomplish the end He had in view; as an enthusiast who suffered death rather than withdraw His pretensions. And the literature of the present day teems with writings containing this horrible doctrine, a blasphemy as absurd as horrible. Nor is this confined to such writers—as are professed infidels; for the truth of the word is undermined, if not openly denied, by those who take the place of being theological teachers. All such books, by traitorous teachers, are far more pernicious and dangerous than the vulgar infidelity of the last century. A distinguishing feature of the present day is that every shade of infidel thought has its representative and teacher. Atheism is made the groundwork of science and taught in its halls, and, being exalted to the rank of science, is applied as a corrector of God's Book; it stops not at material things, but enters boldly the moral domain, and dares to judge what God must be, and what He must not be; decides how much—rather how little—of the creation belongs to God; and how much to “evolution.” This is not confined to the “scientific” few, it is popularized; and the masses, inclined by nature to say “no God,” readily receive the dicta of Atheism and Materialism. God bears with all this, for the present day is salvation, not judgment, and His long-suffering is the proof. Human wickedness has made the patience of God a means of deeper condemnation. If “he that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and

hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28, 29.)

The kingdom of heaven is the rule of Christ over this world. But how does Christ reign when He is rejected? The principles of the kingdom were in grace made known to man, and after he had cast out the King, he used His name and the inherent subjugating authority belonging to it, to establish a system for Himself, where the name of the King is freely used, but His rights practically ignored; where, instead of righteousness reigning, all the worst corruption of nature is dominant, the name of Christ on the lips, the truth of Christ in its life-giving power mostly unknown. Hence the present time discloses the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom as the scene of Christ's power and glory was no secret; it was abundantly and clearly foretold by the prophets. Godly Jews were waiting for it, rejoicing in the hope of it. Further, it was predicted, though perhaps imperfectly apprehended, that the coming King should be despised and rejected, wounded in the house of His friends, valued at thirty pieces of silver—price of a slave. But it was not revealed that the King should be more than eighteen centuries absent, and that during His absence men should arrogate to themselves His authority, and establish human power by its use; still less, that the Jews' rejection of their King should be, in the wisdom of God, the occasion for the calling out of a people for a heavenly portion, who, while here passing through a path of predestined suffering, would be of all men most miserable if in this life only they had hope in Christ (1 Cor. 15:19). It is these two things we see now—the absence of the Lord from the scene of His future glory, and the hidden working by which He secures to Himself a people who, spite of suffering, nay, using it rather as a means, are destined for a higher than kingdom glory (2 Cor. 4:17). These are some of the secrets—the hitherto unrevealed things of the kingdom of heaven.

The Lord Jesus in Matt. 13 reveals. All except the first parable are the mysteries—secrets—of the kingdom. The tare-field gives the fact that, where good seed was sown the devil sowed tares, that both grow to the end, and then comes judgment. The aspect or form of the evil, and its moral character, are given in the tree and the leaven. The first similitude is history given in symbol, but perfect and complete in its brevity as divine wisdom alone could give it. Satan no sooner saw a new sphere of blessing opened for lost man than he hastened to bring in ruin. Just as he did when creation blessing and happiness were put into man's hand, so now he seeks to turn away redemption blessings from man. He did spoil creation (yet only for a time), but redemption blessing rests upon a foundation which not all his power can touch. The floods of evil, the mighty billows of sin, may rage and swell far more under a dispensation of grace than when law threatened from Sinai; the cunning and power of Satan may have now a wider and more open field for display; but all this only proves how firm and impregnable is the Rock against which the mightiest waves of Satanic and human evil dash in vain. It is thus that the Lord reigns now, controlling the evil of Satan and of man by a secret power, which faith alone can recognize. Other secrets are brought to light by the tree and the leaven which show the tare evil in its double form—worldly power and doctrinal corruption.

Prophecy had announced the days when the God of heaven should set up a kingdom which is to subdue all other kingdoms and fill the whole earth, but it was never foretold that men would set up a power for their own glory, and say it was the kingdom that God had announced. It is also said that righteousness will characterize the kingdom, but it was a secret that previous to its establishment an unrighteous power would prevail, giving harborage to the emissaries of Satan as the branches of a great tree to the birds of the air; that such a scene of evil through perversion of

the truth would be presented within the sphere called Christendom, that creedism would permeate the mass as leaven in three measures of meal. External grandeur, and internal corruption! Truly, mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Judgment is the only fitting termination. The Lord of the field is compelled to send the executors of His wrath upon the guilty and corrupt world, and the angels, like reapers in the harvest field, bind the tares in bundles for the fire. The angels “shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

The field was indeed overrun with tares, but good seed is yet found. They belong to the company of the righteous that shine in the Father's kingdom; and though now despised, and to the tare-world for the most part unknown—hid in a field—are to the Lord a treasure, and as such give a likeness of the kingdom of heaven. Both the “treasure” and the “pearl” refer to the good seed which the Lord sowed in the field. To the eye of man nothing was discernible but tares. His eye saw the treasure, and for its sake He bought the whole field. Thus the treasure hid in the field becomes an essential and prominent feature in the mysteries of the kingdom. Indeed, had there been no hid treasure, there would have been no mysteries. So also the pear; of great price is a likeness of the kingdom, or rather, not the pearl itself, but the merchant seeking, and having found one of great price, straightway parts with all he has and buys it, In the one, it is the treasure to which the kingdom is likened, in the other it is the merchant seeking. There is the joy of the finder, then the desire and energy of the merchant who is seeking for something not yet possessed. The prominent thought in the first is the treasure, not the man; in the second, not the pearl, but the seeking merchant. Both these parables are features of the present time, and of God's ways now. They are indeed “secrets” of the kingdom of heaven.

The prophet Malachi speaks of those who will be counted among the jewels of Jehovah, but not of saints so precious that a whole world would be bought to possess them. Much less was it known that divine power and grace would combine in love to form a Church welded together by the uniting energy of the Holy Spirit into one body, and be as one priceless pearl. The activities of divine love are the marks of this present age, not merely saving lost souls, but bestowing the highest blessings. For if the Merchant is seeking, that which He buys becomes a pearl in His hand. This is the moral process now going on.

How different, we may observe, from law process is the process of grace; yet that of grace and faith necessitated the law. But now the Triune God is engaged in the delight of His heart, in saving the lost. “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” The Son, too, is seeking, the Shepherd who is gone into the wilderness to bring back the lost—the good Shepherd who gave His own life for His sheep; the Holy Spirit, also, who is the active agent in bringing home the truth and power of God's Salvation to the hearts of those whom it is God's purpose to save, and making them worshippers according to the Father's will. Is He not like the woman searching for the lost silver? He is seeking through the great house of profession for real worshippers, whose worship of the Father is in keeping with the character of the blessings given.

The great tree and the leaven are the development of that evil thing—the tares—brought in by the devil; they mark the progress and the universal extent of the evil. From an outside standpoint such

is the aspect of the kingdom now. But however sad and real this view, it is not the reality essential to the fact that such things exist as are here called the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The essential reality is God carrying out now the purpose of His sovereign grace, a purpose present to the heart of God before the worlds were made; a moral process going on with man upon a working platform of faith, which begins with the first conviction of sin, then becomes the moral means of life, of walk, of victory, and never passes away till it is swallowed up in sight. The merchant seeking, and the man rejoicing over the hid treasure, this going on side by side with the growing evil of the devil's tares, make the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. It is the worst of evils subsisting side by side with grace in its most magnificent form; nay, which would not be so bad, but that grace is so good.

The not evidently points to the closing scenes of this dispensation; not here the progress and judgment of evil, but the distinction between the “good” and the “bad,” their separation more visible. The net is undoubtedly a symbol of the preaching of the Gospel; it has been cast into the sea, it has gathered of every kind. All enclosed are those “who profess and call themselves Christians,” who by their profession have been taken out of the sea of heathenism, of non-profession and nature's indifference, gathered in by the preached word which by the Lord's command has been carried over the world. At the time of accomplishment the net is drawn to the shore. There is a difference between gathering fishes and sorting them. The end approaches for that activity indicated by the net being in the sea; or while God still converts souls, another action gives character at the close to the kingdom of heaven. Not that the message of mercy is withdrawn, for it will no doubt continue to the end. There are even now those who go about from place to place, at least preaching salvation through Christ, who are not represented by the fishermen in the parable. And though there may be mixed up with them a great deal with which no intelligent Christian would identify himself, extravagancies which excite the contempt of the world, and alas here and there the corruption of nature; yet we see God, in the sovereignty of grace, using even such abnormal means to bring the name of Jesus the Savior home to the heart and conscience of the lost and degraded, which perhaps could be reached in no other way; that is, going into the very dens of infamy and bringing out brands from the burning. Is not the use of such irregular instrumentality as now meets our eye and ear a rebuke to those who boast a better knowledge of the truth?

But when the net is drawn to the shore, the gathering in from the sea is not the work which occupies the fishermen. The putting the good into vessels is the closing act of the fishermen, who are endowed by the Holy Spirit to discern between the good and the bad. Not that this wisdom had not been bestowed before, for all through, from the beginning, the receiving of souls into the Church is putting the good into vessels; but the energy of the Holy Spirit in the fishermen makes the care for the “good” characteristic of the close. Such is the closing testimony, the special work of this day. Those who travel about simply proclaiming the name of Jesus, and leaving those who may have been converted to g, just where they will, may perhaps be doing only what they have power for; but they are not the fishermen who give character to the kingdom of heaven at the close. The Lord Jesus passes abruptly to the judgment upon the evil, and says nothing as to the ultimate destination of the good fishes. In His explanation to the disciple (ver. 42, 43) the curtain is lifted, the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, the wicked are cast into the furnace of fire. But this is no part of the likeness of the kingdom of heaven which has its scene

here, not in heaven nor in hell. There are two separations, not by the same agency, nor for the same object. The one is caring for the good, simply rejecting the bad; but there, as a feature of the kingdom, it ends. And the Lord, in ver. 49, turns to the separation spoken of in ver. 41. “So shall it be at the end of the world,” that is, the angels will seize the bundles of tares and cast them into the fire. The judgment and final doom of the wicked are given, the result of their disobedience to the gospel; and it is fittingly given here as showing that when the kingdom is established in power, they have no part in it. But the catching up of the saints, the Lord Himself coming for them, is no part of the mysteries of the kingdom; it is a church secret which Paul was privileged to make known; nor was it revealed till after the Lord had taken His place at the right hand of God, and the church was formed by the presence of the Holy Ghost. What is given in these two parables is that the Lord has hidden His treasure in the field; having found one, He hides it, and then at all cost buys the field to secure the treasure. This treasure is the good seed of ver. 24; and when spoken of as a “pearl of great price,” it is not its future setting in gold, not the glory which the “Merchant” destined for it, but as the object of His desire and His giving up all else to possess it. This is true of the church; but it is here a similitude of the kingdom, because it is a characteristic of this present time from the Pentecost to the Rapture. While the “Merchant” is seeking, judgment is delayed, and God patiently endures with the mystery of iniquity, and with the despising of the Son. When the Father's work of seeking spiritual worshippers is over, when His church like good wheat is garnered above, then will the Lord Jesus be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon them that know not God, and on those that obey not the gospel.

Neither caring for the good fish, nor binding the tares, is a momentary act. Both may soon be more apparent, but are going on now. At no previous period of church history since the days of the apostles has there been such insistence on the truth of the believer's standing in Christ, on the one Body, and on the evil of sectarianism. For how long a time men thought more of their own denominational position than of feeding the flock of God! how many have been, and how many now are, known by the name of a man!—an evil that broke out in the church at Corinth, but which has not disappeared by the apostle's rebuke. The dishonor this is to Christ is felt now; and gathering to His name is owned, at least by some, to be the only true ground where Christians can meet. Prayer and thanksgiving may be offered to God where this true ground is unknown, but it is only there, and nowhere else, that worship, spiritual worship such as the Father seeks, can be offered up. And more than this, there can be no true “waiting for the Son from heaven” if the saint is not there. The doctrine may be received—though even then not its fullness—but the true heart—waiting can scarce be where human system takes the place of the ground of God's church. Where this hope really exists, the saint purifies himself “even as He is pure.” And so it was that when the truth of being gathered to the name of Christ as the only ground of the church was revived, the waiting for the Son from heaven came in crush power. The long neglected hope of the Lord coming to take His own, and lead them into His rest and joy away from a doomed world, again cheered the heart, and gave strength against the evil of the world. It is midnight, and the cry “Behold the Bridegroom! Go forth” has awakened the sleepers. This cry—mere theory with some, but through grace a practical reality with others—has gone through the world. To bring believers on the true ground of the church, calling them to the true attitude of waiting for the Son from heaven, answers to the fishermen putting the good fish into vessels.

While the energy of the Holy Spirit is seen in thus reviving forgotten truth, at the same time the tares are being prepared for their binding. Men are combining under different leaders, and associations with various aims and characters are increasing. There are societies religious, political, infidel, for the furtherance of almost every conceivable object. And it may be alas! that in some are to be found true Christians, children of God mixed up with ungodly men for the promotion of objects other than of God. The power of grace will doubtless bring out all that are His, and bind them together in the bundle of life (1 Sam. 25:29), separating them from all evil; but then in all others will be manifested a more determined opposition against God and His truth, and all that He has established. Even human authority, as He ordained, will be set aside. This will be the common aspect of every tare-bundle, by whatever name now known. Nihilism, socialism, rationalism, and vulgar infidelity indicate the various forms and character the tares will assume—combinations against constituted government, and denial of the Bible as the revealed word of God. The present latitudinarianism (miscalled “liberality”) may change into persecution before the Lord comes, but it will make the separation between the good and the bad more distinct and visible.

Both Mark and Luke speak of the kingdom of God, where Matthew uses the phrase “the kingdom of the heavens;” but the two phrases are not interchangeable, even where the same parables are given in illustration. Matthew is dispensational, and under the expression “kingdom of heaven” gives the universal declension in Christendom. At Pentecost multitudes were converted, and the good news spread rapidly over the known world; the good seed seemed to be bearing its hundred-fold. Now, in our own day, can we see thirty-fold? In Mark the present is looked at from the point of testimony; hence he speaks of the kingdom of God, the tested condition of those who are within the sphere of the kingdom of heaven. Mark is individual, and lays emphasis upon responsibility. Nor are we left to our own inferences as to the qualities that mark the kingdom of God, which in its highest aspect is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17). And even where these highest qualities are not found, inasmuch as service, and consequently responsibility, are the points in this Gospel, those who fail entirely as well as those who by grace are maintained in service, are a likeness of the kingdom of God.

In Mark 1 the Lord Jesus said the kingdom of God was nigh; still it was moral, not dispensational. The moral perfections of the kingdom of God were about to be displayed in Him. This was His first word, the beginning of His public ministry. The kingdom of God was nigh to the people, very nigh, for He was there and entering upon the path where the power of God's kingdom would be brought before their eyes. To us, with a deeper knowledge than was possible for those who then heard Him, the kingdom of God was nigh in view of His death and resurrection; then it took a new and higher aspect—looking at man—in accordance with the heavenly character and portion of those who belong to it, those who are born again. Later on in His ministry the Lord Jesus said the kingdom of God was come, and this in Matthew (12:28), where the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven is the theme. For in casting out demons He displayed the power which belongs to God alone. The Lord never said the kingdom of heaven was come, for it could not till He ascended to the throne above. But the kingdom of God in power of blessing, healing the body, freeing the soul from Satanic possession, was there present in the person of the Lord Jesus. Again in Matthew the Lord said, “Seek first the kingdom of God.” It is an object of attainment the “how attained” is another question). This the kingdom of heaven is not, nor could be any more than the giving of the

law. That to which the soul may attain belongs to a moral domain; and this should be ever borne in mind when the Spirit speaks of the kingdom of God.

The Sower is given in three Gospels; four casts of the seed, of which three are the same in result, as recorded by each Evangelist; but there is a marked difference in the result of the fourth. And each is in harmony with the Spirit's teaching in each Gospel. In Matthew the return from the good ground is some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. In Mark, the order is reversed, some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, some a hundred-fold. Is this difference of order a mere accident? Nay, it is designed, and there is a divine purpose in it. In both there is the diversity of fruit-bearing, which, doubtless, is to be seen among Christians at all times; but the order of the words in Matthew points to the declension of the corporate body of profession, yea, even in the fruit-bearing of the good seed. Not through defect in the good seed, which is the Word, but through some bad quality in the good ground. In the parable of the tare-field, the good seed is not the Word, but the children of the kingdom; the same as the “good ground” in the Sower, only viewed in a different light.

Chapter 87

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 18. History of Faith

In Mark it is service and responsibility, and the order of the words points to the reward of faithfulness in service. Not only the more prominent, but each one, however humble, has a “candle” from the Lord, and is responsible not to hide it under a bushel. This is the service of all, and where is fidelity there is increase. “To him that hath shall be given.” If the first fruit-bearing be only thirty-fold, the faithful servant will be led on by the Spirit to bear a hundred-fold. In Luke it is neither dispensation nor responsibility in service, but sovereign grace, and in the parable of the Sower the natural result of grace is given. For when it is unhindered it always produces a hundred-fold. If all were constantly true to the grace of God, not one would fail of a full result. There is sufficiency of grace for it. The God of grace delights to look on the brightest side, and looks here at the full effect of what He has bestowed. No mention in Luke of failure, either in a greater or less degree; there is a hundred-fold. Not that responsibility is ignored; God's free giving does not set that aside. And therefore the symbol of a candle is added here. But in Mark it is the challenge to responsibility: “Is a candle brought to be hidden?” “Take heed what ye hear; with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you.” In Luke it is the assertion in view of grace, that no man when he hath lighted a candle covereth it with a vessel. That is, the grace of God unhindered in its action upon the soul meets the saint in his responsibility, supplies all his need, and produces a hundred-fold. Grace makes him take heed “how” he hears; in Mark, “what” he hears; it is God's word, he must own its full authority. But “how” refers to the manner of hearing; in self-abasement recognizing God's grace, in the consciousness of absolute unworthiness, yet in faith.

But Mark speaks of the “mystery of the kingdom of God.” The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven show the various outward forms of evil which, taking occasion through a dispensation of grace, men manifest. The “mystery of the kingdom of God” is, if possible, a more solemn thing, as showing the moral condition of souls. It looks at the effects of God's truth upon the inner man; the truth believed as a doctrine but not received in the heart, holding the truth in unrighteousness, acknowledging after a sort its authority but not obedient to it, loving the world and the things of the world. The love of money (i.e., the world in a portable form) is a root of all evil. And this evil, which has its seat in the heart, is looked at in its unity, as is the good which is put as the Lord's work. It is the mystery—not mysteries—of the kingdom of God. The outward wickedness which the “mysteries” reveal is the result of that root, evil pointed to by the “mystery of the kingdom of God.”

For this reason, I cannot but judge, the tare-field is not given in Mark. The tare-field is history—the source, introduction, progress, and final doom of a special evil, though, as to extent, universal evil that could only be found where good seed had been sown. The tree is found in the three Gospels. In Matthew, it is simply the fact that such a thing exists, giving shelter to Satan's agents. In Mark, it is not the bare fact of existence, but that grace and truth have been so perverted, so practically denied, that not holiness but wickedness can be upheld by and find a home in it. Matthew says, “The birds of the air came:” he is stating a fact. Mark says, “The birds came and devoured:” he is

describing the character (it became such in the hands of man). That the truth in the kingdom of God should, while retaining the name, become so changed through Satanic agency and human evil, is a “mystery.” But this is what the Gentile world did with the truth of the glory of God as displayed in creation— “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things” (Rom. 1:28). Is this a horrible thing? That which Christendom has done and is now doing is far more horrible.

Matt. 11:12 seems to be an exception to the statement that the kingdom of heaven is never presented as an object of attainment. But it is only apparent. So also Matt. 18:4. The former declares that the violent take it by force, the latter that none can enter unless he become like a child. Becoming like a little child is one of the marks of true conversion, and is seen, more or less, at all times. But it may have special reference to the time when the Lord Jesus was here and rejected, both verses referring to that time, “from the days of John the Baptist until now,” i.e., the time of the Lord's sojourn here. When He was here He was none the less King because the Jew refused Him. Nathaniel's faith owned Him such at once. Where He was, was the kingdom, and to follow Him was to enter the kingdom; though as a dispensation it did not begin till Christ ascended, and even then not in its final form, but for a period during which the power and the glory are in abeyance, and a heavenly people formed. When that purpose is fulfilled, the kingdom in power is near.

There are three distinct phases of the kingdom of heaven. First, while the Lord Jesus, the King, was here; second, from the time of His ascension on to His revelation or appearing for judgment; third, the Millennium, which is the future dispensation of glory.

Daring the first, two things would characterize those who entered the kingdom. They would be as strong men and also like little children: two most opposite qualities, yet here perfectly harmonious, necessary and complementary to each other. As strong men, using force, they would break away from old associations, from all they had hitherto held sacred and dear, but which in presence of the rejected King lost all their value. This was a wrench so great that the Lord calls them violent; it was by force they took the kingdom. On the other hand, they were to exhibit the traits of a little child.

Coming to Him was not to be with intellectual reasoning like Nicodemus, “How can these things be?” not proposing questions, “What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” not with a lawyer's evasive skill, “Who is my neighbor?” not even with the sincerity of the rich young man; but with the confiding simplicity of a little child, receiving unquestioningly all His teaching, and sharing His reproach. This was specially exemplified in Peter and Andrew, James and John. The Lord said “Follow me;” and at once they left all and followed Him. No reasoning about their nets, nor even about their father. The same word called Matthew, and he left custom and office to follow the Lord Jesus. This is child-like. How foolish! says the world; but wisdom is justified of her children, and they were the children of the kingdom. But inasmuch as the King Himself is rejected, the children, though free as to title, must share the reproach of the Master; and this was seen in the Lord submitting to pay the tribute for Himself and for Peter. Another fact that marks off this period from the succeeding one is that the dispensation of law, as well as the claim of the Temple, was not yet formally set aside; the veil was not yet rent. Such an aspect of the kingdom could only be while the Lord was here, and rejected by the people.

The second phase is the dispensation of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven—this present time hastening to its close. There is no question now of entering the kingdom by force; what we see now is, life from the dead. There is something analogous when anyone—already converted—gives up position, friends, or even relatives for the Lord's sake; but as a dispensation men are born in the kingdom, which comprehends at least every place where His name is proclaimed. Conversion is not the single idea either in taking the kingdom by force, or in becoming a child to enter it. The dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. The dead cannot use force. The position of being in the kingdom as sons is now merged in the higher place of being brought into the church of God, which now gives a likeness of the kingdom of heaven; but when the third period comes, the church, which is now the hid treasure, will shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

Mark does not give the parable of the leaven, which is never employed as the symbol of a good thing. The tree is so used; the first mention of a tree is in connection with creation good. There was a tree of life in Eden; there will be another in the new earth. And when the tree is need as a figure of blessedness (Psa. 1 Jer. 17) or for the power of Messiah (Dan. 2:44), all is absolute perfection. But when applied to man, or to anything committed to him, then comes failure and decay. Such a display of God's power in goodness as when Christ came, such a manifestation as had never been known before, was worthy to be called the kingdom of God. It is the revelation of Himself. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Not His authority and power in judgment, but His character in grace. The kingdom of heaven now is specially the rule of Christ while He is at the right hand of God; the kingdom of God is specially His gracious power made known in wondrous ways to a lost world.

The tree is connected with man's responsibility, and is given in Mark, and the same illustration which in Matthew gives the dispensational character, in Mark points to the moral and spiritual blindness, the degradation of man, his insensibility to God's grace. A tree may fail in fruit-bearing, may wither, or its fruit become bad. Leaven never becomes bad; it cannot be corrupted, because it is itself corruption and corrupting; and, I apprehend, for this reason it is not suited to Mark's Gospel. Both the tree and the leaven are given in Luke 13 but in connection with the hypocritical ruler, who in false zeal for the sanctity of the Sabbath dared to rebuke the Lord for healing the infirm woman on that day. Hypocrisy is the pervading and prominent evil which falsifies, and is specially opposed to, guilelessness and the grace revealed in the kingdom of God and in the person of Christ, the theme of Luke's Gospel. It is found in high places, among the ecclesiastical rulers of a world-church, as set forth in the tree; its pernicious and insinuating character is in the leaven.

One who seemed to catch the import of the Lord's words, said, “Lord, are those that be saved few?” The Lord Jesus points to the strait gate as the only way to escape the prevailing evil. Hypocrites would make a wide gate, but not into the kingdom of God. Their gate would not lead to the enjoyment of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which constitute the kingdom of God now. Flesh and blood cannot inherit that kingdom. That God now bears with the assumption of hypocrites is part of the “mystery of the kingdom of God.”

The hid treasure and the pearl only appear in Matthew. Both tell of the place God in His love gives to His saints. Not responsibility in service, nor the grace which seeks and saves the lost, but the

estimation which God puts upon those who are saved, the love of Him who within the sphere of the kingdom of heaven hid a treasure and found a pearl.

The net, too, has a place only in Matthew. It is the latest public act characteristic of the kingdom of heaven, save judgment, but this is equally introductory to the Millennium. The “good” are in question here, and for them it, is the winding up of the present age. It has its right plane, surely, where the Lord put it in His parabolic history of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Each Gospel has its distinctive character, and parables peculiar to each. Not one shows this more than Mark 4:26-29. “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” The not knowing how the seed grew is simply the appearance of the world which knows nothing of the secret sustaining power of God. It is the contrast with what had been when Jehovah interfered openly for His people; it might be by judgment, or by deliverance from their enemies, but it was manifest. This was now about to be changed; and the absence of God's interposition on behalf of His saints would be to the world as if He knew not how the seed grew. Just as the earth brought forth fruit of herself, the blade, the ear, the ripe fruit, so God's saints would appear to the world as if all their strength was derived from human sources. The harvest would undeceive them, but not till then would they know. It is then that He who sowed the seed appears. To appear before that time would interfere with, and curtail, the action of faith. Faith had not such opportunity before, nor will there be in the coming dispensation. Manifested glory and power is not the place where the, victories and endurance of faith is best seen. There is a necessity, in the Wisdom of God, that faith should apparently be left to itself; so that it might increase and strengthen—that He should seem to act towards His people as a man who sleeps and rises night and day, and knows not how the seed germinates and produces the ripened fruit. But God has given to faith the power of increasing by opposition; and so growing from the first blade to the full corn in the ear is a divine reality, and is as natural to true faith as that coin seed should grow out of the earth. Faith bears most fruit when appearances are most against. If scoffers say, “Where is the promise of his coming?” faith boldly answers, “He is not slack concerning His promise;” but He is long-suffering.

The wicked being allowed to persecute, without the power of God being presently exercised against the persecutors, led Paul to say by the Holy Ghost, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” But does not God really watch over and protect His saints? Yea, truly, and the church's pathway through the world is both for the glory of God and for the brighter shining of His saints when the glory comes. Saints are conscious of God's care and love, and know that during this present dispensation it is not so much by delivering them from the sorrows and trials of life, as by maintaining their faith and bringing them triumphantly through all. “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [not temptations to sin], knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (see James 1:8, 4 & 13, 14). This is not mere resting upon God during the trial, but joy because the trial is sent. This is one of faith's victories, whose eye is fixed not on present suffering but on God's glory in it. “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). Many instances of

God's special interposition might be adduced, but the general and normal aspect of this dispensation is that the saints of God have to suffer, whatever a Christ-rejecting world may do. So it appears that the seed groweth up “he knoweth not how.” But faith goes beyond the appearance, trusting and confiding in God.

The world sees not God; and saints, to the men who have not faith, are but people with peculiar notions, and visionaries, that lack wisdom. But what is the wisdom of this world? What are the wise and prudent mostly striving for? They are searching into every possible thing, rising to the created heavens, diving into the bowels of the earth, “evolving” the whole animal creation, man himself not excepted, from one primordial, and almost inanimate lump of matter, running to and fro the earth seeking for proof (!) that God is not God. Congresses and lectures are over the land to spread infidelity. Nay (incredible audacity), they search God's own Book to deny His truth, to deny Christ the Sent of God. The world accepts this wisdom, makes legislators of its teachers, to guide the destinies of nations, and to banish the very idea of “God” from the earth. This is the wisdom, the boasted light of the nineteenth century! From the least touch of this horrible, hellish wisdom may God keep His saints. Yet, as if in evidence that the world does not quite believe its own teachings, why do not these wise ones let Christians alone? If they are foolish believers in cunningly devised fables, why not let them alone in their folly? Why speak and write against them and the Book God has given them? Why so much labor to prove that what must be a fable (as they say) is a fable? No one writes now to prove that the gods of the heathen are no gods, or that Mahomet was a deceiver.

Satan laughs at the wisdom of the world but as the Arch enemy of Christ uses it to the ruin of man. He knows that faith in God is a reality, and he has often been put to flight by it. Therefore he would drive it from the earth. He persecutes and kills the saints of God. This failing to accomplish his purpose—faith grows and spreads by it—he seeks to seduce the believer from the paths of faith. But he began with persecution and blood, killing Stephen and James, attempting to kill Peter at the same time; he made Saul of Tarsus breathe out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord; and when this persecutor became Paul the Apostle, he stirred up with increased rage the Jews to kill him. The enmity of the Jews was his choice means against the church, and when that people were broken and scattered by Gentile power, he used the Roman emperor to stamp out if possible the faith of Christ from among men.

But Satanic wisdom perceived that the more the, disciples were scattered, the more were believers brought to bow to the name of Christ. Satanic cunning then employed the world's seductive charms, and here he alas! succeeded with the mass of professors. A faithful few were kept by the power of God's grace, who resisted all the blandishments of the world. Being but a remnant the world deemed it easy to crash them, and the old means of persecution were again used, and not by Pagans but by evil men who called themselves the church of God. The professing church received gifts from the world, grasped its power, and then turned its sword against the faithful. These were in comparatively recent times shot down by hundreds, multitudes cast into rivers. Pagans had thrown Christians to the wild beasts in a Roman amphitheater; it was reserved for Christendom to witness a more terrible slaughter. Not the gratification of a cruel pleasure in which the Romans delighted, not the maddened rage of a heathen mob, but a mob with the cross as its banner, with ecclesiastics as its leaders, in pleasure still more cruel, a rage still more mad shed the blood of God's saints. Nor is this the limit of their hatred. Satan established

an engine of persecution more terrorizing and soul-crushing than any previous to it—the power of the secret inquisition, whose emissaries, in the dead of night, would snap the ties of husband and wife, of parent and child; and the victims of its power, with but few exceptions, would never be seen again.

(To be continued)

Chapter 88

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 19. History of Faith

Now, not by the world's enlightenment (as it would make us believe), but by the order of God, this engine of Satan's malice does not exist, or if it does, is hidden in dark corners. Additional, and more dangerous means are now used; the world is putting forth all its energy against the faith of Christ and against the faithful. It is as if the world was marshalling all its armies in battle array against the church of God. The world's power, the world's wisdom, its science, its commerce, its politics, its pleasures, yea its own religion, are led on by its prince—unseen as yet—against the faith of God, the rule of Christ, and against all that bear His name. Perhaps there never was a more testing time for the strength of faith than the present. Does not the history of the Church—its public history which the world's undiscerning eye may read—repeat to us the words of the parable: “He sleeps and rises night and day and knows not how it grows “? But faith is a defense against all; it is a breast-plate (1 Thess. 5:8), it covers the region of the heart, it gives all its love and affection to God, turns with unswerving allegiance to the Lord Jesus, and repels every dart hurled by the foe.

The Lord spoke in parables. There was a truth, a new truth contained in this parable, very different from what Israel had known before. To be left to suffer from their enemies was the result of departure from God, it was a chastisement for their rebellion. But that they who looked for the kingdom of God should be apparently left without the care and protection of God was a condition for which the disciples were wholly unprepared. They knew that the Lord's pathway had been all sorrow, rejection, they had shared a little in it: still the Lord was with them, and they had seen His power put forth, and expected to see the kingdom established in power during their lifetime. But to have intimated to them in parable that the Lord was as One who knew not how the seed was growing, that He would only appear at the harvest, was a strange sound. But there was another truth connected with it, though not contained in the parable. Whatever the appearance might be, the Lord would be with His saints. This reassuring fact Mark gives in the scene of the storm, which relates to the same period as the parable. So if fear cries out, “The Master sleeps,” faith may reply, “The Lord is with us.” The Lord spoke in parables, but “when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.”

Soon the Lord not merely expounds, but gives a practical illustration of His power to save and deliver. They are alone in the ship, and the storm comes down upon them, the waves rise and fill the ship. Destruction seems imminent. No circumstances could more powerfully depict the position of saints of the kingdom of God. Danger is visible and pressing. Safety is certain. The connection between the storm and the parable is most precious. The man sows seed, and sleeps and rises, and knows not how it grows. The Lord Jesus sleeps, and is unmoved. The roaring wind and seething water cannot disturb the calm peace of His soul: To the disciples the only thing seen is that they are in danger, and the Master is asleep. But He is with them, a truth which the parable did not disclose. Faith grasps the fact now; and finds both strength and joy; and though He be (or

now to saints' fears seems to be) asleep, it is only that faith may be awaked: But the faith of the disciples did fail. How faint the impression upon their minds of His previous proofs of power and care for them! How slow to learn who He was! Or did they think that there was danger because He slept? Their cry does imply that if He were awake—up and visibly active—they could trust His power. But what would become of them if He slept? Their faith did not rise to the assurance that whether He visibly interposed on their behalf, or whether the storm took its natural course, they were as safe in the one case as in the other. The Lord is awakened—by their cry, and first He rebukes the wind and the sea. Creation hears the voice of its Lord, and there is a great cater. Then He turns to His amazed disciples, and His words are a loving reproach for their want of faith. They ought to have known how impossible it was for the ship to sink when the Lord Jesus was in it. What matter whether He were asleep or not? He was there, and that was enough.

So now the storms of wind and sea may appear to be about to engulf the saints, and He, abuse single word “Peace” would reduce the storm in a moment to, a calm, may appear as one asleep. Is this a reason, for doubting? nay, it is for the trial of faith more precious than gold, though tried with fire. We know His parting word's when He went up on high, “I am with you even to the end.” This ought to fill our hearts with confidence. We have the express word as well as the truth mirrored in the ship tossed by angry waves. But how often do our doubting hearts when sore pressed cry out “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” And as often, does the Master's answer, written and preserved for us, come in the power of His love to still our fears, “Peace, be still.” Then the danger past, His loving remonstrance, “Why are ye so fearful? how is it that you have no faith?” makes us ashamed of ourselves. The point both in the parable and in the storm is, that during this present time there is no active display of God's power on behalf of His church so as to be evident to the world. On the other hand, the reality of His presence and power is assured to faith. Thus the Lord Jesus was expounding the parable, and in a most impressive scene teaching us to be calm and restful, no matter how the storms of life may rage, or the waters swell; faith is to triumph over all circumstances. The storm is illuminated by the presence of the Lord, and throws its clear light over the parable.

Thus in the Gospels is the inbringing of the present dispensation: in Matthew its history as a dispensation, in Mark and Luke its moral characteristics as touching the responsibility and service of those who are the kingdom of God; or the sovereignty of grace, more particularly brought out in Luke. Indeed it is infinite grace all through, for the dispensation, is founded on grace. The future is grace, Messiah sitting upon the throne of, David; the Son of Man reigning over the ransomed world are the results of free grace. But this is not all. When the work of the cross was finished, its glorious result could not be limited by Israel's restoration or by Gentile blessing. It was a righteous result that He who endured the cross and glorified God by it, should be highly exalted, every knee bowing, every tongue confessing Him to be King of kings and Lord of lords. But universal dominion is not the full reward of the MAN who so glorified God. Grace has a greater result than even to be king in a dispensation of glory we may surely say, a result sweeter, and more prized by God who delights to manifest His riches of grace. For now while there is no special dealing with Israel, no maintaining the Gentile in universal dominion and the power of the world controlled by. God's providence, He is calling out a people, separating them from the world, guiding them by the Spirit, to the place prepared for them by the Lord Jesus in the glory, that where He is they may also be.

The field was bought for the purpose of exhibiting this grace. A period of mere dispensational mercy would not have met the purpose—may we not, even say, the desire?—of God. There would have been a seeming failure in the effect of the cross, if, there were no church; and so, on the other hand, the call of the church necessitated a dispensation of grace. And grace, when works are impossible as a ground of acceptance, implies faith. No such call could have been under law. That dispensation was necessary that man might be known. The, dispensation of grace was equally necessary that God might be known. The church, as the highest display of His sovereign grace, is now formed “that in the ages to come He [God] might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7).

But even when grace is seen in its highest aspect, there also in special combination is the most solemn responsibility; and thus a moral process is carried on both with the church corporate and the individual believer which magnifies the grace of God and tests the faith of all. Grace meets the responsibility of both church and saint. There is in this, respect an immense difference between the natural man and the believer. The natural man is without power, but his responsibility does not cease because he has no strength. Though failure is inevitable, his obligation to his Creator remains. But the believer—a new creation, while his obligations as a creature remain—is assured that all his previous failure is blotted out, and he begins a new life. And although as a man his obligations to God—i.e., his duties is the relationships of this life—rest upon him as before, yet as a new creation, he receives power through grace to walk in them acceptably before God a power which he had not before. All his past debts, or failures, are canceled; but his creature responsibilities, enhanced, intensified by his new position, are met by sovereign race. There are, as a new creation, new responsibilities, but God in grace has provided for every need. For grace is enthroned, and to that throne we are invited to draw near with boldness that we may obtain help in every time of need. And there it is the blessed function of faith to realize not only the power of grace in time of need, but also the presence of God more intimately than when the worshipper of old drew nigh to the tabernacle upon which the cloud rested, or when the newly consecrated temple was filled with the pavilion of His glory (2 Chron. 4:14). The splendor and the gorgeous service of Solomon's temple did not reveal God. He was inside the veil, and there it was dark then. Jesus, the Lord, has rent the veil, and now tikes us through the opened way; and we as worshippers enter within the veil and are at home in the light of the bright shining of wisdom and power and love.

It is both the duty and privilege of the church to manifest the excellency of the place God has given us. In this the church has grievously failed. Yet even this failure gives a wider scope for the action of faith, enlarging the sphere. Only that when corporate failure is stamped upon the professing body, the faith that overcomes is rather individual. And what severer test can there be for faith than when not the mere professor but the real church fails and loses her first love? It may not make us doubt our personal salvation, but faith is proved as to whether Christ alone is the one Object of our desire. But faith now is tried in every possible way, that it may overcome and that grace may give to it every possible reward.

(To be continued)

Chapter 89

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 20. History of Faith

When the church was first established, how jealous the Lord was for its purity and holiness! The first breach was avenged by instant death. Yet the all-seeing eye of God detected not only lying covetousness, but the future inroads of grievous wolves not sparing the flock, and what is equally if not more solemn that “of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts xx. 30). This was the warning uttered by Paul to the elders of Ephesus. Uttered to them, and for us, that we might remember that the word of His grace foretold us that the most ruinous evil would spring from among ourselves. And the history of the church abundantly proves it.

If Matthew gives failure from a dispensational point, chaps. 2 and 3 of Revelation give that of the professing church. How steep the incline from the loss of first love in Ephesus to the lukewarmness of Laodicea, from the threat to remove the candlestick to the being spued out of His mouth! In the breaking up of what may be the last corporate testimony on earth, each saint is cast more upon Him who alone is the Faithful and True Witness, And if all outward sign of unity vanish, still the truth of God cannot fail, “For by one Spirit are We all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and have been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13). The having failed to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is the cause of the many names and divisions among true believers, who ought to be visibly one as they are by the baptism of the Spirit really one before God, Yet if on board and broken pieces, all who belong to the ship will be brought safe to land. Then the unity beyond all possibility of apparent breach will be manifested to the world (John 17:23).

One of the fundamental characteristics of the church is to wait for the Son from heaven. It is the true attitude towards Christ, specially noted as characterizing the newly converted at Thessalonica. And it is expressed as “going forth to meet the Bridegroom in Matt. 25,” where it equally points to the original position of the virgins, and after their awakening to the resumption of it, and thus is a special feature of the time of the end. It ought to have been the constant attitude of the church from the beginning. The church is called the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), and in no way could the truth be practically shown without the habitual waiting for the Son from heaven. In forgetting and alas! denying this hope, the church ceased to be the pillar and base of the truth. From the church point of view this is the special feature of the leaven which leavened the meal. Not a truth communicated to the church but has suffered in purity and power from this fatal departure from the true position of waiting for the Son from heaven. The sleep of the virgins opened a door for the entrance of every evil found in Christendom. Nor did Satan neglect his opportunity. The vigor and power of a holy life, of Christianity, is paralyzed by the forgetting of this truth. The main life of the saint, the proper aspect and character of the church; is comprised in the “going forth.” All our hope is in meeting Him, our true strength is bound up in it. It severs from every earthly object, it centers every affection in Him, it energizes every spiritual faculty, it purifies

according to His purity; in the midst of the world's hatred and persecution it strengthens to endure and overcome with the patience of faith its malignity. All these were the marks the church should have borne. But to bear them truthfully before God was dependent upon her faithfulness. Impossible for sleeping virgins to be faithful.

Here the grace of our Savior God appears. He is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:13). In His grace He awakens the sleepers: the midnight cry recalls them to their true and original attitude. God's purpose in redemption cannot be set aside. Christ's glory and victory over Satan is of too high moment to permit the consequences of the church's failure to tarnish it. Nay, the failure becomes an occasion to exalt His grace yet more so, that the superabundance of its riches may be more manifest. There is a necessity for the actings of grace, for the Lord Jesus must have His reward. How marvelous the grace that makes our blessing to be His guerdon! He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. This was bound up in God's eternal purpose; and Jesus is exalted, and God in Him.

From the Kingdom stand-point the failure of Christendom is in denying the rights of the King, His coming to take possession of the purchased inheritance, relegating His throne to heaven, but not to reign over the earth; in current phraseology calling the Lord Jesus a “spiritual King” and His Kingdom a “spiritual Kingdom.” But from the church point where all our affections should be displayed, the failure began in the loss of first love; and, this not repented of, Ephesus inevitably leads to Laodicea. Why was such evil permitted in a church destined to be so holy and so glorious? Why was it not kept in perfect purity and faithfulness from the beginning? Was it necessary that the church should so fail in order that the exceeding riches of His grace might be more abundantly seen? Nay. This would be to make God the author of the evil. If it had been a question solely of His power apart from the church's responsibility, assuredly He could have kept it pure and bright as at the first, without spot or stain. But the church as standing by faith, and without excuse for failure, magnifies the grace that is still given, not with standing her declension.

For if the church, or, those who are now the saints of God, had been in a position where failure was impossible, while there would still have been that aspect of grace which justifies us from all things, from which we could not be by law, where would be the grace that keeps and restores the saint after failure? Where the conflict, the victory, the triumphant song? For we not only celebrate Christ's victory over sin and death, but also rejoice in that He hath made us conquerors through His blood. If we may compare, where all is infinite, one aspect and action of grace with another, is not the grace daily shown to a responsible and failing saint of a higher character than that which quickens a dead sinner? Even as sin in a saint is more heinous than in an unbeliever; more guilty in one who is endowed with power to overcome, than in one who is dead in trespasses and in sins. Does this make failure necessary? Far be the thought; but it magnifies grace and exalts God.

All creation is waiting to praise Him, the inanimate creation as well as the animate (see Psa. 148). The highest kind of praise comes from an intelligent and responsible creature, and the church being the highest grade of worshippers must necessarily have these two qualities. This is the kind of praise which now is rendered to God the Father and Christ. Endowed with every needed faculty and privilege, being the habitation of God by the Spirit, and having access within the veil, the church had not to wait for glory to render acceptable worship. In presence of such conferred power and privilege how great the sin of failure in fidelity and true love to God! Alas! church or world,

saint or sinner, it is the same old, old story—goodness on the part of God, not continuing in it on the part of man. We have as a constant fact from the creation that responsibility in man produces or rather results in inevitable failure; nor otherwise in the church, only that here God provides for the failure, and meets it in every possible circumstance, and He is glorified by it. In every way He is the Savior God.

How plainly this is seen in the seven churches (Rev. 2; 3)! How marked the patience of Him who stood in the midst of the golden candlesticks! What means He used to bring the church back to her first love; repeating the warning at every phase of her decline, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!” But the corporate ear of the church was deaf to the call. How quick His eye to see and His heart to feel the first downward step! In Ephesus all that was outward seemed perfect, not a word of reproach as to that. The germ of evil was not seen by the world; He saw whose eyes are as a flame of fire. That which the. church's Lord prized most was gone. First love means personal love. It is not mere faith in the work of Christ, or consciousness of standing in the favor of God, or a righteous walk before Him; though the soul lacks power in all where “first love” is wanting. What the Lord values most is the heart's longings to see and to be with Him, a desire—which rises paramount to all ass, which gives tone and color to the whole life. This is the true waiting for Him, not the dry and unfruitful assent of the understanding to the doctrine, but the power of the truth filling the soul. This Ephesus had lost.

And Christ, so jealous of all our affections, says that all else is worthless without it. “Repent and do the first works.” Orthodoxy, intelligence, zeal, cannot take the place of personal affection to. Christ. Even if there could be holiness without “first love” as a spring in the soul, it would need to be repented of; but there can be no first works apart from first love. “Else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” This warning is not repeated to the remaining churches. Why? Because the candlestick was removed in consequence of the Ephesus-state. The church never regained her pristine condition and aspect. The loss of “first love” extinguished her brightest light. She abandoned the posture of “waiting for the Son from heaven.” And having put her candle under a bushel the candlestick was removed; it was no longer needed. So it was that the church ceased to be the reflex of the True Light; and she could have no light of her own apart from Him.

The Lord may expostulate and chasten and call out a feeble remnant; but the position of light-bearer in testimony as it ought to be was gone from that moment. The few who were kept faithful through grace no doubt bore a little light which would appear all the brighter by the increasing darkness around; but as a professing body the fine gold was become dim; and in the remaining churches the Spirit of God is recording the farther decline of faith, the result of the loss of first love. Faith works by love. If love fails, faith necessarily declines. There is a moral process keeping pace with the decline of faith, each step of which is adapted to each phase of the falling church, the promises, the threatenings specially suited to the condition of the particular church addressed, all used to impress upon the corporate church both its responsibility and failure until—a remnant being saved—the corrupt mass is spewed out of His mouth.

But if the church be dealt with as responsible, there is also grace to deal with it., And the first dealing is to send persecution. The effect is generally to make the soul cleave closer to Christ, and this is the end that God intends. Will it bring the church back to her previous state? Alas! nothing

stayed her rapid decline. While the tribulation lasted, there was nothing but love and comfort in the address to the saints at Smyrna; not one word of “somewhat against thee.” The Lord saw the works, the tribulation, the poverty, He saw the devil's power against His, suffering saints, and it brings out His tenderness and grace. He bids them not to fear all that Satan could do, neither imprisonment nor death. He had been dead and was alive again: why then fear? They were only following in a like path, only drinking a little from His cup, a little sprinkling of His baptism. A crown of life was in store for them, and they could afford to despise death, and, conscious of the sustaining power of Christ, remain unmoved by the blasphemies of those who, while of the synagogue of Satan, assumed to be Jews, i.e., to be the people of God. The Lord knew them and gave their true character. But He does more than give comfort, He commends them; “but thou art rich” —rich in spite of their poverty, rich in having a special expression of the Lord's faithful love. And it is not unimportant to remember the attitude of Him who commends them. See ch. 1:10-18. One like the Son of man stood in the midst of the candlesticks, in the place of authority, and having all the attributes required for the government and discipline of the church. Not here as the Head of the body from whom all sustenance and energy is derived, but as Son of man judging among the churches; a character and position He did not take till Ephesus lost her first love. It is He who commends despised and suffering Smyrna. “But thou art rich.” Were they astonished to be told they were rich? But the joy and the strength it gave exceeded whatever of wonder might arise. It also prepared them for the ten days of tribulation, and then the crown of life, the gracious reward of faithfulness unto death.

Here was an open door, the path by which the church could retrace her steps back to “first love,” the lose of which created a void soon to be filled with the love of the world. The persecution of Smyrna was the means used by grace that the church might, if possible, regain what she had lost. It is the moral process by which the Lord would recall saints from their folly. What greater folly than to have the world as an object of desire, instead of the Lord—the world, which can only give back hatred? But what love to us, what desire on the part of Christ to have our unworthy love, which He condescends to seek! If He called the north wind to blow upon His garden, it was that the spices might give out. It was a bright gleam in the early days of the church: how soon it faded

Ephesus hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, but Pergamos had those who held the doctrine of Balaam, teachers of idolatry; also those who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, their hateful deeds now openly defended by teachers! Their impure notions taught as “doctrine"! How greatly is Pergamos fallen lower than Ephesus. But what an incongruous mass the professing church had already become; there were those who, held fast Christ's name, had not denied His faith [= doctrine] mixed up with Balaamites and Nicolaitanes, the whole dwelling where the throne of Satan is. The godly among them Were unable to stem the inflowing tide of corruption, and one faithful witness (Antipas) was slain. Alas! it is the Balaamites and the Nicolaitanes which impress their character upon the whole. Yet the Son of Man, whose eyes are as a flame of fire and His words as a sharp two-edged sword, knows how to distinguish between them. As a whole they are called to repent, or rather the call to repentance is direct to those who, while holding fast the name of Christ and not denying His faith, yet failed in allowing evil and the teachers of evil to remain among them. Where was the power to judge the evil? How could that power subsist where Satan had his throne? And that was the place where Pergamos dwelt. If the dealing with Smyrna was all grace, here there is judgment. Grace is surely underlying, but in words the call to repentance is

enforced only by a threat: “Repent therefore; but if not, I come to thee quickly,” this is direct to conscience. “And I will make war with them with the sword of my month.” Judgment is threatened to “them,” and a solemn warning to “thee.” What can tell more the sad condition of the church than when He who loved it so much as to give up all that He had to possess it, is compelled to speak thus? Yet there is worse to come.

But here is the first distinction made between those who brought in the evil and those they corrupted. In Ephesus all had left their first love, in Smyrna all are comforted, in Pergamos the Son of Man distinguishes between “thee” and “them.” The two parties are not separated here, and so all are called to repentance; for, by allowing the evil to remain among them, all were more or less identified with it. Hence, the word is “Repent, or I will come to thee quickly.” The church never really recovered her first slip. As a whole every downward step was never retraced; there was never true corporate repentance. Individuals no doubt felt and mourned over the increasing evil, but they are known only to the Lord who never left Himself without a witness. Evil unrepented of and unjudged always increases and assumes a deeper dye. So in the next phase of decline a Jezebel feature is added. This is the condition of Thyatira, and here the distinction which appeared in Pergamos is more marked, and results in separation. For Thyatira as such goes on to the end, and the warnings are addressed to the “rest” as well as the promises. The nominal church as a living testimony for God is given up. On Jezebel and her children judgment is pronounced, which would overtake those who sinned with her unless they repent of her works. There is no direct call to Jezebel and her children. If in Pergamos all may be included in the call to repent, certainly not in Thyatira. Repentance would avert the threatening surely, but space had been given for repentance, and they did not; therefore they would be left to receive each according to his works. Here there is no calling back to the original position, which was lost irrecoverably.

How compassionate the word to the feeble remnant! No other burden but to hold fast what they had. What had they? It is significant that we are told what they had not— “have not this doctrine, have not known the depths of Satan.” It is faithfulness under a negative aspect. The Lord prizes even this, and in loving pity says, “I will put upon you no other burden.” Useless to attempt to regain what is lost, but hold fast what you have till I come. As if the Lord said, Only remember Me. And this is the word of special moment for us in these days when ruin is more visibly stamped upon the professing church than it was when the evil of Thyatira first appeared. “Till I come” is the grand stay for our souls, and nothing more clearly expresses the Lord's love to us (see John 14:1-8). What hearts are oars to forget His love, so patient, so faithful! His coming is now the only remedy; the depths of Satan are such an evil as the Lord alone can meet by taking His saints out of all. Not that we are quietly to rest without bearing testimony, however feeble, against it; but there is no complete deliverance till He comes.

(To be continued)

Chapter 90

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 21. History of Faith

The “rest” in Thyatira are directed to the characteristic hope of the church, and to resume, as far as possible, that aspect which is the true evidence of first love. Why, when all else gone, is this one lost hope brought prominently forward? Because, if it is a going back to a precious hope, well-nigh forgotten by all, it is really a looking forward, so that the seeing Christ may be the divine preservative in a scene of wide-spread declension. This hope is the divinely given motive for personal holiness (1 John 3:3).

So even the failure of the church is used as an occasion to declare the unfailing love of Christ as well as to lead His saints to long for His coming. When all is ruined as to corporate testimony, what riches of grace thus to present Himself. If sin be measured not so much per se as by the grace against which it is committed, is there any sin greater than the church's forgetfulness of the love and grace of Christ? But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

The evil of the Thyatira state goes on to the end of the age, it is the last phase of a part of Christendom. We have not far to look to find the special evils denounced in Thyatira. The judgment is that of the end; broken to shivers can only be when the Lord appears and this is the doom of the unrepentant Nicolaitanes, the followers of Balaam, and the children of Jezebel. The reward of the faithful also points to the Lord's coming, which from other scriptures we know will precede the judgment upon the wicked. The Morning Star is the portion of the faithful before the evildoers are judged. But there is more, beside the sweet enjoyment of the Morning Star—and this the loving-hearted prize most—there is the public display in glory, power over the nations; a more than compensation for present weakness and oppression.

It is the remnant, the rest in Thyatira, that appear in Sardis. And a new feature of evil appears in them. Not the corruption of Thyatira, nor the presence of the teachers of evil doctrine, but they were dead, a more hopeless case. So that in reality the Sardis condition, though to human eyes more respectable, is worse than that of Thyatira. Not even the promise of the Morning Star kept them holding fast till He came. The things that remain were ready to die. What were these things, what remained to them amid the corruption of Thyatira? “Have not this doctrine,” “have not known the depths of Satan,” together with the added word of the Lord, “Hold fast till I come.” These were all but gone. “Remember how thou hast received and heard.” Patient love and pity said “I will lay upon you no other burden.” Even this is forgotten, and cold indifference to the Lord's love set in upon those who had escaped the idolatry of Thyatira. Unwatchfulness characterized them. Therefore the Son of man would come upon them as a thief. All save a few names were dead. These few had not defiled their garments, and their reward is to walk with Him in white.

Both Ephesus and Sardis are told to “remember,” not Pergamos, nor Thyatira, nor Laodicea. The first step downward was made by Ephesus, and the Lord calls them back to remember whence they had fallen. The remnant (Sardis) from the new beginning infinite grace provided made

another first downward step in forgetting the things they had received and heard, and they also are called back to remember them. This unwatchfulness is but the reappearing of the fatal cause of evil at the beginning; for it was while men slept that the enemy sowed tares. A fresh start—so to speak—was given to the faithful in Thyatira, now represented by Sardis. “I will put upon you no other burden.” Nor is this the first time that failure in those who bear the name of being the people of God, has been met by granting a new point of departure. The law made no provision by which the law-breaker could escape punishment. The soul that sinneth shall die, was the irrevocable sentence. The law could not, and ought not in strict righteousness to abate one jot of its penalty, even though the sinner's repentance was most heartfelt and true. Much less could it offer abundance of pardon to any, who might repent. Yet this is the very announcement that Jehovah commissioned Isaiah to give to rebellious and sinful Israel. “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto Jehovah, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God for He will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:7), Israel's (i.e. Judah's) responsibility is tried with a new test. Formerly, having accepted law, it was to abide in obedience. They did not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them, and came under its curse. As to the righteousness which is by the law they were ruined and lost. But now the word by the prophet is to return to righteousness. If they could, all their wickedness would be forgiven. “God will abundantly pardon.” This tells how truly God waited to be gracious. It is equally true that it was given by the prophet that man might be his own proof that he could neither continue in righteousness, nor return to it when once he had left its paths. It was a Savior-God's way of shutting up men to Christ. Mara was no less a new starting point for Israel, and all the calls to repentance in the prophets are founded upon the super-abundant mercy as given in the words of the prophet. So here for the church; all is on the ground of “no other burden.” Alas! no sooner separated and, as it were, put upon fresh ground, than the same dreadful evil of departing from the path of living faith is seen. At the first step they are arrested—here, as in Ephesus, called to remember—to retrace if possible their way back to the position of “holding fast.” Not to regain the pristine condition of Ephesus, but to remember that when in the midst of Thyatira evil they were kept from it, to remember the grace that bade them not give up their little faithfulness, but to look forward to their Lord's coming as the Morning Star which would soon dispel for them the thick darkness around. They had received and heard; alas how soon they forgot. How soon the Lord is compelled to say that they had a name indeed of living, but in truth were dead. Grace waits upon them, but neither Ephesus nor Sardis, repents. The former lost her candlestick, this sinks into the careless condition of the world, and upon Sardis judgment comes as a thief, as it will upon the world.

The things that marked these two churches are visible now in Christendom. There are those who are separate from Jezebel idolatry, but are living in the world and dead to God. Among them the piercing eye of the Son of man only discerns a few names. “Thou hast a few names [? even] in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.” Defilement does not result only from the corruption of Thyatira, it follows equally from the outside world. A professor living only for the world is dead to God, he has no living faith. And if a believer is not in holy separation from all such, he becomes defiled, like the Israelite who touched a dead body. There may be outward orthodoxy in all, and a measure of truth known, but this alone does not keep the garments undefiled. So while ecclesiastical corruption brings judgment upon Thyatira, worldliness no less hateful to the Lord stamps ruin on Sardis, and exposes them to the same judgment as that of the world.

With all the external decorum of Sardis, only a few names were owned by the Lord. These might not be owned by the others, not enrolled in the Sardis register, but they are written in the book of life, and the Lord Jesus will confess them before His Father and the angels. There is a word of commendation from the Lord here which ranks higher than even that given to the suffering saints in Smyrna who were pronounced “rich.” For the few in Sardis are called worthy to walk with Him in white. It is a wonderful word for even the most faithful to hear. But the Lord Jesus said it, and we adore and rejoice, for it is the reckoning of sovereign grace. That which follows applies to every believer. We are still here to fight and to keep our garments undefiled. “He that overcometh.” But the promise is absolute, for grace ensures the victory.

The Son of man is presented to Sardis as to Ephesus, but here with the addition of having the seven Spirits of God: an attribute not mentioned in the description of Him whom John saw in the midst of the golden candlesticks (Rev. 1:13-18). It is the expression of absolute and perfect power and authority as exercised over the whole creation, and also therefore over the church. Not as the Holy Spirit dwelling in and with the church, revealing the Son, and guiding into all truth, but the expression of rule and of judgment of evil found in the professing church. Why brought in here? To tell the assembly in Sardis that all authority and power was vested in the Son of man who was in the midst of the candlesticks and marking their ways and condition, that He was the Man appointed to judge the world (Acts 17:31) upon whom He would come as a thief, and upon them as being dead like the world. And moreover as a stay for the few undefiled in Sardis that they need not fear the opposition and scorn of the worldly which the faithful always meet with from them.

In the history of the church Sardis begins a new chapter, and a further attribute is brought out, possessed by the Lord, in connection with church responsibility. It was suited to the new character of failure. The church had become a world-church, and as such the Lord in relation to it is the Son of man who has the seven Spirits of God.

The few in Sardis who are undefiled, and the many who are dead, are developed in the two following churches: the former in Philadelphia, but those who had a name to live, and were really dead, eventuate in Laodicea. The boasting of Laodicea is the natural fruit of a mere name without the power of life in the soul, which is the character of the Sardis state. As there had been separation from the corruption of Thyatira, so there is further separation from the deadness of Sardis. Sardis was itself a remnant separated from the evil of Jezebel and the depths of Satan found in Thyatira; now the remnant must itself be sifted. The separation here is not so externally visible as when the “rest” were taken out of Thyatira, which is an historical fact as to its application to the Reformation. But the reality of the distinction between the few names who had not defiled their garments, and the lifeless mass, is more fully seen in comparing Philadelphia with Laodicea. And the impression left on the mind is, that while profession and nominal Christianity widen, how the real dwindle in number. Only a few names in Sardis: what a change from the first days in Jerusalem! The church that then began in such power, that thousands were converted at one preaching; then in such holiness, that the pair who attempted the first defilement died under the rebuke of God; in the Sardis era only a few names are found. And if we look around now, the beauty of the early days is gone, and in its place defilement, weakness, and deadness meet our eyes, all the result of lack of faithfulness.

Weakness is the result mostly of previous unfaithfulness; but if there be only a little strength, yet if Christ's word be kept, the word of His patience, He will keep us from the hour of temptation which is coming upon the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Little strength, and patience, mark Philadelphia; but the prominent points in this epistle are the great grace and love of the Lord Jesus, the full power of His love rests upon them. He will make the self-styled Jew do homage to them, and “to know that I have loved thee.” None so exposed to the hatred of dead Sardis as the feeble Philadelphians. But the word “I have loved thee” more than compensates for all contempt and suffering. Moreover, the time of patient endurance is short. “Behold I come quickly,” and the Lord adds, if we may so say, His word of loving solicitude, “hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” We have constant need to remember the word “hold fast,” because the danger of relaxing our hold is constant. But the crown is now in view, and is presented as an incentive to diligent perseverance. Now so near, let no man take it. Here also in the weakest, yet perhaps most blessed, phase of the church of God, responsibility comes in. Though weak they must continue to hold fast. Grace meets their weakness and will keep them holding fast, so they shall not lose their crown. The word of patience is maintained in them. Saints now know and rejoice in the knowledge of this sovereign grace. Some now may stumble and fail, but they that are Christ's are kept bolding fast. The assurance of this for all His own is implied in the words of the Lord to Peter before he denied his Master, “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” However heavy the rod for a failing child, the staff is always present. Not that the failing one has the happy consciousness of faith, indeed, it would not be a good sign of life if be said, “I know I have sinned, but I still believe,” it would savor rather of levity than of deep self-judgment. But those who are kept by the grace of God know that the link of faith can never be broken.

We have not here the splendid victories of faith achieved by those “who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens,” nor of that surpassing endurance of faith which brings up, the rear of that noble army of martyrs of whom the Spirit says the world is not worthy. Yet the faith of Philadelphia is as real if not so brilliant, and as prized by the Lord. Here, as in the previous epistles, the promised reward takes its form from the peculiar circumstances of each church; that is, the reward to the overcomer in each stage of the church's decline is suited to the character of the conflict he had to endure, for it is worthy of notice that all the rewards to the overcomers are presented as to individuals and not to the church corporately. But there are two, and only two, which have a reward promised to them as a church. In Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira the Lord has some things against them. In Sardis all are dead except a few names, in Laodicea all are lukewarm with no exception. None of all these as a church has a reward promised, but judgment threatened. In Smyrna there is surely the word to him “that overcometh,” and also in Philadelphia, for there is no condition down here where saints are not responsible. But Smyrna as a church was faithful in her tribulation, in her poverty, in the presence of death. The crown of life is the reward. And Philadelphia—weak and despised, yet because they had kept His word, and not denied His name, He would keep them from the hour of temptation which was coming upon the world. Their faithfulness brings out respectively the Lord's approbation of them corporately before the perseverance of each is encouraged by reward.

The Lord as One like the Son of man judging in the midst of the churches could not in that character speak of the corporate blessings of grace, sovereign over failure, in presence of such sin

as was found in the other assemblies; but in the two where no failure is recorded, He speaks of the reward of faithfulness. Sardis, where there is great failure, confirms this, for the promise there which comes before the word to the overcomer is in reality not to the church, but to the few names which had not defiled their garments. These, outwardly mixed up with the dead ones “in Sardis,” proved their faithfulness in most trying circumstances. They did not defile their profession, and the Lord from amid the golden candlesticks says, they are worthy to walk with Him in white. Not even the beloved Philadelphians have such commendation, “They are worthy.”

Still the Philadelphians may have that which betokens more intimate communion; for if the overcomer in Sardis is rewarded with a place of honor and made prominent before the Father and the angels,— “I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels,” the overcomer in Philadelphia has all the intimacies and communion of having written upon him “the name of my God, the name of the city of my God, new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my new name.” And beside this closest intimacy and communion, they have a place in the temple of God, of strength, power to sustain, to be a pillar. There was little strength here, but there grace gives great strength.

Many now claim the name of Philadelphia. Those who thus boast are in danger of assuming the name without bearing its characteristics. None so liable to follow in the wake of those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others as those who in spiritual pride pretend to greater faithfulness, of higher spirituality, of being represented by Gideon's select band. It is much more like the boast of Laodicea— “I am rich, and increased in goods.” Not so Philadelphia, whose great care was to keep Christ's word and not deny His name, who, perhaps, were unconscious that they had any strength at all, till the Lord told them they had little: The boasting of Laodicea is the same in character as that of Great Babylon— “sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.” This arrogance was the immediate precursor of judgment.

It may be quite true that there are saints now bearing testimony of a Philadelphian character; but they are not known by the assumption of superior intelligence and holiness. Their distinctive mark is, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience.” This implies suffering, and equally points to the hope of the Lord's quick return; the hope which cheers and invigorates the patient saint in every trial. Patience is much more needed when fellow-saints speak unkindly than when the world persecutes. This, I apprehend, is the special point here, and the Lord gives special encouragement. “Behold, I come quickly;” when He comes, there will be no more need of patience; till then, “hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

Laodicea gives the last aspect of the nominal church, and He who stands in the midst of the candlesticks sends a last message. He knocks at the door. Laodicea is not in the deathly cold condition of Sardis, but in what is even more offensive to the Lord. “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wart cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” The deadness of Sardis was worse than the corruptness of Thyatira, and the lukewarmness of Laodicea worse than the deadness of Sardis. Protestants may boast in being free from Romish idolatry, but lukewarm orthodoxy is more hateful than corrupt doctrine. All the previous evils in the churches call for judgment, but nowhere such abhorrence and disgust as here. It is Sardis death pretending to Philadelphia life; it is the five foolish virgins with the lamp of profession, but no oil. There is nothing good found in them. In the

former steps of the declining church some were found who in a little way met the mind of the Lord. To Laodicea the Lord says, “Thou art miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” They are counseled to buy gold and white raiment of the Lord. To buy! It seems to point to the impossibility of obtaining what they needed, save indeed by parting with their pretended riches, and confessing their real condition. For with what else could they buy? Nevertheless they were responsible to obtain the gold tried by fire and the white raiment. So the foolish virgins were told to go and buy oil for themselves. Terrible moment: when having refused and now, as it were, denied the gift of grace, they are bidden to get their need supplied as best they can. Over Laodicea the Lord lingers in mercy. He says, “buy of me.” We know how He sells, and He alone in the darkest, guiltiest condition of the professing church can supply the need. And He was ready and waiting to do so. He would not turn away, and makes a last appeal in declaring both His love and righteous dealing. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent.” To all who would repent, there was the assurance of His love. The solemn fact appears here, that although one like the Son of man is in the midst of the churches judging their condition, the Lord Jesus, as the One present in the midst of the two or three gathered to His Name, is not in Laodicea. He is without knocking. Nor is He now knocking at the door of the church, but at the door of each heart. It is individual: “If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sap with him, and he with me.” Can we gather from this that one or more souls in Laodicea will hear His voice and open the door? Grace is sufficient even for this. But the church as a corporate body is not owned, and the rain is complete and final. Compare this end with the bright beginning at Pentecost. The deep failure of the nominal church is only exceeded by the grace which has kept the real children of God—spite of their failure—through the constantly deepening darkness from Ephesus to Laodicea. The root of all the evil was found in Ephesus; is the ripe fruit now visible? There is high pretension, and mixed with a walk defiled and defiling, and the word to each one, “To him that overcometh,” comes with increased force as the end approaches.

In this pictorial history of the church, the actual rapture of the saints is not given. Is it not at the same moment as the spueing out of His mouth of Laodicea? That is, when the true but imperfect witness is caught up to the Lord in the air, is not the utterly false witness rejected? But the hope was given as the only stay—when all else was gone. Evil was so inveterate that the only remedy is the Lord coming to take His own out of the defiled place. Church history as given by “the testimony of Jesus Christ” is but the slide from the position of witness of the grace of God down to a place of infamy and disgust, and at the same time sovereign grace interposing and gathering out a remnant, and bestowing blessings which if not more than at the first are surely intensified and made all the more prominent through corporate failure. A testimony truly of unfaithfulness, yea, of the worst evil that ever rose up against the love and authority of the Lord, but also of the sovereign power of grace preserving some to know and enjoy the fullness of the love of Christ. What can be sweeter to the heart that in any feeble measure responds to His love, than the last words of promise to Philadelphia, “I will write upon him my new name “? We must have the writing to know its joy.

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 22. History of Faith

Here the special exhibition and teachings of faith cease, and the dispensation pre-eminently of grace and faith closes with heaviest judgments. How wise and wonderful the moral dealings of God with man, beginning with his expulsion from Eden. Every step in the process necessary, and leading on to the due time when Christ was to appear, the prominent features of what was necessary before He came are now plainly seen by us, for we follow on in His track, and there is always light. Those who lived in the early days of faith would not have known that their lives were so ordered as to become to us in this age lessons of truth which can only be truth because the church is called. But before these lessons were given to be learned in the patriarchs, it was indispensable that man should know and suffer the power of Satan whom he followed in disobedience to God. This was manifested in a peculiar way when he was without law and government as before the deluge. Men multiplied upon the face of the earth, and wickedness increased in a greater ratio. God had His witnesses even then, Abel, Enoch and Noah. He never was without a witness. But it was necessary that proof should be given of the power of Satan over man. God did not restrain the evil, and Satan so completely dominated over man that the earth was filled with violence and corruption, and God destroyed it with a flood. A new chapter in the trial of man came after the flood when the sword of government was put into his hand, to maintain authority and repress vice; and proof is given that both the governor and the governed were respectively unable, the one to govern in righteousness, and the rest to obey. Human might did not attain so great a degree after the flood as before it, and the deeds of the giants before were admired by those after the deluge, and became the means of developing a latent evil not seen before. Idolatry spread rapidly among men. They who would not bow to their Creator made an image and bowed to it. Three distinct features of fallen nature have been made clear, violence, corruption, and idolatry. Nay, it is not enough to say “features” of fallen nature, these are the nature itself, for in every possible way in which man acts he shows himself in one of these aspects. That such a nature could ever work righteousness was impossible. And here begins the working of a new principle, in a new form, namely, Faith; and faith in separation from the world, exemplified in Abram. From that moment the history of the world is made subservient to the history of faith. For it is God's remedy morally to meet all the evil in man. And the character of His dealings with an individual or with a nation is in strict relation to the faith, or the want of it, of those with whom He is dealing. The Word abounds in instances of this. The energy of subjective faith was, or should have been, more plainly seen when the object of faith was presented—to the nation of Israel, first by type; the object, Christ, was revealed for this end. If His worth and glory were but dimly seen in the types and shadows, yet all His varied excellences were there: only to be seen, indeed, when the True Light shines upon them; otherwise, dark and meaningless. And even when seen in the reflected light of Christ, what is that to the full blaze of His revealed Person! And because the revelation in Grace of the Son was needed for the manifestation of God, it was equally necessary that the ruin and sin of man should be brought fully into view, so that he might

be shut up to faith. Whether we look at the corruption before the flood, or at heathen idolaters and privileged Israel after, every part of this process was indispensable and preparatory to the due time when Christ came into the world. There was faith before this, for Abel brought his lamb by faith, and his view of the Object was necessarily less clear; for no symbol did ever concentrate within itself all that Christ is. The efficacy of His work, the glory of His Person, were spread, so to say, over illimitable space, till He came to embody in Himself the whole infinite extent. Just so light was created, the first thing, and before the sun was made there were three evenings and mornings. But when on the fourth day the sun was set in the firmament, it became to this earth the source of light. All the light now comes from it, though light was first in being. There were many saints that trusted in God, as the Almighty, as Jehovah, But Jesus gathers up all the rays of faith; and He is the center of all, for even as He is the one source of all blessings, which diverge like rays of light from a common center, so is He now the One Object to which saints now tarn, to whom the faith and hope and love and every other holy emotion saints may feel, all converge and meet in Him.

The church taken to heaven, and God's purposes of grace in and by it accomplished, an awful though brief period of judgment passes over the world. The processes of faith are followed by the processes of judgment. For to teach faith, and thus bring souls to Himself, is not all God's purpose—an essential part truly. But God is going to set His King upon His holy hill of Zion, and when the King is there, all who have rejected and despised Him, who said, “We will not have this man to reign over us,” He will break with a rod of iron, and will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. The earth is cleared from all things that offend, and Christ's righteous and kingly rule begins in millennial blessedness.

This blessedness is not introduced by the gospel of grace. Between the moment when the special teachings of faith cease, and the glory of Christ as King is displayed, is the time when the nations are judged. During that tremendous period, sin will have its fullest development, and these judgments become a divine necessity. Else there could be no joyful time of peace for the earth. So judgment is first, then peace.

How baseless the notion that the preaching of the gospel is the means for renovating the earth, for making all things new, and bringing in universal blessing. That all who now believe are supremely blest is most true. Believers are now a new creation, before God creates a new heaven and a new earth. But the question is whether the word declares that the millennium will be brought in by the gospel of grace. The only answer is that such is not the declared purpose of God. This to some appears a bold assertion. Minds not subject to the word dislike it as too dogmatic. The truth is always dogmatic, and must be so, or it ceases to be the truth. Both the Old Testament and the New declare that the reign of the Lord Jesus upon the earth will be ushered in by unsparing judgment upon the wicked. The present dispensation of grace will not, as it were, fade away in the bright light of millennial glory, as the light of the stars is lost in the blaze of day, but a dark night comes between in which wickedness and judgment reach their climax. This present dispensation closes under the blackest cloud that ever settled down upon this guilty world. And this is not a mere inference however legitimate, but the plain statement of scripture, repeated in the Prophets, in the Gospels, Epistles, and the Revelation, which is the special book of judgment upon the earth. The gospel is to deliver from judgment, of which the New Testament speaks in clearer tones than were ever heard before. The New Testament alone declares that wrath is revealed from heaven.

The Old Testament reveals neither grace so sovereign, nor wrath so imminent. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.” And it is plain from this that the gospel does not contemplate all believing. The Lord Jesus commanded that the gospel should be preached to all, but a selection is made on the principle of faith. The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ is truly unto all, for all have sinned; and there is no other righteousness than that which is by faith, but it is only upon those that believe. Now “all men have not faith” (2 Thess. 3:2). Believers are spoken of as elect, called and chosen (see 1 Cor. 1:26, &c.) “For ye see your calling,” “God hath chosen.” If the gospel were the means of bringing in the millennium, would it be said “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble?” would not all be included? It is quite true, that in this scripture God hath chosen the foolish, the weak, the base, and the despised, in order “that no flesh should glory in His presence.” But the fact remains that God hath chosen those that are counted as nothing,” things that are not,” and hath included in His calling not many of the wise and great and noble of the world. To the “called and chosen” God has made Christ Jesus to be their wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. The gospel has called them out, and separated them from the world unto God. If the blessings of the gospel are for those whom it separates from the world, how can it be blessing for the world as such, from which it separates?

Believers now are called to heavenly joys, not to earthly blessedness. The earth is left for righteous dealing from a sin-avenging God. When His name is vindicated, then He will bring in His salvation, which in the millennium is not heavenly blessing, but earthly:—very different object from that of the gospel of grace now preached; for by it souls are called, and chosen for heavenly glory. Whereas judgment, not grace, purges the earth from its evil that it may receive millennial blessing. We may surely say that, if earthly peace and prosperity were the intended result of the gospel, it is a manifest failure. Not because the gospel is not God's peace for man, but because sin and all evil is so antagonistic, so ingrained in nature, that the gospel of grace brings out all the enmity of man against God. The Lord Jesus said that He came not to bring peace but a sword, that a man's enemies would be those of his own house. This is the natural and sure result of the gospel, where those who receive it are separated from the mass and trained for heavenly glory. For how indeed can the world which loves its own, love those who though in it are not of it? Again, at the first preaching of the word, the Lord Jesus made known in parable that the gospel would not be received by all; only one class out of four received the truth and its blessing. On the contrary, the preaching of the word gave an occasion for the sowing and the growing of tares, and in result the whole field where the good seed was sown would be given up to judgment. Does this give a picture of success to the gospel in the sense of winning the world for God and for Christ? Nay, is it not evident that the power and aim of the gospel is not to win the world, but to win souls for Christ, to gather them to heaven? Do not the fishermen show the result of preaching, when having drawn their net to shore they cast away the bad? that a distinction is made? Would separation be the prominent feature in the parable of the closing scene of the gospel dispensation if the purpose of the gospel was to bring in millennial happiness? The fact is that, if there had not been good seed sown, there would not have been tares. That is the gospel of grace has been through its rejection the means indirectly of the worst evil. But when grace is the principle, faith must be the means; and faith implies election. And God has His election from among the Gentiles as well as out of Israel: “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name” (Acts 15:18 et seq.). In this passage words are used which clearly prove

God's purpose in sending the gospel: “To take out of them” “the residue of men” “from among the Gentiles.” Every creature, every created thing, belongs to Christ; and grace, according to the eternal wisdom of God, is now calling out a company of redeemed men, and would make them a special witness of the power and love of God; a bride for the Son, a body for the Head, companions for the risen man in glory: this is the present work of the Holy Ghost. The millennium is an ulterior purpose, and in contrast with the present dispensation.

It may be said that the gospel has failed to bring in universal peace through the unfaithfulness of the church. But if the church had never failed, if the first love had never been left, and the first glory never dimmed, it could never have brought earthly blessings for the earth. Had the church rightly any portion on earth save such as the Lord Himself had—scorn and persecution? The church owes its origin as well as its highest blessings to a Christ first rejected here and then exalted in heaven, whither the church is soon to follow. How can the saints be the earth's universal blessing—for it is their presence here which is said to ensure it—when they are so soon to leave it? But the church is not the witness of earthly peace, nor is it the aim of the gospel of grace to bring it in, but to take out a people for heaven. Judgment upon a Christ-rejecting world is God's revealed way of bringing in righteousness and peace. The indirect but not remote effect of the gospel is truly judgment. And though we know that the revelation of wrath is not far distant, yet the longsuffering of God for a little while may delay the judgment for the purpose of salvation; but vengeance is sure. In Noah's day the flood was delayed for one hundred and twenty years that Noah might have a place of safety. Even for Lot the judgment upon the cities of the plain was stayed till he reached Zoar. For, said the Avenger, I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. So when the time comes, when the Lord shall have taken away all His own people, swift and heavy judgment will fall upon “those that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” Upon these and not upon the heathen will fall the heaviest wrath.

The rapture of the saints gives the needed space for the development of the evil which was partially kept in check so long as God had His witnesses here. Feeble and imperfect as their testimony has been for Christ and the truth, they must be taken out of the way before Babylon the Great is made manifest. The germ of evil first detected by the Lord in Ephesus, then sprouting into Nicolaitanism, bearing fruit in the doctrine of Balsam, the teachings of Jezebel, and every other religious abomination in Christendom, now appears with its abundant harvest, an agglomeration of all evils, under the name of Babylon. It is essentially religious evil, yet not exclusively for worldly ambition, corruption, and covetousness, which disdained no fraud and shrank from no violence to attain its end, have all been found in that system which when matured is called Babylon the Great; and not as extraneous evil, but the direct and natural product of its teachings and practice. What evils, what wickedness have not been frequently shrouded from public view, and screened from public vengeance, by the sacerdotal cloak? What abomination has not been sheltered, yea encouraged by world-religion?

Nor can we wonder at such a result from a system which blends revealed truth with Satanic lying. This is Babylon. It appeared at the beginning. On the earth just dried from the waters of the deluge, man with the fresh evidence of Almighty power before his eyes begins to build the tower of Babel. He world be independent of God. This is the first given feature of Babylon, for Babel is Babylon. It began with Nimrod; “he began to be a mighty one in the earth” (Gen. 10:8). The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, or Babylon; and a very significant beginning it was, for we

soon learn its meaning. They would have a tower to reach to heaven, so that if another flood came they might get beyond the reach of God's power. It was to get a name; pride and ambition are the first given marks of Babylon. Achan gives another feature, namely, covetousness. His position as an Israelite gave him the opportunity to gratify the coveting of his soul. The true character of his guilt is intimated in his taking the Babylonish garment; for I doubt if this only refers to a material fact. The silver and the gold were hidden in his tent in the earth, and were covered with the Babylonish garment; “the silver under it” (Josh. 7:22). The taking advantage of a religious reputation to gratify a covetous heart is a prominent characteristic of Babylon. As the Lord said to the Pharisees, for a pretense making long prayers, but the reality was to devour widows' houses (Matthew 23). The pride of Hezekiah is in the same connection, for it is to the ambassadors of Babylon that he discloses the treasures of Jehovah. In these three instances we have marked and prominent features of Babylon. The first was an endeavor to get beyond the aim of God, to be as it were above Him; and this was the beginning of world power. “And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel.” In Achan there is the immoral use of religious profession for worldly gain, and in Hezekiah, the pride which makes a display of the things of God to win worldly applause.

But these are not all. In the city of Babylon other evils appear, though perhaps not more offensive to God. The idolatrous Nebuchadnezzar associated the God of heaven with his idols. He did not forsake them, he only acknowledged that the God of the Jews was greater than his gods. Belshazzar profaned the symbols of the worship of Jehovah; he and his lords used the vessels of God's temple to pour out libations to their idols. Darius was not ignorant of the power of God, for he said to Daniel,” Thy God is able to deliver thee,” yet he suffered himself to be exalted above God. It is this knowledge of God, with the practice of all evil, which is Babylon. All appear in Babylon the Great, and her guilt infinitely increased as it is combined with the fullest revelation of God in grace and love: a fully elaborated ecclesiastical system, which God forbore with till His church was taken up. Then what was left He rejected. This is not destruction, but rejection as a witness. The Lord will have no more to do with the backsliding church; He had taken a place outside and stood knocking.

Chapter 92

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Now that His own are gathered, the others are left as dregs. There may be no marked external change, the observance of religious ordinances may be uninterrupted, there may be nothing more than the expression of wonder at the sudden disappearance of many well-known persons. Little will those who are left behind know that the removal of the true church is the immediate forerunner of judgment upon the false church. Only a little space left for the full ripening of the grapes of the vine of the earth, and then the vintage. In the short interval (comparatively) between rejection as a witness, and destruction as a harlot by the Beast and the ten kings, the false church assumes its final aspect, and is seen by the Apocalyptic prophet in all the shameless wickedness of a harlot. Every feature and aspect of sin from Nimrod downwards is found in her; not in an incipient stage, but in full manifestation. Christendom, when infinite riches of grace has been fully revealed, acquires the dread pre-eminence of being Babylon the Great. And as the expression of the worst evil, so its judgment is the heaviest.

Even when the prophet is declaring God's judgment upon the ancient and heathen Babylon, the Holy Spirit looks onward to the mystic Babylon of which the city of Nebuchadnezzar was but the type. The judgment of the world is included in the prophecy against the ancient Babylon (Isa. 13:11). And though the pride and arrogancy of its king be great, the language of the prophet (Isa. 14) goes beyond a simple description of the heathen king and his city. The Spirit of God gives the time, when “thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon.” It will be in the day when the Lord Jehovah gives rest to Israel. That day is not yet come, and it is evident that the prophecy looks onward to Babylon the Great. But does it not go beyond the ecclesiastical system destroyed by the Beast and the ten kings? Is not the direct power of Satan as exhibited in the false prophet referred to (14:12-21)? Lucifer, son of the morning, is apparently a reference to what Satan was before he fell, and the expression of his heart, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will be like the most High,” the pride which caused his fall. (Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.) The same awful character of pride is seen in the “man of sin,” who “exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:4). Disgrace and unhonored with any burial was the doom of the king of Babylon, but does not the prophet speak of a worse than the heathen king, “Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land and slain thy people"? If darkly, yet is not this a prediction of the judgment upon that man of sin who is both the false prophet and the king that does his own will, in a word, the same doom as Rev. 19:20? Be this as it may, we know that prophecy wonderfully blends the future with the circumstances which are the occasion of the prophecy. And if the false prophet is included in this prophecy, the name of the Apostasy is applied to that state, which will arise from the destruction of the corrupt thing which is pre-eminently called “Babylon the Great.”

It is given to John in a vision to see this system of iniquity as it appears to God. A woman when used as a type gives the position of those of whom God is speaking. Israel having broken the covenant is a divorced wife; the church of God is as a chaste virgin, the Bride, the Lamb's wife; and here John sees a woman arrayed in the glory of the world, possessing its riches, dominating its rulers, by means of her golden cup seducing the nations to drink of her fornication and sorceries. Her name which the world may not see, which those who drink of her wine may not understand, is revealed to John. This woman is “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.” She is drunk, but not with her own wine, but with the blood of saints and martyrs. When John saw her he wondered with great astonishment. The angel tells him the mystery—the secret condition and doom—of the Woman and the Beast upon which she is sitting. It is the refuse of Christendom which, after being spewed out of the mouth of the Lord, is perfected in evil, and becomes a harlot—the unholy alliance by man of Truth with all evil, which is designated by God with the name of the most degraded condition among men. She is declared to be the source of every abomination in the earth; it is the system of wickedness which is not merely the sensuality of the flesh, but the opposition of man to God, first seen in Nimrod who manifested the first principle of Babylon, afterward developed against the Jehovah God of Israel, as in the literal Babylon, and now against the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So that Babylon has always been the antagonism of man to the special revelation of God at the time, and is the concentration of all evil.

The Beast—the imperial power of the world—upon which the Woman sits will eventually, with the ten kings, destroy her, “eat her flesh and burn her with fire.” He will take possession of her riches— “eat her flesh,” and utterly destroy the system— “burn her with fire.” The Beast and his coadjutors are the visible means of her destruction, but it is no less a direct judgment from God upon the worst form of evil that had ever yet defiled the earth. The manner of the harlot's judgment is retributive. By her fornications she had deceived the nations, and under the vile name of harlot they turn upon her and become the executors of God's wrath; her slaves become her executioners. This is the end of that which was begun by grace, which soon through unwatchfulness became corrupt, which provided a home for Satanic agencies, which the Lord who began it at the end rejects, and man destroys.

But the harlot is not the last phase of the world's religion. She may be burnt, but there remains much apostasy. They who aided the harlot to deceive men by her sorceries are themselves deceived by the lying miracles of the false prophet. If the false church is swept away it only makes room for open and direct antagonism to Christ. The Beast from the earth may have arisen before the harlot was destroyed, he is beyond question, the little horn that came up among the ten and displaced three of them; for he is characterized by intelligence, eyes like a man, and has a mouth speaking great things, just as the false prophet does who only assumes the place and position of prophet after the corrupt church is destroyed. Not even the shameless harlot could provide a place for him. Such is his open and undisguised enmity to Christ that no system that admits the name of Christ as Lord, however corrupt and vile, could subsist side by side with his blasphemous assumption. This wretched being is called “false prophet” because he is the special opponent of Christ the True Prophet. Christ declared God, His truth, and love. This man denies the Father and the Son, that is, the special revelation of God as in the Person of Christ. For how should we know the Father save by the Son whom the Father sent? It is the denial of the special truth of the gospel,

that he might sit in the temple as God. He is also called the king. that does his own will, and disputes the right and title of Christ as king to reign over the earth. He is not called false priest. And in what he is called he is evidently the tool of Satan.

Christ is now our High Priest, and this is His only function now in exercise. “For their sakes I sanctify myself.” “He ever liveth to make intercession for us,” and “if any one sin we have an Advocate with the Father.” And so long as Christ is in the presence of God as our Great High Priest, the aim of Satan is to bring in false priests. Rome is proof, which puts the virgin, saints (so called), and her own ordinances and her priests, in the place of Christ. When Satan is cast out of the heavenlies, knowing that he has but a short time on the earth, he concentrates all his power and malignity against Christ as king and prophet. For it is as such that the testimony for Christ in that day will be characterized. Satan's energy has always been against present testimony. All the sources of power and influence, invisible and visible, will combine to bring men into conflict with God. Frogs issue from the month of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. They are demons working miracles to bring kings and peoples to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. Man has emancipated himself from Babylonish corruption, not to seek truth, but to fall under the strong delusion that they might believe a lie. Christendom becomes heathendom. All—save a few sealed in their foreheads by God—worship the Beast and his image; they are idolaters. Is not this image the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel? Satan uses it to seal man's ruin.

The Beast and the false prophet are the personal enemies of Christ, and so in the day of battle the Lord meets them in person, and both are cast alive into the lake. As there was no death such as is common to man, so no resurrection for them—soul and body not separated by death, but cast alive into the lake. All that are in the graves shall come forth, the sea will yield its prey, death and hades will surrender their prisoners at the call of the Son of man to be judged before the great white throne. But the lake of fire never opens its gates save to receive the judged. Satan is bound and chained in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, but is not cast into the lake of fire till immediately before the judgment of the great white throne.

Thus the earth is prepared by judgment for the reign of the Lord Jesus. For He will come in the pomp and glory of victory. His enemies who would not bow to Him must then feel the avenging might of His arm. No other way of taking possession of His kingdom would be consistent with His rights and title. To reign as some imagine by the spread of gospel truth, even if there were outward semblance of obedience, would be an unworthy way for the King of kings and Lord of lords to slip by stealth, as it were, into His kingdom. God's purpose is to exalt the Son. By faith He is exalted now as the Savior; then by unsparing judgment. Satan and his deluded followers are allowed a brief day wherein to manifest their utmost hate and power. But the Lord appears, and His enemies are slain by the breath of His mouth.

Though the special teachings of faith ceased when His saints were caught up to meet the Lord in the air, God will yet have a testimony on the earth. Hitherto it has been a process of grace. At this time though grace be not absent, yet this brief period is characterized by judgment. There was a special testimony by the two witnesses. I apprehend their sphere was in Jerusalem, at most within the land. Rev. 11:9, 10 give the moral condition of those who were tormented by their testimony. “They of the peoples” were there, “and kindreds, and tongues, and nations.” But there are other phases, “And they that dwell upon the earth,” an expression that gives their moral character. Jew

and Gentile rejoice together over the death of the two witnesses, as they did when in the same city the Lord was crucified. The Lord Jesus said, “When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth.” There was no faith in the city “which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt where also their Lord was crucified.” After three days and a half the Spirit of life from God enters into the two witnesses whose bodies lay unburied, and they stand upon their feet. The only effect upon their enemies is great consternation. A great voice Calls them to heaven, and their enemies see them ascend in the cloud. Heavenly honor for them, but judgment falls upon the city. Seven thousand are slain, all the rest are affrighted. They give glory to the God of heaven, in spite of themselves compelled to acknowledge Him as the God of heaven. But neither the testimony nor the ascension of the two witnesses, nor even the earthquake, led them to receive the testimony of their coming king. The Lord says, “my two witnesses:” they are His special witnesses to the Jew at this time. It is this special testimony that brings upon them the power of the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit. That is, they are slain by the direct and immediate power of Satan.

Besides this special testimony, to the Jew, a general proclamation of the everlasting gospel goes out to all. “Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and sea, and the fountains of waters.” How sunken in ignorance when men are recalled to the worship of God as Creator. There might be some who gave glory to the God of heaven: did they deny Him as the Creator of earth and sea and fountains of waters? And this call to worship Him is not accompanied by the promise of grace as heretofore, but by the announcement of impending judgment. The hour was come. It is the last call before the kingdom. Many a call had been made, to individuals, to a nation, to the church, and all in grace, all for blessing. This is on the eve of judgment. God's forbearance so patient, so long, had only given the world opportunity to increase in evil till there was no remedy but judgment. But God will have His remnant, as Matthew 25 shows. The angel flying in mid-heaven may be the symbolic representation of the “brethren” that carry the gospel of the kingdom, which is nearly the same as the “everlasting gospel,” to the Gentile; and from these the Lord gathers out His sheep and separates them from the goats. Surely there was faith in these “sheep,” but was faith ever on a lower ground? But if never so low, how great the mercy which will save the hitherto outcast Gentile, upon the ground of kindness to the “brethren;” the remnant of the Jews who carry forth this gospel; and the king takes it as being done to Himself. “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.”

The history of the professing church is the history of the decline of faith, each succeeding phase becoming darker. But grace likewise kept pace, yea kept in advance of the continuously increasing evil, and carries out its purposes. For some must enter into rest (Heb. 4:6). These two most prominent facts cannot escape the attentive reader of the seven epistles. There is a third fact, which is the direct result of the break-up of collective testimony and of the grace which meets the ever failing condition of the church as a public witness for Christ, that the power of subjective faith is more manifest at the close than at the beginning. Before the Object of faith was revealed the power of faith was kept up in the soul by the Holy Spirit in view of the promises, as in the patriarchs. Afterward types were given, which, while exhibiting to Israel in the wilderness the several glories of Christ, were a help for those who were led to look beneath the surface. But when Christ was here, the Object of faith was fully manifest, and in exact proportion as He filled the eye and the heart so was the subjective power of faith seen. The Holy Spirit created love in the

believer's soul as he gazed upon Him, and the more earnest the gaze, the more would love grow and the faith that worketh by love. When the eye is off Christ, no matter what other object is before it, the church, the saints, or even service—not to speak of the world, then “first love” is left. And though like Ephesus, orthodox and correct, there is a fall, and in these epistles we see it such a fall that the professing church never regained her original standing.

Objective faith was where the decline began. All manner of sin of which the church is guilty dates from this. How could it be otherwise, for what is faith without an object? Men may speak of faith, and even boast of it; but if Christ as the one object fill not the eye and heart, all the talk about faith is mere imagination. Now that the knowledge of the word has so greatly spread, and truth, long forgotten truth, is familiar to most Christians, there is great danger of falling into this most subtle snare of the devil; so that he would make faith to be the object before the soul rather than Christ. It may seem to some paradoxical, but it is no less true that when faith looks at itself, it ceases to be faith.

When the church reached the Thyatira state, it was given up as a witness for Christ. Grace recognized and separated a remnant. Being such, it could not be acknowledged as if in the pristine condition of the church. In Apostolic days it was a holy witness for God, in the days of Thyatira that position was irretrievably lost. But here comes in the grace suited to the despised remnant: “No other burden, but hold fast what thou hast till I come.” The altered condition of the saints is met by the tender and compassionate grace of the Lord. This little remnant soon lost the place of holding fast, and passing through Sardis we come to Philadelphia, where in a condition of greatest weakness we find the sweetest promise of all, grace in its fullest expression of best privilege to the believer. For what promise to the overcomer in any other church, so prized by the heart that has Christ alone as its object, as the promise to the overcomer in the epistle to Philadelphia? Thus as the outward aspect darkens, grace brings Christ before the heart in the most intimate expressions of His infinite and unchanging love, as it were, restoring to the individual believer what the corporate church lost at the first.

As the rejection of Christ by the Jew was the appointed way to the cross, the eternal purpose of God, so the failure of the church—apart from its responsibility—only serves to make still more prominent faith as God's moral means of bringing souls into the most intimate communion with Himself, which is the highest condition of happiness a creature can know. The failure of the church magnifies the riches of His grace, and He is glorified by it. Not that this makes the church less responsible, but it does marvelously show how the grace and wisdom of God makes the sin of man, even the failure of His own saints, to praise Him. Sin brought Judah into captivity in the literal Babylon, then grace gave such power of faith to Daniel and his companions that they became victors over fire and wild beasts. Now, the church-remnant apparently in captivity in the mystic Babylon, or what will soon be developed as such—have the privilege of exhibiting and proving the power of faith over equally adverse circumstances, yea the same, as the Roman amphitheater, and Smithfield declare. Victory in a different way, but the same. The victories of faith must always be subservient to the purpose of God, to the truth He is revealing at the moment. In the one case it was to demonstrate His Godhead and power to an idolatrous king, in the other to prove the sustaining energy of divinely given faith under the cruelest sufferings endured for Christ's sake. In the one we see the God of heaven and earth, in the other the God of grace.

Thus if faith as a dispensation has failed like all before it, in its subjective power it brightens, and amid the wreck of the building that God began on the day of Pentecost, our souls cling more to the object of faith, Christ is more exceedingly precious. This is according to God. But how astonishing the process. With what amazing skill Almighty wisdom and power have blended man's inevitable failure ender any dispensation with the display of the infinite resources of grace. O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and untraceable His ways.

But the time is come for creation to cease groaning, for deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. What a moment for the earth when the voice of a great Multitude is heard, as the voice of many waters, as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth (Rev. 19:6). It is the anticipative shout of the heavenly multitude, of the armies which follow the King of kings and the Lord of lords. One more daring acct of rebellion to fill up the cup of iniquity ere the kingdom be established, one more tremendous display of Divine vengeance, and the earth is set free from the bondage of corruption. It is the supper of the great God, and the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven are called to it. There are two other suppers, that of grace in the gospel (Matt. 22:9; Luke 14:16), for the Jew and the outcast Gentile. There is the marriage supper of the Lamb, where the church will be displayed in His glory. But this supper of the great God is His vengeance, and not men, but fowls that fly in the midst of heaven are invited, “that ye may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of captains and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men both free and bond, both small and great” The beast and the kings of the earth then mustering their armies know not that from heaven the command is already gone forth to gather the fowls to feast upon their flesh. All the glory and the might of the world are there arrayed against the Lord God Omnipotent; it all becomes carrion for birds of prey, save the two chiefs who are east alive into the lake.

The millennium is specially for the glory of the Lord Jesus as Son of Man. The world had rejected Him. Now by His own might He rules over the nations with a rod of iron until every enemy is subdued, and peace spreads her wings over the world, and nations shall no more learn war, then all is prepared for the outshining of His glory. Every blessing is poured down upon the earth, and the earth responds in the full yield of her fruits. Israel will have fullness of blessing. “For Jehovah shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places, and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of Jehovah; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody” (Isa. 51:3). And these natural blessings are the evidence of their moral condition. All will be taught of God, from the least of them to the greatest of them. As rebellion and iniquity had marked them before, so in that day holiness will raise them above all nations, and their metropolis shall be called “Jehovah shammah.” In His holy mountain ferocious beasts become tame, children lead them; asps lose their venom, infants play with them (Isa. 11). “They shall not hurl nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.” Israel in their destined place, blessing goes out from them to the surrounding nations. The holy mountain is the greatest effect of the King's presence, but the glory radiates to the outermost circle, the inanimate creation rejoices in it, the places where judgment lay heavy join in the song which creation, freed from the bondage of corruption, will then raise. “And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith Jehovah, I will hear the heavens, and they

shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine and oil; and they shall hear Jezreel" (Hos. 2:21, 22). This is the order of millennial blessedness, and though specially addressed to Israel, and having special application to the mercy that meets their sinful condition and God's judgment upon them, yet it gives the channels of blessing for the whole earth. Isaiah speaks of Jehovah as sitting upon the circle of the earth (ch. 40); here Jehovah is in the circle of the heavens, and displaying His beneficence with a largeness unknown before; dispensing His blessings through the gradations of rank and order which the government of glory will then have established. He waits, as it were, to hear the heavens, and they become media for communicating fruitfulness to the earth, or, as it is beautifully and poetically said, the corn and the wine and the oil call upon the earth, and the earth hears and brings forth her increase, as witness that the curse is removed. Yea, it is so removed that the corn and the wine and the oil hear Jezreel.

It is not a little remarkable that after the earth has called to the heavens, and has itself responded to the call of the corn, wine and oil, there is a place which in its turn calls to the fruits of the earth, in order to complete the chain of blessedness. Evidently, here "Jezreel" is symbolic, though the name is found frequently in its mere historical import. But I doubt if any name is used symbolically without being either then or previously found in connection with circumstances which intimate its symbolic significance. Naboth's vineyard was in Jezreel. Ahab coveted and Jezebel procured it for him by slaying the owner—murder and robbery which God avenged by the hand of Jehu. But Jehu was a bad man, and gratified his own ambition under pretended zeal for Jehovah. Hence even the blood of Jezreel will be avenged upon the house of Jehu. So Babylon was God's instrument of wrath upon Judah, but she served herself and was proud against Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and therefore she comes under righteous judgment. "And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith Jehovah" (see Jer. 1 and 51). In like manner Jehu was the executor of righteous judgment against the house of Ahab, but he was proud against Jehovah, and judgment overtakes him.

Here Jezreel is the name applied to the whole land, it had all become polluted with blood and oppression. "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood and the city of perverseness" —or wresting of judgment (see Mark; Ezek. 9:9). In the prophet's day the whole land was characterized by the crimes which made Jezreel prominent in the days of Ahab, and in judgment Jehovah takes away His blessings. "Therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof." But in "that day," the day of the reversal of judgment, the place where the heaviest judgment fell shall be cleansed from its iniquity, the curse of innocent blood shall be taken away, yea, the slain of the polluted blood of the house of Ahab shall be obliterated. In "that day" not only shall the earth be delivered from bondage, but mercy will rejoice against judgment, and Jezreel too, the defiled and forsaken, shall flourish again even more abundantly than before.

Sin had interfered with the communication of blessing to the earth, redemption reconnects the severed links, and the chain is complete, most manifestly when the Lord Jesus reigns in glory over the earth. Jezreel the place once of sin and judgment, now of mercy—calls to the corn and the wine and the oil, as the evidence of God's favor, and in accordance with His promise at the beginning; forfeited then because made conditional upon obedience, secure now through restoring grace; and these call upon the earth to bring forth, and the earth calls to the heaven, for the first and the latter rain, and the heavens call to Jehovah, and God the source and giver of all hears and

gives in the appointed order and way. “I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil” (Deut. 11:14). But the land of Israel can no more be the limit of millennial blessing than the Jew could be the sole object of grace after the cross. Of necessity both the grace and the glory must overflow. Now the grace that bringeth salvation appears to all, then the glory of His presence will fill the whole earth. Jesus, Jehovah God, rules and blesses by His own power.

It is amid this scene of glory and universal blessedness that the final test of man takes place. As grace succeeded law, so glory succeeds grace, and looking at the various ways of God from the beginning, first, man left to himself without government, then the sword put into Noah's hand, then the law, then grace and salvation through faith, and soon the revelation of glory and power in the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus. How complete and perfect the trial of man, how thoroughly he is made bare, and, as we may say, exposed to his own gaze if he will only stop to look thereon, how incurably evil his nature God all through revealing Himself in His majesty and power, in His holiness and truth, in His patience and longsuffering, grace, love, all divinely and marvelously verified in the cross of Christ; the baseness of man, notwithstanding the goodness of God, his moral vileness, his natural inability for anything good, are before us in imperishable records. History and present experience are only collateral proofs of the word of God that in man there dwelleth no good thing, but every evil thing.

But the word goes farther than our experience, or past history; it declares that in the future dispensation the nature of man remains the same, that the presence of glory in the Person of the King of kings and Lord of lords does not change it. Man is fallen, only converting grace can raise him from the ruin, his evil must be purged from him, it cannot be cured. Restrained partially it might be by the sword and the law; rampant now under the dispensation of grace; repressed it will be in the dispensation of glory, as prophecy abundantly declares. But it always was, and will be to the end solemnly true,” Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Millennial blessedness cannot remove this necessity. Israel will in that day be a converted nation, but that is above and beyond the corn and the wine and the oil, though I am perfectly willing to take these earthly blessings as indicating for them the higher and spiritual blessings. But the word of God is plain that no external advantage, not even of glory, can supersede the new birth. So the dispensation of glory is as much a moral process as any preceding dispensation. Vastly different indeed are the circumstances. The power of the King present to the sight, not merely known to faith, to execute instant judgment upon every open and flagrant offender; Satan the tempter is chained up. But this only proves that man is a sinner without the devil to tempt him; it adds another evidence of the essential evil of the nature of man, of its unchangeable character. And when Satan is loosed for a little season, he finds the same material to work with; unrenewed man falls an easy prey. Then the last judgment takes place, death and hades give up the imprisoned bodies and souls, and men in resurrection of judgment stand before the great white throne. The lake of fire closes upon all whose names are not found written in the book of Life.

There will be new heavens and a new earth, not in a mere dispensational sense as in the millennium, though then there will doubtless be surprising physical changes in the earth; but the new heavens and new earth will eternally abide. The kingdom, where Christ has reigned in glory for a thousand years, He will deliver up to God even the Father; the Son Himself be subject—as man—to God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), that God may be all in all.

Then will be accomplished the eternal purpose of God, secured upon the basis of redemption by the blood of Christ. Sin could and did sully the beauty of the old creation, but cannot touch the glory and exceeding beauty of the new creation shining in the brightness of redemption glory. The first creation sprang into being at the simple word of God, but such as the new creation could only be by the blood of Christ. Through that precious blood it is, that the believer now delights in God. Then in eternity man will delight in God, and God will delight in man.

Chapter 93

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 24. History of Faith

However interesting it is to trace the ways of faith through the dispensational dealings of God with man, it is of more practical importance to see how sovereign grace is interwoven with the believer's responsibility now. For now it is not only a dispensation of grace as distinct from law, but this present time is specially distinguished by what we may call the minute and careful operation of grace upon each believer, and which is as varied in the detail of its operation, as each individual saint may differ in circumstances, in character, and in need. Evidently while grace always must remain grace, and the believer always remains responsible for faithfulness in walk, the operation of grace must be a moral process in each soul, during which every energy of the new nature is called into active exercise, and where the sustaining power of God is seen in. every moment of weakness, His watchful care in every hour of danger, and His strength in every victory. This is seen in the every day life of believers now, it is God's way with His saints. And since He has given us the relationship of children, how could He act otherwise? Redemption has brought us into a place where we can say “Abba Father,” and as Father He deals with us. Perhaps no scripture more explicitly declares the grace of God and the responsibility of the believer, combining—and giving each its true place than Phil. 2:12, 13, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” —here is the believer's responsibility; “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure,” —here is God's grace. And both are so combined that the grace of God has the first place, as it must have; for He works in us, then we “will” and “do.”

The word of God assures eternal life to every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ; not a question of attaining eternal life after he believes, but a free and absolute gift at the moment. On the other hand the same word contains warnings, promises, and exhortations as if our salvation depended upon our own diligence. We know that there is a blessed and divine connection between the assurance and the warning. The Word of God is perfect. To sever the one from the other, because of human inability to grasp both, has not only divided believers into two opposing schools—and this is the lesser evil—but it has opposed one part of God's truth to another. This is not faith; in its root it is infidelity. The result is that those who are simply occupied with one side of the truth have evolved principles which are contrary to the plainest statements. For if because of the warnings to believers it is inferred that a soul born of God may after all be lost, what becomes of the assurance of eternal life? If on the other hand because life is eternal, this certainty is used to lessen, if not to deny, the sense of responsibility, then the solemn word of warning is practically set aside, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” So evident is it, that not a word can be omitted, added, or displaced, without marring the truth and injuring our own souls. The simple bow to the whole truth, and to such God gives unshaken faith.

Salvation is a free gift. Holiness also is a gift; none could possess it if God did not bestow it. But our salvation expresses the new and blessed relationship into which we are brought once and forever to God. Holiness is both a gift and a moral quality, and being a quality admits of

development and progression, and being a moral quality, it is not impressed upon us by the simple “fiat” of God, but He works in us to will and to do.

The infidel has dared to say that there are contradictions in the Bible. He forgets that he will be judged by that word. But saints sometimes feel a difficulty in discerning the perfect accord between every part of it. This is sometimes due to erroneous teaching, sometimes to insubjection of heart to the Word. Still there are cases when a soul really desires to learn, not doubting the perfectness of the Word, but feeling his own ignorance, and especially when misapprehension of the Truth touches communion with God, or shakes the assurance of having eternal life, and thus instils a fear that perhaps after all he may be a castaway. But there is no statement so reiterated as that declaring the believer has everlasting life-statements so plain that the most untaught can understand. The gift of this eternal life, by Him whose life is the light of men, is the theme of the earlier part of John's Gospel. “Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” And again in the same chapter, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Nor is it only that this blessed truth is frequently repeated, but the form is varied, as if the Spirit would array the divine assurance in different colored robes, so as to fax it indelibly upon the hearts of His saints. “Never perish,” “Nothing shall take them out of my hand,” “I am the living bread—if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever,” and so of the water that He gives, it springs up into everlasting life. We need not ask why eternal life has so full a place in the Gospel of John; it is this Gospel which presents the Son of God, although a man, made flesh; yet the Word that was God, therefore the source of life, made man for the purpose of imparting life, the eternal life which was man's need. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of man.” Where a fuller, though brief, development of this great fact than in John 6? And the power and proof of the Lord Jesus being the life will be declared at the last day. It is the Lord saying that He will guard the life so given until the body is fixed in incorruptibility and prepared for eternal glory. There is not even the possibility of losing it, it is not in our keeping, it is hid with Christ in God. He Himself is our life. Can Christ be lost? No more can our life. Wherever the word of God speaks of the life given to believers it is always with the character of being eternal. Therefore if any scripture seem to be at variance with this truth it must be that we do not apprehend its meaning. Who but an infidel would dare to say that scripture disagrees with itself?

Many true believers when harassed with fears have applied to themselves Heb. 6:4-6, and perhaps there is no other part of the word which shows how much one may possess and yet not have life. They tasted, were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, but not of life. Where this is not seen, Satan takes advantage of our ignorance to make us doubt that which is so plainly stated in the Gospel of John. I doubt if this scripture (Heb. 6) ever troubled a mere professor. The dread of having fallen away is rather a mark of having life. The more a lifeless professor had of outward privilege the farther would he be from feeling such a dread.

But what did those spoken of in this chapter possess? They were enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift; this does not go beyond the light which reaches the intellect but not the heart; the natural mind is able to make a profession of Christian truth. They had an intellectual taste of the heavenly gift, i.e., the truth of Christ (not Christ, the truth) was received by the mind; it was heavenly truth, for Christ was in heaven, and the revelation of the truth of Christ is a heavenly gift. It is intellect preferring gospel truth to law.

They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. This is an advance upon the former, something more than mere mind assenting to revealed truth. There is a power dwelling in the church, the power of the Holy Ghost, and all within the sphere of that power feel and partake of it. But a man may be within the sphere of the power of the Holy Ghost as displayed in the assembly of God, without having the Holy Spirit as indwelling; for the Spirit only indwells where there is life. The power of the Holy Ghost as manifested among saints “builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit” is different from the Spirit dwelling in each believer as the power of life. When the, Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost filled the house, He was then the Spirit of power as witness of the ascended Christ. When the Lord Jesus breathed upon the disciples, saying “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” He was the Spirit of life.

Another characteristic follows, which was peculiar to that time, i.e., to the first age of the church, for then miracles accompanied the word. They had tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. By a word, many had been healed, some raised from the dead. “In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk,” said Peter to the lame beggar. “Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.” To the dead Tabitha, he said Arise; but all was God's word, which was seen and enjoyed by all within the sphere of profession. Nor was it less a mark of power or of tasting the good word of God when Elymas was made blind; it was equally a testimony to the truth of the good word of God. But these miracles are the powers of the world to come. The coming age is the millennium which will be characterized by deliverance from the bondage of Satan. Samples of this delivering power were given by the Apostles. Nor was miraculous energy limited to the Apostles. Whoever preached the word, the Lord confirmed it by signs following. Living amid such displays of power, and in measure sharing it, those of whom the Apostle speaks tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the coming age. Thus we have here enlightenment, tasting the heavenly gift, partaking of the Holy Ghost (as did Balaam, king Saul, and Judas) tasting the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, but not one word of eternal life. Wonderful as all this is, these advantages enjoyed by man without life, they are but the natural result of a risen Christ, whose power and coming glory were witnessed to, and if we may so say, “sampled” in those early days, and their significance apprehended at least in measure by mere man, who by intellect could distinguish between the grace and glory of the gospel, and the dry hard commands of the law. But all was apart from living faith. Having no life, when the testing moment came—as come it will to every professor—all without faith fall away. Therefore Heb. 6:4-6 shows us a profession which might be renounced, not a life which can be lost. The enjoyment of privilege, the possession of gift, is distinct from eternal life.

But if life is eternal, if nothing can take the believer out of His hand, what is the meaning of “Let us therefore fear lost, a promise being left of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it “; “Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest lest any man fail after the same manner of unbelief,” and, “Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him? “

The Hebrews were in peculiar danger of going back to their old Judaism; the Gentile professor was not nearly so liable to return to paganism—though that was possible. For the law and the ordinances were of God and had been clothed with divine authority. The Hebrew who had no real faith, but who by profession of Christ's name was reckoned among the saints and therefore a partaker of all the outward privileges of God's assembly, never did, nor could break away from the

old things which the death and resurrection of Christ had annulled for faith. And even as Israel in the wilderness went back into Egypt in their hearts, so the Hebrew not born of God would go back again into the Judaism he had professed to have given up. The gospel which he heard was not mixed with faith; of necessity he came short of God's rest, like those unfaithful Israelites who fell in the wilderness, never entered the earthly Canaan. The Apostle refers to them as a warning to the Hebrew believers. There were among them those who were true, and of them the Apostle says, “We are persuaded better things of you,” and again, “We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” Why was he so persuaded? Because lie knew the power of eternal life, and the pledged word of our Lord, “I will raise him up at the last day.”

Nevertheless the warning is addressed to them all as a company of professors of faith in the Lord Jesus. These same warnings speak now to all who bear the name of Christ. Where there is real faith in the heart, confession with the mouth surely follows, but there may be, alas! a pseudo-confession of the mouth while the heart is full of guile. Paul in writing to the Philippians speaks of some in the church who were enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end was destruction. Jude also speaks of corrupt men who had crept in unawares.

Chapter 94

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 25. History of Faith

Many are the ways in which the mere professor is snared and taken, and while all are exposed to the wiles of the adversary, only those who have life finally escape them. All the scriptures that warn, and call to diligence lest we fail and come short of His grace, are tests applied to each professor, and make manifest his true condition according as he pays heed to them, or is careless. For each one in whom the Spirit dwells does give diligence that, he fail not of the grace of God. I speak of the habit, not of slips and failures, but as John says “whosoever has been begotten of God doth not practice sins” (1 John 3:9). The absolute certainty of the believer's salvation is in the purpose of God, and one part of the purpose is holiness, and grace accomplishes it in us. See Rom. 8:28-30 as to the purpose: where more absolutely and unconditionally expressed? This purpose was made before the world was created, Foreknown, then predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son; then after being born in this world, at the right moment called; and so entirely is the responsibility side of the believer's life excluded from this scripture that the complete and full purpose of God is summed up just as if then accomplished, “Whom He called them He also justified, and whom He justified them He also glorified.” Our names were written in the book of life before the foundation of the world.

Can any such fail to enter into the rest of God? Can any such fail of the very place marked out for them in the coming glory? When our names were written in His book of life, was not our precise portion in the kingdom and glory also predetermined? Yea, all was included in His purpose. And the real question is, not whether we may fail to enter into our pre-appointed place, but does God fail in carrying out His purpose.? Is nature stronger than grace? The will of sin mightier than the will of God? Nay, with those that are called according to His purpose, where sin abounded grace does much more abound. Were it possible to be otherwise there would be an impeachment of the value of Christ's blood, of the sovereignty of grace. Blessed be God, this is not possible. Every true believer will be, yea must be, brought through every trial, a victor over every foe. God's purpose is published, is proclaimed to the whole world, His immutable counsel confirmed by an oath, “That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled to refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

But recurring to the question, if our salvation is so eternally secure, why these warnings and admonitions as if our entry into heaven depended upon our own exertions and watchfulness? Because the flesh, the opposing principle to God, is in us; and it is ours to overcome and judge it by a power outside of ourselves. We should not have known what dreadful evil was in us, had we not been warned. Therefore the warning, the admonition, is for those who have faith, not anything to suggest a fear of final failure and loss, but a gracious intimation of where our danger lies, that we may not be suddenly overtaken in a fault, and, so watching, we are—so to say—forearmed against our enemy. To a heart that responds ever so feebly to God's love, what greater grief could be than that God should have no pleasure in him? what greater motive than this to keep him

diligent in the ways and life of faith, that he never draw back? This is the constant tendency of nature, and we find that our most treacherous foe is ever present with us. God could have annihilated our old nature when we believed, and then we should have had no flesh to contend against. It is because we are constantly beset by this foe that God Himself works in us, or we should soon be overcome, and also because He would give us a reward that He bids us work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Without this principle of sin within, God would still have worked in us to will and to do of His good pleasure—for there is no power in the new nature, it is capable of producing good, but the power is in the Spirit—but there would have been no reason for fear and trembling. It was simply a question of God's will. Is it then a mark of favor and love that believers here should be called to work out their salvation with fear and trembling? Yea, assuredly, for God's purpose is not only to save, but also to give us a crown of victory. Victory implies previous conflict. If there were no flesh to fear and judge, no world to overcome, no devil to resist, there would be no fighting, no victory, and no crown. The fear and trembling arise from the fact that our own nature is in league with the world and its prince. Hence the warnings, and the necessity of constant watching against the workings of nature—i.e., the old flesh, which always lusts against the Spirit. Hence the continuous conflict with the flesh. Neither the world nor its prince can harm us save through our own flesh. Therefore God says “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” But eternal life is ours, the victory is assured, and we fight, not as one that beateth the air—not vainly struggling, but as well knowing what and where the danger is, and watching with jealous care.

To ensure the victory, which as to our daily walk and experience is a moral victory, God works in us first to will. The will being created in us, then God gives power to do. If the believer were simply an unintelligent machine, there might still be the doing, but where would be the willing? Who thinks of a will in a steam engine? The Father is seeking worshippers who shall offer intelligent praise. There is creation praise in Psa. 148. We who know in Whom we have redemption give a willing praise, and yield a willing obedience. Truly it is God who creates the will and gives the ability to do. But it is also our will. God works, and we will and we do.

Chapter 95

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 26. History of Faith

What are the means which God uses in His wisdom to produce intelligent praise and obedience, what the process to produce practical holiness, to make us conquerors of every foe, to deny self in all its workings, even as becomes the Lord's bondmen, to follow and obey the dictates of the Holy Spirit, the desires of the new nature, as it does become the Lord's freemen? Well, God employs moral means. And herein is displayed the wonderful wisdom of God. For those means which produce fruit according to God, where there is life, are a test applied to the lifeless professor by which his true condition is manifested. A double effect is thus produced, the same means bringing the soul born of God into closer communion with Him, and making more manifest the lifeless condition of the other. Even the slips and failures of God's own children are made subservient to the purposes of grace. God forbid that the knowledge of such grace should make us indifferent to holiness. “Shall we sin that grace may abound?” Nay, but we fall before Him and adore, for that unspeakable grace which will not permit that any born of God should so fall as not to rise again. God will maintain His own character, He will keep His own pledged word. And the Lord Jesus, who only said what the Father told Him to say, says, “I will raise him up at the last day.”

Every fruit-bearing branch in the vine is purged that it may bring forth more fruit. “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” Holiness in heart and life is the fruit God looks for, but it is ordained and must abide. Much purging is needed in order to be fruitful; but God works to make us fruitful, and the Lord Jesus says, “My Father is the husbandman.” The process is not agreeable to the flesh. Paul had to keep his body under else he would have been a castaway. He had been in the third heaven and had heard unutterable things. He might well after that count all else here below as mere refuse. But the abundance of his revelations did not destroy his flesh; when he came out of the third heaven, his flesh was not a whit better than it was before, nay, it was an occasion for the flesh to boast, and so be more hateful than if Paul had never been caught up into the third heaven. It was an extraordinary privilege, and extraordinary means are used by God to keep down fleshly boasting. The Father purges this branch. He puts a thorn in his flesh, sends a messenger of Satan to buffet him. These are the moral means by which God works, and Paul gets a victory over himself. At first there was a fight, and he prayed thrice to have it removed. But when the word came, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness,” then he submitted, and no longer prayed that Lord would remove the thorn.

However interesting it is to trace the ways of faith through the dispensational dealings of God with man, it is of more practical importance to see how sovereign grace is interwoven with the believer's responsibility now. For now it is not only a dispensation of grace as distinct from law, but this present time is specially distinguished by what we may call the minute and careful operation of grace upon each believer, and which is as varied in the detail of its operation, as each individual saint may differ in circumstances, in character, and in need. Evidently while grace always must

remain grace, and the believer always remains responsible for faithfulness in walk, the operation of grace must be a moral process in each soul, during which every energy of the new nature is called into active exercise, and where the sustaining power of God is seen in every moment of weakness, His watchful care in every hour of danger, and His strength in every victory. This is seen in the every-day life of believers now,—it is God's way with His saints. And since He has given us the relationship of children, how could He act otherwise? Redemption has brought us into a place where we can say “Abba, Father,” and as Father He deals with us. Perhaps no scripture more explicitly declares the grace of God and the responsibility of the believer, combining and giving each its true place, than Phil. 2:12, 13, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” —here is the believer's responsibility; “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” —here is God's grace. And both are so combined that the grace of God has the first place, as it must have; for He works in us, then we “will” and “do.”

The word of God assures eternal life to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; not a question of attaining eternal life after he believes, but a free and absolute gift at the moment. On the other hand the same word contains warnings, promises and exhortations, as if our salvation depended upon our own diligence. We know that there is a blessed and divine connection between the assurance and the warning. The Word of God is perfect. To sever the one from the other, because of human inability to grasp both, has not only divided believers into two opposing schools—and this is the lesser evil—but it has opposed one part of God's truth to another. This is not faith; in its root it is infidelity. The result is that those who are simply occupied with one side of the truth have evolved principles which are contrary to the plainest statements. For if because of the warnings to believers it is inferred that a soul born of God may after all be lost, what becomes of the assurance of eternal life? If on the other hand because life is eternal, this certainty is used to lessen, if not to deny, the sense of responsibility, then the solemn word of warning is practically set aside, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” So evident is it, that not a word can be omitted, added, or displaced, without marring the truth and injuring our own souls. The simple bow to the whole truth, and to such God gives unshaken faith.

Salvation is a free gift. Holiness also is a gift; none could possess it if God did not bestow it. But our salvation expresses the new and blessed relationship into which we are brought once and forever to God. Holiness is both a gift and a moral quality, and being a quality admits of development and progression, and being a moral quality, it is not impressed upon us by the simple “fiat” of God, but He works in us to will and to do.

The infidel has dared to say that there are contradictions in the Bible. He forgets that he will be judged by that word. But saints sometimes feel a difficulty in discerning the perfect accord between every part of it. This is sometimes due to erroneous teaching, sometimes to insubjection of heart to the Word. Still there are eases when a soul really desires to learn, not doubting the perfectness of the Word, but feeling his own ignorance, and especially when misapprehension of the truth touches communion God, or shakes the assurance of having eternal life, and thus instills a fear that perhaps after all he may be a castaway. But there is no statement so reiterated as that declaring the believer has everlasting life. Statements so plain that the most untaught can understand. The gift of this eternal life, by Him whose life is the light of men, is the theme of the earlier part of John's Gospel. “Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” and again in the same chapter, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Nor is it

only that this blessed truth is frequently repeated, but the farm is varied, as if the Spirit would array the divine assurance in different colored robes, so as to fix it indelibly upon the hearts of His saints. “Never perish,” “Nothing shall take them out of my hand,” “I am the living bread—if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever,” and so of the water He gives, it springs up into everlasting life. We need not ask why eternal life has so full a place in the Gospel of John; it is this Gospel which presents the Son of God, although a man—made flesh—yet the Word that was God. Therefore the source of life, made man for the purpose of imparting life, the eternal life was man's need. “In Him was life and the life was the light of men.” Where a fuller, though brief, development of this great fact than in John 6? And the power and proof of the Lord Jesus being the life will be declared at the last day. It is the Lord saying that He will guard the life so given until the body is fixed in incorruptibility and prepared for eternal glory. There is not even the possibility of losing it, it is not in our keeping, it is hid with Christ in God, He Himself is our life. Can Christ be lost? No more can our life. Wherever the Word of God speaks of the life given to believers it is always with the character of being eternal. Therefore, if any scripture seem to be at variance with this truth, it must be that we are not apprehend the meaning. Who but an infidel would dare to say that Scripture disagrees with itself?

Many true believers when harassed with fears have applied to themselves Heb. 6:4-6, and perhaps there is no other part of the Word which shows how much one may possess and yet not have life. They tasted,—were made partakers of the Holy Ghost but not of life. Where this is not seen Satan takes advantage of our ignorance to make us doubt that which is so plainly stated in the Gospel of John 1 doubt if this Scripture (Heb. 6) ever troubled a mere professor. The dread of having fallen away is rather a mark of having life. The more a lifeless professor had of outward privilege, the further would he be from feeling such a dread.

But what did those spoken of in this chapter possess? They were enlightened and had tasted of the heavenly gift; this does not go beyond the light which reaches the intellect but not the heart: the natural mind is able to make a profession of Christian truth. They had an intellectual taste of the heavenly gift, i.e. the truth of Christ (not Christ, the truth) was received by the mind; it was heavenly truth, for Christ was in heaven, and the revelation of the truth of Christ in heaven is a heavenly gift. It is intellect preferring gospel truth to law.

They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. This is an advance upon the former, something more than mere mind assenting to revealed truth. There is a power dwelling in the church, the power of the Holy Ghost, and all within the sphere of that power feel and partake of it. But a man may be within the sphere of the power of the Holy Ghost as displayed in the assembly of God, without having the Holy Spirit as indwelling; for the Spirit only indwells where there is life: the power of the Holy Ghost as manifested among saints “builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit” is different from the Spirit dwelling in each believer as the power of life. When the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost filled the house, He was then the Spirit of power as witness of the ascended Christ. When the Lord Jesus breathed upon the disciples, saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” He was the Spirit of life.

Another characteristic follows, which was peculiar to that time, i.e. to the first age of the church, for then miracles accompanied the Word. They had tasted of the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come. By a word many had been healed, or raised from the dead. “In the name of

Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" said Peter to the lame beggar. "Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." To the dead Tabitha, he said Arise; but all was God's word, which was seen and enjoyed by all within the sphere of profession. Nor was it less a mark of power or of tasting the good Word of God when Elymas was made blind, it was equally a testimony to the truth of the good word of God. But these miracles are the powers of the world to come. The coming age is the millennium which will be characterized by deliverance from the bondage of Satan. Samples of this delivering power were given by the Apostles. Nor was miraculous energy limited to the Apostles. Whoever preached the Word, the Lord confirmed it by signs following. Living amid such displays of power, and in measure sharing it, those of whom the Apostle speaks, tasted of the good Word of God and the powers of the coming age. Thus we have here enlightenment, tasting the heavenly gift, partaking of the Holy Ghost (as did Balaam, King Saul, and Judas) tasting the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, but not one word of eternal life.

Wonderful as all this is, these advantages enjoyed by man without life, they are but the natural result of a risen Christ, whose power and coming glory were witnessed to, and if we may so say "sampled," in those early days, and their significance apprehended at least in measure by mere man, who by intellect could distinguish between the grace and glory of the gospel, and the dry hard commands of the law; but all apart from living faith. Having no life, when the testing moment came—as come it will to every professor—all without faith fall away. Therefore Heb. vi. 4-6 shows us a profession which might be renounced, not a life which can be lost. The enjoyment of privilege, the possession of gift, is distinct from eternal life.

Chapter 96

The Declared Purpose and Present Moral Processes: 27. History of Faith

But if life is eternal, if nothing can take the believer out of His hand, what is the meaning of “Let us therefore fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should, seem to come short of it"? and of “Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest lest any man fail after the same"?

If Christ was glorified by it, then Paul would glory in it. By accepting the thorn as disciplinary means for keeping the flesh down, and trusting to the promised sufficiency of the grace of Christ, Paul obtained a moral victory over the thorn and consequently a greater blessing than if it had been removed. This was the path of grace, yea the path of honor; it was the only way to win the fight, to obtain the crown. This is a notable instance of the way in which God works in us first to will and then to do. Paul shrank from the conflict. The Lord speaks to him. “Oh” says Paul, “if Thou art glorified, I will endure, yea boast of it.” It was according to God's working, and he bore the thorn, and carried it about with him, thus “doing” of God's good pleasure. Thus it is the fruitful branch brings forth more fruit.

This abounding fruit can only be where there is life. There is in some a latent thought that we obtain life by fruit-bearing. Not so, we have fruit because we have life. It is quite consistent with the deepest reverence for God to say that the Spirit must first communicate life before any fruit can be borne for God. And to remember this is of the utmost importance; for it gives the soul rest as to personal acceptance, and by assuring the victory from the first strengthens us against the flesh and its coadjutors, the world and the devil.

Temptations may be presented apart from fleshly activities, they never injure the believer unless yielded to. Often indeed the flesh is so indulged as to invite temptation; but in its most passive condition it is always ready to receive and yield to the suggestions of the enemy. In moments of depression we are peculiarly liable to doubt our salvation. “Oh, you cannot be a Christian” says the insidious tempter; and we are in danger of forgetting that God has given to us eternal life. If Satan said “You are not walking as a Christian!” he would often tell the truth, for alas! such is too frequently the case. But his aim is to discredit God's truth; he began with that in the garden. He is a liar from the beginning.

But does not Paul say (1 Cor. 9:27) that he kept his body under lest he should be a castaway, that is, lest he should be lost? At first this scripture may seem to imply that eternal life might be lost. But those who maintain this only show their ignorance of the true teaching of these words. I do not in the least seek to tone down the meaning of the word “castaway.” The same word occurs in Rom. 1:28, “God gave them over to a reprobate mind.” In 2 Corinthians 13:5-7, “Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates, &c.” In Titus 1:16, “unto every good work reprobate,” and in Heb. vi. 8, “but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.” In all these it is the same word as in 1 Cor. ix. 27, and Paul uses it with the same

meaning. He brought his body in subjection, lest after preaching to others he himself should give evidence that he never was converted, never received eternal life, and so became a castaway. If he had never kept the body under, if he had been proved to be a reprobate, would it have proved that he was not an apostle? Nay, Balaam was inspired, no prophecy more sublime than his. A man might be all these, and yet a castaway. like those in Heb. 6 who, with all their privileges and endowments, fell away and could not be renewed. What would have been plainly manifested if Paul had become castaway? That he never had eternal life; those who have NEVER PERISH. “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.”

But Paul never doubted that he had eternal life. He intimates here the means by which God teaches practical holiness to those whom He has saved. He calls us to glory through a path-way of self-denial and holy obedience, and these warnings and exhortations are the moral means by which He keeps us in the path. They are as thick edges on each side of the road to prevent our breaking through and leaving the right track. Even if a saint through not judging down the flesh does break, grace must bring him back, for it is impossible that one having eternal life should perish. The wolf may scatter the flock, may catch and tear one of the sheep, but the roaring lion shall never devour him. Our gracious Lord put a thick edge around Peter when He warned him of his denial. Peter broke through by not giving heed to the warning; he had not yet learned to judge his flesh. But he had eternal life, and so the Lord Jesus restored him. At the last supper Judas was warned, but he paid no heed. The Master would have put a hedge around him, but He who knows all hearts and who knows His own sheep said to him, “That thou doest do quickly.” Judas had no life and went to his own place. Paul learned what the flesh was and gave heed to the danger, not that he doubted his salvation, but he gave proof of it by judging all, that was contrary to holiness and true service. All this is written for our learning that we may have the same confidence, the same jealous fear of the flesh, the same diligence in keeping the body in subjection. And doing all by the power of Him works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

The Psalmist says “By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.” And the word of God is still the means by which we walk in holiest paths. The natural man, whether he makes profession or not, never applies the word to himself, never suspects that there may be a lie in his right hand. Among professors there are those who obey the word, others show by their habitual disobedience that there is no life in them. The action of the word of God upon a mixed company of professors may be compared to a powerful magnet passing through a mass of metal filings. Some are of gold, silver, and copper, but none cleave to the magnet but the steel. Of course it need scarcely be said that this cannot possibly be a figure of the gospel preached to the lost; for when all are lost, there are no “steel filings” which naturally obey the word. I am looking at a company of professors who take the stand of being Christians, and I say, the word tries them whether their profession be true or false. The word is the grand public test of every one bearing the name of Christ. If his faith be a living faith, he may fear and tremble at the enemy's power arrayed against him, and at the solemn word, “let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;” but the effect will be to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure. If there be no living faith, sooner or later, he is made manifest; in one form or another he shows that there is no life in him. It is this life from God which makes such a difference in the effect of the word upon the soul. The word does not profit if unmixed with faith; but where there is, it leads to increased prayer and watchfulness, and we are led on by the Holy Spirit, and guarded by the power of God. It is not

led like a horse or a mule “which have no understanding;” but “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.” Gracious care, perfect love on God's part towards us, the intelligence of faith and responsive love on our parts; and so God keeps us right in the middle of the path. How wonderful, but how blessed, the interworking of almighty grace with the believer's responsibility, how wise the process which gives each its proper place Every moral feeling is wrought upon by the Spirit, all the affections of the new nature. He draws our love by manifesting God's love, and our heart's, respond: “we love Him because He first loved us.” He raises our desires and imparts the assurance of hope, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. He brings into view “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” and we press forward to the mark, we follow after to apprehend that for which we are apprehended of Christ Jesus; that is God's grace first, and Christian energy afterward. Fear, desire, love, hatred, hope, every motive power in us, God takes up and uses to produce holiness. For Christ Himself is before us, to be with Him and behold His glory, to be conformed to His image; for when we see Him we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, and all the energy of the new nature strains after it. This is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, for whom all things are counted but loss. It is thus that we are led on by His eye, these are the moral processes by which saints are now led on to glory. What a difference between being thus led on in the constant sunshine of His face in uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and with the Son, the being chastened with His rod under a deep sense of unfaithfulness! But both the light of His countenance and His chastenings are moral means, the divine and blessed way for accomplishing His purposes for, and in us. But the manner of His working is in accordance with our behavior.

Therefore when the word bids us beware lest we fall after the same manner of unbelief, it does not mean that there is a possibility of the believer being lost, for this would be taking him out of Christ's hand; but, it being addressed to the whole professing body, they are warned that, though they might be apostles, if they walk not in the paths of holiness, and live without bringing the body into subjection, they show that they have no life and become castaway. A true believer, one truly born of God, can never become a castaway.

“Let no man take thy crown” was once used by the writer of a tract to prove that a believer might be in heaven without a crown. What will a crown-less saint do when the twenty-four elders cast their crowns before the Lamb! For the elders are the representatives of all the redeemed up to the coming of the Lord. There would be discord in heaven! Where would be the perfect happiness of a saint in glory with the consciousness of having lost his crown? It is a lowering of the grace and power of God, and of the infinite worth of the precious blood of Christ. The Divine Almighty Potter took us up, an inert mass of clay, and fashioned us according to His own will. If we are not what He intended us to be, then He had not power over the clay. If God purposed to have a saint in glory without a crown, then there is no loss to the saint. But there will be no member of Christ's body without a crown. The question is not what place we deserve, but the fullest glory of Him who has saved us and glorified God. Indeed if it were a question solely of our desert, should we be in heaven at all? I do not forget the believer's responsibility, nor that we all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive for the things done in the body whether good or bad; but when our whole course here will be brought into the light, we shall be like Him, and our unfaithful ways will magnify the riches of grace, will be to the praise of Him who, notwithstanding unfaithfulness, has brought us as conquerors through all. And whatever He may blame as having been of faith will

sure be to the praise of His grace; and—still grace—the blessed Master will commend us for those things wherein we were kept by His power. Our ways truly. will be investigated, and they will appear to us as now they appear to the Lord, and we shall repeat His judgment upon our own short-comings, and join in the commendation and the full reward to each according to his sphere of service, and according to the several ability of each. There is no word of loss but to the one who was cast into outer darkness. Also in the parable of the pounds the only one who suffered loss was the wicked servant, as in the former the unprofitable servant. In each the loss was eternal condemnation.

Therefore neither parable gives room for the idea that saints will have no crown or a broken one. There is only one place where a believer is said to suffer loss (1 Cor. 4:15). Loss of what? His own work, the wood, hay, and stubble that he had been building upon the only foundation. All that is burnt up in the day when every man's work shall be tried by fire. As there had been no true work done, there could be no reward. But this is very different from a believer losing his crown, or of occupying a place in glory other than the one appointed before the world was made.

God has appointed a place for each saint. The Lord Jesus told the disciples before He left them that He was going to prepare the place for them. All that remains now is the short distance between our present abode and our eternal home. Paul speaks of this little interval as of running a race. In a human race, men in order to obtain a corruptible crown are temperate in all things. How much more should we be who run a race when the prize is an incorruptible crown! “Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.” Paul was striving, therefore he was temperate. So he can say with the absolute certainty of obtaining the mastery, “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly. If no uncertainty why strive? The prize is sure to the one who strives, though his striving be ever so feeble; but the one who does not strive at all is a castaway. Again in a human race only one can win, only one receives the prize. In the heavenly race every runner, every one who strives, wins. Yea, sovereign grace says he shall surely win. Let us therefore so run that we may obtain. The word of God, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Coming, the promised Glory, are all pledges to our winning. But he who in his heart is most assured of winning is most deeply conscious of almighty and sovereign grace.

Ever since the Fall, faith is the one grand principle given of God to withstand the evil of sin, and to raise the believer morally above it. The first glimpse was seen in Abel who brought his lamb as an offering to God, by it confessing that his own life was forfeited. God accepted it and gave it a value far beyond Abel's intelligence, but he obtained witness that he was righteous. But all the power of faith, and the blessings joined to it was not known at first. It was a series of lessons, teaching step by step how effectually the believer is brought into communion with God—all its subjective power seen in the life of Abraham—and gain victory over the world. In the Passover and the Red Sea there is atonement and deliverance from the bondage of the world. In Abel's lamb we have substitution, in the Paschal lamb there is more than substitution, for God said “I will pass over.” Then there must be Atonement, else God could not pass over the sinner without judging. Full and complete Redemption necessarily follows perfect Atonement, and God dwelling among His people follows full redemption.

God dwelling among the people, (may we not say?) necessitates the presentation of the object of faith, as the One who gives vitality to faith, and the reality of relationship to God. At first it was only

by type and encased in ordinances, for there were other necessary truths as to the evil nature of man and the utter impossibility of pleasing God except by faith, which man had to learn before the due time came when Christ the object of faith was revealed in person. When He came and was rejected, crucified, and was ascended to the glory whence He came, but now as the Risen Man having accomplished eternal redemption for us, then faith rises to a higher aspect and its subjective powers increase in the soul the more He becomes known as the object, not only of faith but of love.

Now we have the life of faith in separative power from the world, a faith that lifts the believer above surrounding circumstances. Impossible for faith to have a larger sphere than during this present age. There is now such a demand upon it, that God alone can supply the needed strength. For God Himself now acts—as far as all outward interposition on behalf of His suffering saints, as if a man should sow seed, and then leave it to grow he knoweth not how. But this is the highest honor ever put upon faith, and God has attached to it the highest reward.

So from the first example of faith in Abel to the last brightest exhibition of its power, Paul glorying in infirmities if Christ were glorified thereby, how minute and careful God's teaching, how assiduous and untiring, and notwithstanding the perversity of the flesh how patient and persevering His, grace, how determinate His counsel to save, and how glorious His victory in us over all the power of sin and over him who held the world in captivity, when the church rises to meet the Lord in the air! Yea, victory everywhere, every trace of sin obliterated when the new heavens and the new earth are created. Though this be yet future for the created world, by faith we enter into it now, and anticipate its joys and glories. For “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Chapter 97

Deliverance From the Law of Sin: Part 1

It is very evident that deliverance from the law of sin and death ought not to, indeed cannot, remain in theory. Yet we find those who avow they are sealed, and have the consciousness of the effect of the Spirit's dwelling in them, that are not delivered from the law of evil which works in the flesh. That conflict will remain to the end, though perhaps in a more subtle form, is certain. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, awl the truth is not in us.” We deceive ourselves; the truth, in the inward effect of its presence on our conscious state, has not produced its effect. Where the truth of Christ is in the heart, there is the consciousness that there is that which is not Christ. Where this is not so, the conscience has not been so wrought on as to give in the new man begotten by the word the sense of that which is contrary to Christ, who is the life of the new man, the spring of its sensibilities and moral feelings. Where that has been wrought in us, it gives its own consciousness of anything and everything that is contrary to it. There is no need of yielding to it, for Christ's grace is sufficient for us, and His strength is made perfect in weakness; but the being out of its power supposes the power of Christ, and diligence in looking to Him, that we may have that power to use; “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies.”

But let us weigh the effect of the sealing with the Spirit. Scripture is plain that it is consequent on faith in redemption, as His coming is the consequence of the accomplishment of redemption. Acts 2:38 gives us the plain declaration that it is in having part in the forgiveness of sins that the Holy Ghost is given. (So Eph. 1:13.) Hence liberty is there at once for the forgiven soul. It has remission of its sins, is conscious of it, and is before God, with a purged conscience, in peace. Rom. 5 is the expression of this—the general normal state of a redeemed soul. It enjoys that favor which is better than life.

But there are two things consequent on this, connected more immediately with deliverance—our new relationships, and power over sin in the flesh. The presence of the Holy Ghost is the power of the new relationship and liberty with God; but there was a work done by Christ to bring us into it—His dying unto sin once, and our having died with Him, that we may be free, and wholly, for faith, in this new relationship. Now there may be faith in the efficacy of that work of Christ—that He has set us in the place where redemption brings us, and in favor and under grace, and delivered us from the responsibility of making out righteousness to meet God—without that experimental acquaintance with what we are delivered from, which results, through grace, in deliverance, in practical reality, in the conscious state of the soul. This is not mere forgiveness and justification from guilt. That applies to the old standing in the flesh, and to its works. That is needed for the possession of the Spirit and deliverance, but is not its fruit and consequence; it is the clearing away the guilt of the old man, not the position of the new. But there is a more general aspect of redemption, in which it exists in the minds of many, in which it mixes itself up with the new.

We read, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Now this, where there is no definite apprehension of truth as to the sealing

of the Spirit, leads the mind into the feelings and peace which the sealing of the Spirit gives the definite consciousness of, in our relationship with the Father and the Son. I do not doubt that many sealed ones remain in this true but indefinite sense of grace, and count on divine love; for you have more than forgiveness, you have the riches of His grace, and you have redemption through His blood—not merely forgiveness or a rescue from a state you were in, and introduction into eternal blessings. But it is not, after all, conscious sonship, and being consciously in Christ, and Christ in us.

Having noticed and guarded these collateral questions, I turn to the direct point which is connected with the failure in practical deliverance from the law of sin which is in our members—namely, the state of a soul which enjoys the liberty of its new position in grace, but does not find power against evil as it would wish. Now, we have already noticed that there are the two things: the presence of the Holy Ghost, by which we know we are under grace, and enjoy the relationships into which we are brought—the Spirit of adoption, and that work by which the deliverance has been wrought; not forgiveness, or the blessed Lord's dying for our sins, but His dying to sin, and rising again. This last was closing all association with the first Adam place, and law, its rule from God, which could bind no longer than a man lived, and the entering into a new place and standing with God, based on redemption and divine righteousness. The place is now according to the riches of God's grace, and past all that separated us from God, accomplished for us on the cross, and according to this place in son-ship through redemption— “My Father and your Father, my God and your God;” the Holy Ghost gives us the consciousness, shedding withal abroad in our hearts the love of God. Blessed be His name, we are in Christ before God, and we know it.

But then Christ is in us. But it is not difficult to understand that the soul who, through grace, has believed in redemption and the grace that gave it, should know and have the consciousness of this acceptance. This depends on our being in Christ, and this known by the Spirit; it is objective, our standing in faith, and the new man acquainted with redemption cannot but know its place in Christ, though it may be little realized. But when I speak of Christ in me, it applies to my actual state—is subjective. “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin.” Now I fully admit that we are brought into this place by Christ's work. Still, the state of the soul is connected with it, not simply relationship.

With whom doth death put us in relationship? It puts us out of relationship with all a living man is connected with—sin, the world, and all in it; and that is a very great thing indeed, but it is what has happened to us if Christ is in us. Of this more in a moment. But if, knowing that I am in Christ and Christ in me, I look up, is there any flaw, or something wanting to my position? Why Christ (and I am in Him) is the very object and perfection of God's delight; I lack nothing; acceptable according to God Himself, I have nothing unacceptable to what He is. I may realize it more or less, but what I realize is perfection itself. But Christ is in me—I look down. Is all perfect, nothing wanting here? Not in Him abstractedly; but if I am true, earnest, loving holiness, loving Christ, I find what displeases me, how much more God! No excuse, for Christ is power as well as life; but all is not what I would have it to be, even according to the light I have.

The Christian's responsibility is here to walk as Christ walked, to manifest the life of Jesus in his mortal flesh. Without Christ he can do nothing; and diligence, a heart exercised in dependence, prayer, the word, watchfulness—all have their place; exercising oneself day and night to have a

conscience void of offense towards God and towards man, not grieving the Holy Spirit of promise by whom we are sealed, so that He be not a rebuker, but the spring of joy in that which is heavenly. It is not now a question of righteousness or imputation. As to that, Christ has borne our sins, and we are in Him, according to His acceptance before God. The question is now brought into one of holiness, of acceptableness, not acceptance; and with a true heart this is of the utmost moment. For though God's sovereign grace has found a way in the unspeakable gift of Jesus on the cross, of meeting our sins according to His glory, so that grace should reign through righteousness, and guilt be no longer in question, yet what is really acceptable to Him is the basis of this very judicial estimate, and as partakers of the divine nature, His judgment is ours.

But this leads us to the very point in question. We hate the evil, yet the flesh is in fact there, and the practical question of deliverance is, how far we are free from it, or how far it has still power in us. I may writhe under cards which bind me, and yet not be able to break them and be free; and we have to learn our own weakness and want of power as well as our guilt. But, being renewed, born of God, I hate the evil, I groan under its power. I earnestly seek and strive to live free from it. I do not succeed. I learn that there is no good in me; I learn that it is not I, for I hate it, but I learn it is too strong for me when I do.

Into the detail of this I do not enter, it has been treated of elsewhere; it is in principle always law, the thought of God's judgment of us depending on oar state: this not in its grosser form—guilt, for this is through sins committed; but being lost through what we are, perhaps a terrible question of self-deception, if we have made profession. We may writhe under the cords that bind us, and rub ourselves sore, but the cords are not broken; yet a most useful lesson has been learned—what we are, and that we have no strength. And now comes deliverance, through the working and power of the Holy Ghost, but in the faith of what the blessed Lord has wrought. He has not only borne our sins, redeemed us, and cleared us from guilt, but He died unto sin. The fall result will be the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, but the work itself is done. He appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. See Heb. 9:26, and what follows as to our sins: and John 1:29.

Now thus as a sacrifice to pat away sin, we find its practical application in Rom. 8:8. When Christ was for sin, that is, a sacrifice for sin, God condemned sin in the flesh, not that Christ surely had any, but that He who knew no sin was made sin for us, and died to it on the cross. I have part in the efficacy of His cross, and this hateful sin in the flesh, condemnable in me and everywhere, has been condemned there, condemned in Christ's death; He died unto sin once, and while the condemnation is accomplished, and most solemnly and fully for me, in that blessed One, who was made sin for me in grace, it was so in death so that, as done effectually for me, there is no condemnation. But I reckon myself dead. I have been crucified with Christ, my old man is crucified with Him; we are not actually dead, of course, but faith, according to the word, appropriates this truth.

(To be continued)

Chapter 98

Deliverance From the Law of Sin: Part 2

Up to this point I had been as a quickened soul in the position of a child of Adam, and practically under the law, laboring to have done with the old man, with sin in the flesh, but without success. Now I have died with Christ, and so do not belong to the old position of a child of Adam. Death clearly closes all relationship and bond with it. I cannot speak of a man who is lying dead as having evil lasts and a perverse will. The law might show me the evil, but could not remedy it. But I have died with Christ, and am delivered from the law; the condemnation is passed, being accomplished on the cross; but that was in death, so that I reckon myself dead, and no condemnation there. Up to that it was effort to overcome what remained untouched there in its vital strength. But God has dealt for us with this in Christ, Himself sinless. And we have not overcome but been delivered, having died un that wherein we were held, for Christ has for us. Hence, in Col. 3, God pronounces on our position, “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” With God the question is settled. I am not in the flesh, not in the standing of a child of Adam. I have died in that when Christ died. This judgment of God, declared in Col. 3, is deliverance; for that which I was hopelessly struggling under is dead and gone—the old “I” of my corrupt and sinful nature; not only that I have received divine life in power in Christ (Rom. 8:2), but that the sin of the old man has been condemned in the cross, and I, as such, died there. My standing is in Christ, not in Adam or flesh at all. It is not that the flesh is not in me, but it is not my standing and place before God. I am in Christ, or in the Spirit: in Christ, consequent on His having died and risen, and gone up beyond sin and death and judgment; or in the Spirit, which is the power of it down here.

Faith, in Rom. 6, takes up the judgment of God in Col. 3, and I reckon myself dead to sin, and alive to God; not in Adam, but in Jesus Christ our Lord. Hence, while” where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” this liberty has a double aspect: conscious liberty in the light before God as in Christ, and a son; and liberty from the law of sin in the flesh. I have got into the new place in Christ, in that I have died to the old thing—Adam—and am alive in Christ. Had I to die, or to get free, by my own victory, I should not succeed; but I have found the need of a Deliverer, as unable myself to set aside flesh, and have by grace found one in, by faith, having died and risen with Christ. I have not to die, I reckon myself dead, because by the Holy Ghost Christ who died is in me as my life. The Holy Ghost gives me adoption, and the consciousness of being in Christ a son. It does give me faith as to having died in Christ; but it cannot give me the consciousness that the flesh is not there, but that I am not a debtor to it, nor that I am living after the Spirit when I am not. I know the conflict exists, that the flesh lusts against the Spirit, but that, the Spirit being there, I am not under the law. There I was captive to the law of sin. In the Spirit I am not; on the contrary, Christ's grace is sufficient for me, His strength made perfect in weakness. I am at liberty, because the sin I have discovered in my flesh has been condemned in the cross of Chris, tend that was in death; so that for faith I am crucified with Him, and got into the new place of man before God, after the cross, and in resurrection, past sin, Satan's power, death and judgment. That place is liberty—liberty before God and from the law of sin. I am dead to it, having died with Christ. Romans does not go farther than death in this doctrine, and Christ being our life. In Colossians

resurrection with Him is introduced, and we are dead also to the world.

As to our life, the old things are passed, and Christ is our life, we having with Him died to sin, and now alive to God with Him, my whole spiritual condition in connection with sin in the flesh having closed by death; and this is so perfect, that we could, if God's time were come go, and be, as the thief, Christ's companion in paradise. But generally we are left here, and have to do with the old man—the flesh—free, redeemed out of the state and standing I was in, but having to do with the existence of flesh in me, with Satan and the world around. It is with the first I have now to do. Now in this state of things, that is, in a believer sealed with the Spirit, the conscious relationship with God as sons, and true liberty is there. But there is more; when we have learned what it is to have died with Christ, the soul is set “free from the law of sin and death.” He that is dead is justified from sin—not sins. You cannot accuse a dead man of a perverse will or evil lusts. But the flesh is in me. Now, captive to the law of sin in my members is not the place of conflict nor of victory, any more than Israel had to fight in Egypt. There may be carelessness as regards our communion with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; but this is only deadness of soul, and the power of present things, the want of spiritual feeling. But if we do not mortify the deeds of the body, there is a positive evil power at work, positive evil rises up; if there be conscience, the sense of a bad state is there, and a worse one if there be not—the spiritual judgment is deteriorated. The flesh has a power which does not answer to deliverance, and we see persons who have not lost the sense of their standing with God, and are in that sense at liberty, in whom the flesh works as if spiritual power in Christ were not there.

Now, in such cases, the remedy is not to deny the deliverance; “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” “the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.” Entangling the soul again in the yoke of bondage is not what gives power. Slaves are not combatants, the yoke has to be broken. Where there is liberty and spiritual power, there is conflict. “The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” Hence it is so beautifully put in the end of Rom. 6, Now you are free, dead to sin, and alive in Christ to God, to whom are you going to give yourselves? to sin, or to righteousness and God, with fruit to holiness and the end everlasting life? Such is God's way, by freeing us from the law of sin, and putting us in the liberty of adoption with Himself, to set us in the conflict, to realize fruit unto holiness here. Our standing is perfect, our state in no way; meet in Christ to be with Him, but exercised in daily spiritual life, if left here, how far we live up to the life which is ours in Christ through Christ in us. God's view of our position, as noticed, is in Col. 2; 3 Faith takes this up (Rom. 6), and the believer reckons himself dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ. In 2 Cor. 4:10 we have the practical carrying it out, and God's dealing with us in view of it: “Always bearing about in the body the dying (not the death) of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies.”

Theoretically there ought to be no movement of the flesh in us, it being suppressed by this application of the dying of Jesus. This supposes the activity of the new man to keep our thoughts and ways up to the level of the blessing into which we have been introduced, practically the life of Jesus manifested in us. It supposes a lusting flesh, but always absolutely kept down. “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin” (if it lives of its own life and will, it will produce only that), “and the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” But, alas! this normal condition is not always maintained, as we know, if we know ourselves; and God disciplines us. “We are delivered to death"; well for us if it be “for Jesus' sake.” If we fail, we have an Advocate with the Father, or we

may have a thorn in the flesh, that we may not fail. Our normal condition is to be beholding with open face the glory of the Lord, and being changed into the same image, and feeding by faith on Him in His humiliation as the bread come down from heaven, and so living by Him, abiding in Him, and growing up unto Him, who is the Head, in all things. When walking thus, the flesh has no power; it is there, but the heart in elsewhere. Still, down here, we are passing through temptations and snares, and watching and praying constantly is needed not to enter into them, because the disposition of nature, if not will, is there. Power is there in Christ for us. We are not under the law of sin, but spiritually free, and there is no excuse for failure, but we do all fail. Where there is not diligence in watching and praying, we do not lose the sense of our position, but we act inconsistently with it. A son may never for a moment have such a question rise in his mind, but he may be a naughty rebellious son. So sin has power over the unwatchful unpraying believer, who yet never doubts of his place in Christ hen he has been set free. He is not a slave, but a son, but more faulty than if he were a slave. He is not under the law of sin, but he is practically governed by it in his ways, because he is not profiting by the grace and power of Christ, his conscience and heart keeping far away from Him. The standard of his Christianity becomes frightfully lowered, and he sees “no harm” in things from which, in times past, he would have shrunk—not because they were prohibited, but because the life and Spirit of Christ in him found no food or attraction in them, but the contrary. Yet he may not have lost the sense of his place before God; in that sense he has deliverance, as a child goes on in the sense that he is a child, though heedless of his father's will and of his father's pleasure. But this is a sad state. The remedy is not making him doubt of his adoption, but pressing with the claim of Christ's love his walking worthy of the calling wherewith he is called. But it is of all moment to see that deliverance, in the sense of known relationship with God, our place in Christ, not in Adam or in flesh, is a distinct thing from deliverance in the sense of the realization of death and resurrection with Christ. This is the basis of that, known by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. But one is the place we are in, the other the experimental power of walking according to that place, and, as the flesh is in us, requiring diligence of heart in seeking grace and strength (for without Christ we can do nothing), seeking Him, and the things which are above, where He is seated, and bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. But it is of all moment that we recognize deliverance from the law of sin as the Christian state. Here only is power, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the power of the Spirit of God working in the life of Christ. There is true liberty, and that based on Christ's dying to sin once, and for sin. (Rom. 6; 8) There is, for such, a grace sufficient for us, and strength made perfect in weakness; so that there is no excuse for the commission of sin, though the flesh be in us. And here spiritual exercises have their place, to the acquisition of heavenly things in spirit, and a heavenly character down here. It is evident that the grace and strength of Christ only can enable us to walk in the path in which He walked, but that grace is sufficient for us. But His strength—it is its nature and character—is made perfect in weakness, and there must be known weakness in us to find this strength. Hence those exercises of heart before deliverance in which we learn our weakness, that we cannot get the victory even when we desire it, which lead to the felt need of deliverance. This we find in the death of Christ, and are thus free— “free from the law of sin and death.” Consequent on this there is victory, and if kept in the sense that we have no strength in ourselves, the peaceful though watchful consciousness that He is with us, as well as that without Him we can do nothing. Deliverance is His dying to sin once, and we in Him, and, while thus free, having the strength in Him which is made perfect in weakness in us. Till we have learned that we

cannot free ourselves, we do not get freedom. Freedom is the portion of every Christian so taught of God; strength, of him who abides in the sense that he has none, and looks to Christ: only these are the Lord's gracious dealings with us to keep us in this position.

Chapter 99

The Enemy's Work: a Word in 1846, a Warning for 1882

This may be always remarked, that where there is a work of the enemy, even saints always fall into it if they do not treat it as such. It has power over the human heart, and where there is not in the soul the power of the Spirit to judge it as the positive mischief of the enemy (and so it will be judged where that power is), there the soul will fall into it, as if it were more perfect truth than what the Spirit teaches. See the early Judaizing of the church, traced and detected in the Epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, and elsewhere. And see in the Galatian churches how the saints fell into it. See the same thing in Popery.

And here I would explain a little further. It does not follow by any means that there are no truths held by those who fall into such a snare. Many important truths may be held by them. Nor is it to be thought for a moment that true saints of God are not liable to fall into these snares. On the contrary, what makes it important to consider them is that they affect the saints of God. Did they not, it might be sorrowful instruction, but no more: just as the awful darkness of heathenism, or the sorrowful condition of a poor unbelieving child of Israel. Nor does it follow (though it will generally have a legal tinge, because the flesh will in such case more or less resume its power) that many good works will not be done by those under it. They may abound. So that in saying that there has been a work of Satan, I am not saying there are not many very dear children of God; I am not saying that they do not hold many all-important fundamental truths as truths, nor that they may not be doing a great many good works. All this will be fully found in the system of Popery, for example, as it was in the Galatians, the earliest form perhaps of that amazing and deluding system.

But there is a further point which it is right to notice. Truly godly people may be the instruments of helping on a system which is truly Satan's. No one can doubt that Cyprian, who laid down his life for Christ's name, that Augustine, that Bernard, were godly men. Yet, though one opposed Rome episcopally, and the last declared Antichrist was risen there, no one can doubt that they helped on most eminently Satan's work in Popery. They did not perceive the bearing of certain points on the meaning and testimony of the Spirit of God.

Further, I do not call every evil I find a direct and positive work of Satan. Of course his hand is thorn. A saint I call a work of God, though Satan may mar it. Thus I believe there are serious defects and faults in the Establishment; but I believe it to have been a work of God, marred and spoiled by human considerations, which led those who framed it to adapt it to circumstances and to the then state of the population, and to introduce principles which lay it now open, perhaps to that work of Satan which is commonly called Puseyism. In that too itself, I dare say, several good men are laboring, because they do not by spiritual power discern Satan's craft, who has a lovely religion for the flesh, a religion fairer to men's judgment and loveliest natural feelings than God's, which acts entirely on the conscience, and gives all glory to Christ. So with Dissenters: I believe that was a work of God: with many defects, I judge, but still a work of God. And so of others. But Popery and Puseyism are the work of the enemy, though you may, and doubtless would, find many dear persons among them. Of course the degrees of evil or power may vary. I speak of its

character and source merely.

Satan originates nothing. This is God's prerogative. The work of Satan is to mar and break down what God has wrought, when this is left, as an effect produced, to the responsibility of man. God created Adam. Satan spoiled the work through man's folly. There was but One whom he could not touch down here; in whom, having laid his defiling hand on all else as prince of this world, he could find nothing. He can originate nothing, but he can build up with vast sagacity an immense system, out of the corruption, suited to the evil which is in us; yea, and stamped with the character of the evil that is in us to which it is so suited. What would money be without avarice? or worldly power without ambition? or superstition without a natural principle of religiousness in the heart of man? Such a system may be a vast fact in the economy of divine government considered as a judgment, as Mohammedanism; or a subtler corruption, as Popery, pregnant with greater mischiefs, but where the enemy of souls has not been permitted to blot out in the same way the great facts of Christianity, as to the manner of the Divine existence and incarnation, nor the historical truths of the gospel; or it may be a marring where, in the main, truth abides; or it may be the ruin of some special testimony of God, as far as it goes.

A testimony of some special truth may decay, or be lost, or lose its power by becoming mere established orthodoxy; but I do not call this directly or properly a work of Satan. I call it a work of Satan when, blessing and testimony having been brought in by the blessed Spirit of God, a systematic effort is made, producing a regular system: an effort which takes up the truth whose power has decayed as to faith really carrying the soul out of the influence of present things, or some neglected truth generally, and, while it seems to adopt it as it stands in its basis as a fact, subverts and sets it aside: throwing the soul back on ground which is no longer a test of faith, though it be truth (for there Satan can adopt truth for a time), and bringing in apparent additional instruction, but really subversive of the power of what the Spirit taught, and making the authority of this teaching sectarian, or superstitious, or both, though they will not last together. I am not speaking here of Satan's work in open infidelity.

Now many may be quite unable to detect Satan working in this way. But there will be always enough, through the faithfulness of God, to guard souls really waiting on Him from falling in; or, if listened to, through grace to bring them out. But then it will be and must be judged as evil, not dealt with as a mere measure of better and worse.

There is a distinction which may yet be made.

There are two distinct characters of work which Satan does, which may nevertheless merge one in the other. Of those, however, one, if alone, will be ephemeral, the other lasting. First, where power is not the true power of the Spirit, so as to detect and judge Satan's imitation, there he can easily set up the imitation of power, and that even where there is a measure of true faith and owning of God; but subjection, intelligent subjection by the Spirit to the word as of the Spirit, is not found. Where this is connected with the establishment of arranged human authority, this latter may subsist, but the work itself is ephemeral. Such a work as this will probably be connected with some of the most right-feeling, if not right-judging, persons among Christiana, who have the strongest feelings of the decay which occasions it, but there will be generally shipwreck of the faith in some point or other. Yet it will afford exceeding difficulty to those who cannot discern the work of the enemy in the midst of this right feeling. I would instance as examples of this kind of evil work of the

enemy, the Montanists, the Irvingites, and, in some respects, the Quakers, or Friends. As to these last, it is well known that what I now refer to has passed away, and that they remain among men a most quiet and, in many respects, most estimable body of persons. I speak of their early history. What remains is the authority that was settled among them, though with the old Friends very much defect in doctrine.

I have no doubt that this work began in a right feeling about the want of spiritual power. This may be easily seen in Dell's works. But no one who has read the remarkable history of George Fox, Naylor, and many of Penn's writings, or known much of the doctrines of Friends, can doubt the inroad of the enemy. I have added a few words on this, because it was a more mixed and ambiguous case; I would not pass it over, because it is one instructive to the church.

But there is another form of Satan's working.

In this, orthodox truth is in general maintained. Any pretension to the possession of spiritual power is based on church position, not on any particular manifestation of power, and thus seems to honor the institution of the church, and Christ in it. God is alleged to have set there, in that institution, the seat of blessing, and this also is an acknowledged truth, and the unity of the body of Christ is thereon connected with the institution. But the sovereign operation of the Spirit of God is set aside, and that which acts outside the actually formed institution is condemned as denying the authority of God's institution and schismatical sin. Thus the actual possessors of the power of the institution, in its then state, really take the place of God. His power is vested in them as far it acts on earth. Divine condemnation attaches to all who act independently of them. Direct dependence upon God is not allowable. And thus whatever puts individual faith to the test (for going with the crowd under authority does not) is condemned as self-will and presumption.

The system which so judges is alleged to maintain the unity of the church. This may exist in different degrees, and in different circumstances; but it always attaches divine authority, more or less, to official position, and thus puts man in the place of God by attaching His name to man. It is not spiritual energy in man putting souls through Christ in direct relation with God, with the Father. There spiritual affections are happy and blessed. It is man eclipsing God, getting between Him and the soul; not man revealing, nod, but the authority of God attached to man. Hence full love and grace will never be known. The Spirit of adoption and blessed assurance of salvation in the knowledge of Him will never be. It may survive such a system for a time, but it cannot be identified with such a system when matured. To be with God, while always rendering the soul submissive, must render it independent of man; that is, it asserts no rights, but when the need is, it says, “we ought to obey God rather than man.” The first of these works of Satan then is the pretense to the extraordinary operation of the Spirit. That is ephemeral. It is suited to the ill-directed but righteous cravings after that manifestation of spiritual power which was and is the only true source of living blessing on the earth, when that power has faded away. The other is the orderly establishment of men in the place of that power. This lasts. It is suited to unbelief, and in its full development always generates it. Montanism is passed. The spiritual pretensions of Irvingism are in fact passed; the system of men and ordinances set up by it abides. So practically among the Friends. This is common to both, as far as they go, that the manifestation of Christ in living power for the peace of souls, and the truth as to Him is weakened and set aside more or less. Orthodox truths may, as we have seen in one of the cases I have supposed, be maintained; but (as it is the work of the Holy

Ghost alone to present Christ to the soul, so that it should be in the power of that living faith which sets the soul in blessed fellowship with the Father in true joy, leaving the impress of its own everlasting nature upon it, which the Holy Ghost can alone give, and the Holy Ghost alone maintain) the consequence is that such communion with Christ is lost, and the conscience ceases to be before God.

In the former of the cases I have supposed Christian truth is generally lost; that is, saving truths connected with the person of Christ, and error substituted on these points. The Spirit's alleged presence eclipses, instead of revealing, them. In the latter they are plausibly subverted in their effect on the soul rather than set aside; as justification by faith in the Popish system, where, while every orthodox truth is maintained, the love and work of God in Christ is, as to its efficacy, denied by it as a system as effectually as it could be by Socinianism itself. We are enabled in this case to speak of the full and awful maturity of this abiding corruption of the enemy. But those most conversant with history, and most spiritual, know how much spirituality it requires to detect its commencement and early growth; and that it sprang really from the best persons and most apparently godly principles that appear after the record of scripture; so that, though there were counteracting principles which Protestants can justly cite, yet full-grown Popery can quote the earliest fathers to establish in principle her claims, and support her pretensions. The blessed and perfect word of God reveals in one word this history: they began in the Spirit, and ended in the flesh. If you inquire who were the persons that laid the basis of this amazing evil, it will be found that it was those who insisted on good order and unity; yet it was not in the power of the Holy Ghost (God is not the author of confusion, but of order, in the churches), but in arrangements which attached to office the authority necessary to maintain it. There may have been fleshly workings which gave occasion to it; but the remedy was not spiritual acting on the conscience and affections of those astray, for this is what we see in the epistles, but the authoritative arrangement of order, because power was so much gone, and spiritual discernment to know it. Hence the effect produced by the power, the institution itself, the church as an ordered system (not the church as redeemed by Christ), became the object presented, and was made the guard as an institution, instead of being guarded by spiritual care. Hence, when the outward institution became the positive enemy of Christ and of His people, it retained its claims, and used its power as His.

Now, however subtly at first so that none scarce perceived it if any, we now know what a work of Satan this was. It has, so to speak, usurped the world.

I feel satisfied that, as to the principle of it, a similar work has been going on at Plymouth. It will be ever founded on practically setting aside the power of that truth which has been, in any given case, the gathering principle, and the testimony of God to the world.

I do not exactly expect that in itself every one could see through such a work; but, as I have already said, there are sufficient proofs always afforded of God to the single eye; there will not, and cannot be, to others.

I shall add here some of the points which seem to me to mark the presence and influence of the enemy in general.

The first sign of weakness is the gathering itself becoming the object of attention, instead of there being a people enjoying the blessedness of their position by the relationship and fellowship it gave

them with Christ, who had become and was their abiding object, revealing withal God the Father. But I would speak with more detail, for this is rather the occasion of Satan's power than the fruit of it as a positive word. Where this last is, you will find holy spiritual affections broken and set aside to give place to the claim of the institution. And so are even natural affections; whilst the latter are given all their natural force and weight in practice to hold persons in the institution, and even largely used for this purpose. In the same manner people are won and brought under the influence that acts there by them. The activity and zeal will be for the system. It will be to make proselytes, and establish them in what will keep them there, not to save souls or lead them on in Christ. There will generally be a good deal of acting against or depreciation of others who even hold the faith of Christ.

Paramount importance will be attached to the views which distinguish that institution, not to what saves or to what brings faith to the test by the revelation of Christ.

Good works will be found generally much pressed, and that in a systematic way in which it works for and into the system. Truth, I mean truthfulness, will ever be wanting. This I have always found where the work of the enemy is.

Connected with this is the pressing much certain doctrines, when it is safe, which form the bond of the institution, and denying them in the alleged meaning, or explaining them away, when they are pressed on them by those who detect the evil. This any one conversant with the subject cannot but have noticed. The denial of the doctrine positively stated where the influence exists, as held in any such sense or its explanation, is the very thing that marks the power of evil. With this will be found the attributing to those who hold the truth every kind of doctrine they abhor, where there is influence enough to have their statements believed. Popery is the plain example of this.

Another mark, whatever the apparent devotedness, yea, and real devotedness sometimes, is that the spirit of the world is acquiesced in. The poor will be nursed as instruments, and the rich (and so the clever) flattered for, support. Another mark is the extreme difficulty of fixing them to any definite statement, save as they have power to enforce it; and then it is bound on others, and there is the sternest rejection of all who do not bow. Calumny of the saints, and of their doctrines, has been known from the testimony of the blessed Lord Himself onward. The influence of females and of money will be found also largely employed.

In cases of the second character of evil I have noticed, the combinations of a party will always be found.

There is another mark, often incomprehensible to one not under the influence, and that is an incapacity of conscience to discern right and wrong, an incapacity to see evil where even the mere natural conscience would discern and an upright conscience reject it at once. I speak of this incapacity in true saints. The truth is, the soul is not, where under this influence (for it may be upright in other things), at all in the presence of God, and sees everything in the light of the object which governs it; and, as to these things, the influence of the enemy has supplanted and taken the place of conscience. The moral marks will be found to attach to every case of evil power.

Chapter 100

Equalizing the Church With Christ: Part 1

Dear Brother in Christ,—In going among the poor, I have learned something of the nature of the claims put forward by earnest men, who consider themselves to be “Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord,” on behalf of the church. To the poor these claims are rather of a practical character: What the church can do for souls—at birth, throughout life, at death, and even after death. But, exalted as are these claims, they are always, so far as I have observed, made in professed subordination to Christ Himself. They are ever presented as His benefits, though the church dispenses them. Alas! as to results, the church (or rather its ruler) takes the place of Christ in the minds of many, to His dishonor and their ruin.

Still, in terms, His pre-eminence in all things is ever maintained. This leads me to the question which crave permission to put to you, for an answer, if you deem it of sufficient importance, in the “Bible Treasury.”

In a magazine, lent to me by a brother, is the following statement:— “First then, we have arrived at this, that the church is Christ's body, and that there cannot be any distinction between one part of Christ and another. Paul's first lesson is conclusive on this point. The Lord regards his persecution of the church as personal, as done to Himself “Why persecutest thou me?” No room here for the error that there is a difference between an offense done to the church, and one done to the Head, as if they were two parts of a great whole which can exist separately.”

I ask,—Does Acts 9:4 so apply to the church as to warrant the writer's deduction of no distinction and no difference? Other passages, besides Acts 9:4, plainly state, that the Lord graciously counts, and will count, what is done to others as done to Himself, and this, where there is no thought of the church, or of union; as in the case of His servants—of the remnant (in Matt. 25)—and of a little child received in His name. But granting that union is implied in Acts 9:4, does union involve equality?

The words, “There cannot be any distinction between one part of Christ and another,” must convey to most minds that the writer holds, and would have his readers hold, that, because the church and the Head “cannot exist separately,” neither is greater or less than the other. Is this consistent with the glory of Christ? and can saints accustom themselves to such statements and not get “their spiritual senses deadened, their hearts hardened, their consciences torpid, and their judgment perverted “?

If you would briefly review the whole article, it would be helpful, I trust, to many besides O. A.

Chapter 101

Equalizing the Church With Christ: Part 2

It is with reluctance that one notices, even in a single point, the growing error of the monthly in question. Notorious for its old and persistent unfriendliness to gospel work and to those gifted and earnest in it, it is now in danger of perverting the truth of the church into a lever of party and pride. These little essayists have lost the watchful eye and ready hand which used early to nip their buddings of heterodoxy. It is an unfaithful voice.

That the church is Christ's body, one with the Head, none of us denies but believes, at least as firmly as the theorist who reasons on it apart from Scripture. The mystery is a great one; yet is it no mere figure, but a present, precious, and living reality. And as is the privilege, so is the responsibility for practice. “As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.” But thence to deduce, with the help of Acts 9:4, that Christ and the church are on so dead a level that offenses against the one are equivalent to those against the other, is not faith but the prompting of fanaticism. The discerning reader will see that it is a poor speculation, and a real abandonment of scripture as far as this question—a very serious and practical one—goes. They go on, as they began, with not wanting Scripture; they oppose it now.

For the statement objected to is that no ecclesiastical error, however real or gross, could justify the rigor demanded by scripture where the doctrine of Christ is subverted. This is a plain fact throughout the range of scriptural doctrine. There were schismatics in the Corinthian assembly; and they are blamed. (1 Cor. 1 xi.) Heresies, or parties outside, the apostle descries as the sure fruit of schism (1 Cor. 11); and, when a man does go on to this factious extreme, Titus (iii.) is ordered to admonish him once or twice, and then to leave him alone as a self-condemned soul, who prefers his own will to the faith, or to the fellowship of the church. The disorderly idler, though to be withdrawn from, was to be admonished as a brother. (2 Thess. 3) The saints were to turn away from such as create divisions and scandals. (Rom. 16) The wicked person was to be put out from among them. (1 Cor. 5) But he who came and did not bring the doctrine of Christ was not to be received into the home, nor even greeted (2 John). For such deceivers and antichrists the sternest dealing is reserved. Think where those are getting who dare not only to deny this plain distinction of God's word, but to brand a correct statement of it as “the most pernicious leaven of the day!” May their own ignorant railing, virtually of scripture which thus distinguishes, be forgiven! At any rate, manifest is their folly who prefer their Own imaginative deductions to that inspired teaching of which long since they professed their independence for direction in the present crisis.

Entirely accordant with this scriptural distinction has been our procedure hitherto. We have frankly and habitually received known godly men from the various orthodox sects; but we judged all the while that every such sect is “an offense to the body,” to cite the rather peculiar and unintelligent language of the periodical. We did not deal with them as with offenders against Christ, like Irvingites on one side or Arians on the other; and even those who now innovate went apparently in heart with this most just and imperative distinction. We have even been in the habit of receiving in

love the chief instruments of this “offense to the body,” such as godly clergymen and dissenting ministers; yet a man who but trifled with Christ's person would have been indignantly rejected. Nor need we repeat here the leniency of old often shown to ecclesiastical error amongst ourselves.

Either then the critic must (to be consistent with the past) condemn his present teaching as baseless, to say the least; or he must try to extricate himself from his own noose by denying the sects and their officials to be “an offense to the body.” If he will still affirm that an ecclesiastical offense stands on the same platform, and should be so dealt with, as an offense against Christ, we must treat this offender against the truth as unworthy of further notice; and the notion itself as false, evil, and irreverent. Not to bring the doctrine of Christ is heinous in any one professing His name; but it is rare indeed to find those who bring the doctrine of the church, His body, and we should utterly err in treating them alike. Those who can so feel, do they really know what the truth of the church is? if they have it in letter, can they have it in spirit?

Let me counsel sober men in those ranks to weigh the deliberate judgment of the late Mr. Darby in laying down the great principles of revealed truth, which was pre-eminently his gift. “I could not for a moment put a question of blasphemies against Christ on such a ground. It is really wickedness. The attempt to cover them by church questions, or by pleas of conscience, I abhor with a perfect abhorrence.” “But I shall never be brought to such wickedness as to treat acceptance of blasphemers as an ecclesiastical question.” (Eccles. iii. 459, 460.) Now this without disguise they are doing—treating an ecclesiastical question, even were they right in it, as one ought to treat the acceptance of blasphemers. Leveling up or leveling down, it is a grievous wrong, and in fact wickedness, as we quite agree with him.

Errata

Page 54, col. 2, line 90, read “enemy's “; 55, 1, 13, “converted"; 56, 1, 30, “soon,” 41, “assure,” 45, “hear"; 57, 1, 8, “baneful,” 26, “decree,” 31, “who.”

Errata

Page 102, col. 2, line. 20 from bottom; for “If utter,” read

“Heathen.”

17 „ ; for “then,” read

“ than.”

Page 103, 15 from top; for “favor,” read

“ power.”

If 1.1 35 „; for “these,” read

“ those.”

Page 105, „ 2,,, 12 ; for “effort,” read

“ effect.”

AUGUST.

Page 119, col. 1, line 15 from bottom; for “sacrament,” read

“sacraments.”

PP j., 2, „ 22 PP ;,for “Timoth;” read

“ Timothy.”

>1 ,, ,, 16 IS ; for “them,” read

“thou.”

Page 125, „ 1, „ 6 from top; for “we are,” read “were”

Errata

in p. 190, col. 1, after “concerned,” read which &c.

Chapter 103

Thoughts on Exodus 12-13

At the opening of Ex. 12, we find the beginning of the year changed. It is not said why this was to be, but simply, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year unto you.” This was an intimation to the people of Israel, that they were to enter on some fresh connection with God, to take up some new character before Him, or to be recognized in some new relationship: and that this was necessary. “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months.” And this was said to them while they were still in Egypt, the place of death and judgment, the place of nature or of the flesh.

The intimation thus given at the very outset, was very quickly explained. “God is His own interpreter. For the very next moment the congregation are introduced to the Lamb of God, whose blood was to shelter them from the sword of the angel; that is to be their full plea and answer to the throne of judgment where righteousness sits.

This is simple and clear and blessed. Israel are at once taught this—that the new character in which they were now to walk with God was that of a blood-bought people, a redeemed ransomed generation. This was the form which the new life, the new year, on which they were now entering, was to take. This was their new creation, their second birth. They were new creatures, being sinners reconciled.

This truth takes a New Testament form in 2 Cor. 5:16-19. The new creature is the believer who walks with God in the faith and sense of reconciliation. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.” This is man beginning the new year, entering on a new life, being a new creature, as a sinner reconciled by the paschal blood of Jesus. So in 1 Peter 1:25. He is declared to have been born again by the word which the gospel has preached to him; and that gospel is the message of redemption through the blood of the Lamb. By this he becomes a kind of firstfruits of God's creatures. (James 1)

The early intimation of new creaturehood, which we had here in this twelfth of Exodus, is thus soon interpreted; and the interpretation is confirmed by one and another scripture in the New Testament. But there, is much more than this in analogies between these chapters and New Testament Scripture.

At the close of chapter 12 we find Israel, now redeemed themselves, acting upon others. They are taught how to deal with “strangers.” They were to tell them, that they were as welcome to come into the regions of the new creation as they had been—that they might eat of the Passover with them, or celebrate redemption with them; only they were to be circumcised as they had been. They must renounce themselves in the flesh, or in the old-creation condition, and then they may enter on the new year with them, the new life, the new-creation of God in Christ Jesus. There must be no confidence in the flesh, but a rejoicing in Christ Jesus—this is the true circumcision. (Phil. 3:3.)

The Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament is the leading formal witness and depository of this evangelic ministry of the redeemed. There the saints are seen addressing themselves to “strangers,” and doing so in the simple style of this Scripture—12:43-49. So that we are still breathing the atmosphere of the New Testament when we read these verses. We are in company with the Spirit which afterward animates the Book of the Acts. In the reconciliation of the paschal blood, the blood of the Lamb of God, we tell all around us, that the kingdom is theirs on their being born again, on their faith in the One who died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification. “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us,” we still say to “strangers,” “be ye reconciled to God.” (See the chapter already quoted, 2 Cor. 5:20, 21.)

How sweet, how convincing, how precious it is, thus to find ourselves in the mind and with the principles of the New Testament, as we read these very early oracles of the Old! But there is more than this.

The saint is to take heed to himself, as well as to address himself to “strangers.” And to take heed to himself, order his ways, and nourish his soul, in the peculiarities of the calling of God, and after the mind of the Spirit. This we next find in chapter 13; and this we also find, formally and characteristically, in the Epistles of the New Testament.

In chapter 13 we see the Israelite of God, now redeemed by blood, and thus set in God's presence and fellowship, carrying himself according to this his place and calling. He finds his springs in God, his motives and sanctions, and secret effectual virtues in that which God has done for him He purifies himself—keeping the feast of unleavened bread; he devotes and dedicates himself—rendering up his first-born and his firstling to the Lord; and if he be inquired of, why all this cleansing of himself, why all this devotedness, he simply pleads what the Lord had done for him when he was in Egypt, a bondsman there in the place of death and judgment. This is all he has to say, though he be challenged again and again. His springs of moral life are known to rise in the salvation of God.

This is truly blessed. This says to the living God, “All my springs are in thee.” And this is the language of the new creature in Christ Jesus, as we see him in the Epistles of the New Testament. So that in this thirteenth chapter, we are still as I have said, in the New Testament atmosphere. For there it is the mercies we have received, promises which have been made to us, the grace which has brought salvation, the fact that we are bought with a price, the great gospel message that we are washed from our sins, a sprinkled redeemed sanctified people, which are recognized as the springs of all moral behavior and personal devotedness—of course to have their efficacy in us by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. (See Rom. 12; 2 Cor. 7: Titus 2 Cor. 6; Rom. 6)

And another remembrance of the temper which we find in the New Testament is in verses 3, 4, of this same chapter. There, Israel is told to “remember” the day of their deliverance. This is surely, as I say, in the temper or spirit of the New Testament. So much so indeed, that the standing ordinance, in the midst of the saints in this evangelic age, is a feast of remembrance. (1 Cor. 11:23-26.) And other scriptures of the same New Testament teach us, that this remembering is to be the very business of eternity, or of the life of the redeemed in glory. (Rev. 1:5; 5:9.)

Chapter 104

Faith or Despair?

In all the great crises that have overtaken and convulsed the people and the church of God there has always been a remnant which, though in weakness, have witnessed for the truth; and whose faith has, by God's grace, proved equal to the occasion. God has always had His faithful ones though unknown and unseen by men; and indeed those convulsions have ever been a wholesome, though painful and sorrowful, means of manifesting the faith of such as desire to be true to Him. Hence, however evil the origin of these troubles, and however disastrous their effects, they are, after all, not an unmixed evil, as they serve to bring out that which is really true, and that which is merely pretentious. Not that we should not deplore contentions and divisions among God's own people, as every right-minded Christian surely does; but when evil, whether in principles or in practice has slipped in and is allowed insidiously to work without being judged, it is a great mercy on the part of God to permit the whole thing to be broken up in order that His truth and honor might be vindicated and maintained. “For there must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor. 11:19).

But there is another element which such times of trouble produce, or rather make manifest, and which often has a very disastrous effect upon the testimony itself; and that is—the element of despair. It is this element of despair, which often appears at times of great crisis and trial, amongst a portion of those who desire to be faithful, but who have not the courage to “trust in God and do the right,” that acts as a dead weight upon the testimony and hinders the due progress of the principles of God. When the Israelites came up out of Egypt and got into the wilderness, it was the mixed multitude, who had gone up with them, that fell a lusting and brought trouble and vexation into the camp.

And so it ever is. History does but repeat itself, whether in the church or in the world. There is always a number of people who are ready enough to follow those who lead the van, and who really do desire, in measure, to be in the right path, as long as things go smoothly. But when things go no longer smoothly, when times of trial and testing come and difficulties appear, at once we hear the cry of despair:— “Oh! we shall never accomplish our object; it is only a fool's errand after all: let us go back. What is the use of our going on when our cause is hopeless? “

Just so! they have never got a clear idea that it is not “our cause” but God's; and as long as we are occupied with the progress of “our cause,” there will be sure to be distraction and bewilderment in the presence of real trial.

The fact is these dear people never duly counted the cost before setting out, nor have they ever had it settled in their minds that every true work for God is wrought by God, and that we are merely His instruments. We being but the channels, not the Source, as surely as we get occupied and absorbed with our testimony, our work, our progress, &c., instead of with Christ, God will blow upon it that we may find our true level and Christ alone be exalted.

Now no one can grieve and mourn too much or too deeply over the sorrowful spectacle presented by the divisions of the church of God to-day; nay, we believe, and insist upon it, that it is the only right condition of soul for any and every true child of God who knows and loves His truth; yet, for all that, mourning over a failure is a very different thing from despairing on account of it. Trial, whether to the individual, or to the church, is surely permitted by God for His own wise and gracious purposes; but whatever those purposes may be, they are certainly not that those who profess His name should lose confidence in Him, and give up everything in despair.

And yet how often this happens when those trials actually come! How many there are who, when convulsions and testing times come, look upon them with feelings of disappointment and bewilderment! They are happy enough and earnest enough, while the testimony prospers and the stream runs without a ripple; but when reverse comas, when the testimony is checked, when those who take the lead in bearing it are taken away or prove unfaithful, how many alas! begin to lose heart and take up and echo the cry of despair:— “Oh, the testimony is ruined; corporate testimony is a failure; unity is broken up!”

I have no doubt that such men as Nehemiah and Daniel had to encounter a good deal of this kind of thing. Doubtless there were many in their day who said with a wail of despair:— “Oh! the children of Judah are scattered; the nation is broken up; the testimony of Jehovah and the unity of the Godhead are ruined! What are we to do? What good can be done in Babylon by being so tenacious of a ruined cause? Let us make a few harmless concessions and fraternize with the people around us and do the best we can, under the circumstances, in our individual capacity! “But the men of faith—the Moseses, the Gideons, the Nehemiahs, the Daniels,—did not talk in that fashion though there were but two or three, or even one, they were determined to be faithful even if they perished in the attempt. True, they might be mocked and laughed at; they might have to suffer and be pat into a fiery furnace; but what of that? That was not their business; at any rate so they thought. They acted for God and left the consequences to Him. It is also true that there have been men like Jeremiah whose scalding tears were eloquent, though mute, witnesses of the sorrow and contrition of heart which they felt for the sin of their people; and though they wept as perhaps no others have wept before or since, they had faith in. God and did not despair. Ezekiel saw a valley full of dead men's bones, but when God told him that they should live, he believed God. Had he fretted and complained and despaired he would never have been the true and faithful and honored man of God that he was. Did he not feel the apostasy and corruption of God's beloved people? Ay that he did, and deeply too; but that only cast him more upon God's faithfulness. Look again at Nehemiah and Daniel who so completely identified their souls with the sins of their people and took the entire onus upon themselves, confessing all to God with sorrow and with shame. But they were not overwhelmed, they did not get paralyzed. They confessed that confusion of face belonged to them and to their people, but they did not sink down into confusion and despair! No they were men of faith, and faith never despairs because it looks at God. When every one else had failed, they knew that God had not failed—could not fail; and so they rose from their knees refreshed, strengthened and mighty through God to accomplish whatever He willed they should.

Beloved reader! do we not need to take courage today from such lessons as these? Do we not hear the cry of despair? “The testimony is all broken up, corporate testimony is ruined and everything is in confusion, we must walk now as individuals and not trouble ourselves about

ecclesiastical questions!” But we would ask:—Is the truth of God ruined? Is the church of God a failure? have the gates of hell prevailed against it? “Unity is a failure,” they say; whose unity? man's or God's? That men have failed to keep God's unity we sorrowfully confess; but to say that the unity of the body of Christ which is made by the Holy Spirit—the unity of the Spirit—to say that this is a failure is sheer unbelief, and a direct denial of the truth of Gods Notwithstanding all the confusion and sectarianism that man's unbelief and unfaithfulness have brought in, the truth still remains that “There is one body"; and our responsibility to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” is not one whit less now than ever it was. The failures of men do not relieve us of our responsibilities to maintain the truth of God. It is not that God would have us raise a party cry, nor organize a human confederacy, nor invent a unity of any kind, but keep that unity which is already made by the Holy Spirit—the unity of the Spirit—the unity of Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female, in one body—the body of Christ—the habitation of God by the Spirit. Are we keeping that unity? It is not “endeavoring” to keep, as though it were doubtful whether we shall succeed, but “giving diligence to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Beloved reader, again we ask you:—Are you doing anything which practically denies that unity which is so precious to God and to Christ? Are you helping on in any way that cry of despair and unbelief, “The testimony is ruined, corporate testimony is a failure?” Nay, rather let us “have faith in God.” He has not failed: not one jot or tittle of His truth shall fall to the ground. Let us see to it then that we are obeying the word of Him whom we call “our Lord and Master” by “giving diligence to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” For “There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God. and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” H. C. C.

Chapter 105

Flattery and Slaves of Slaves

He that accepts flattery becomes in the same measure the slave of the slave that offers it.

Chapter 106

Forgiveness and Liberty: Part 1

I would, for a few moments, draw the attention of brethren in Christ to a point, as to which I think there has been a good deal of misapprehension in practice, and which, while the joy of known forgiveness seemed to make all plain for a time, has left souls subsequently in distress and difficulty, even when not doubting of their acceptance, though it has sometimes come to that. Forgiveness is not deliverance; yet they have been a good deal confounded. It is a very common experience, when a person has found peace through the blood of Christ, that the pardoned and justified soul, (filled with joy and gladness to find its sins gone, the conscience purged, the sense of divine goodness filling it,) thinks that it has done with sin because it is at the time full of joy, and the Lord's goodness and favor; but this is not deliverance.

It is deliverance from the burden of sin upon the conscience, but ere long the soul is surprised to find sin still there; yet this deliverance from the sense of guilt, received forgiveness, has very often been taken for the setting free the soul, as in a new position before God. This it is not. It is freedom, compared with the bondage of uncertainty of acceptance in which souls are attempted to be kept; but the question of sin in the flesh is yet unsolved. I do not speak of perfection, so-called, which has missed all sound discernment as to the state and hope of the Christian, and invariably lowers the Christian standard of holiness and the judgment of sin, tending to harden the conscience, and to lower the state of soul before God. There is no perfection, no goal, for the Christian, but being like Christ glorified Himself! But pardon, in its fullest sense, is rarely known by the soul that is happy in the way that I have just spoken of, which only knows the deliverance of the conscience from the burden of sin actually lying on it, and thinks of none else; but even in its fullest conception the not imputing sin, forgiveness, applies to the sins of which the flesh, the old man, is the source, clearing the conscience, but the fruit of Adam life is all that is contemplated by it. It deals with what man has done as a fallen child of Adam. It leads to the knowledge of divine favor, and, I may add, the hope of glory as revealed in Christ. But, while thus knowing God in His ways of grace, and so far completing my sense of grace, self-knowledge, and the consciousness of a new position in Christ before God, are not yet acquired. That we have sinned and are guilty and deserve condemnation, is in such a case—fully acknowledged. What we are in the flesh, and what we are in Christ, is not yet experimentally known. Hence the soul does not stand in its new position before God, is not delivered, is not freed from confounding the old man and my place before God, nor from the power of sin.

Deliverance has a double character: perfect freedom with God in love in my place before Him; and freedom from the power of sin in myself. We are in Christ for the former; Christ is us for the latter. We are no longer in the position of the first Adam, though outwardly in the world, and the flesh unchanged, we say, “When we were in the flesh.” Then the motions of sins which were by the law wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. This new position, and the consciousness of it, flows from the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, while He refers us to Christ's work as the ground of it. I do not now say simply, He bore my sins, and cleared me forever from them, but I am in Christ before God, accepted in the Beloved, not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. I am not in the condition of a child

of Adam, responsible before God, and thinking of my condition in His sight in connection with my conscious state; I have died to that as wholly and hopelessly evil, and know by the Holy Ghost that I am in a new standing altogether, in Christ, accepted in the Beloved. I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Christ has died to sin, and I have died in Him, and He is my life; I am alive to God in this new life in Christ before Him, and reckon myself so by the Holy Ghost. My place is in the Second Adam, not in the first. Not only my sins are forgiven me, but I have died out of the place and nature in which I was guilty by its deeds before God, and the Second Adam is become my life! I am alive in Him to God. Of this the Holy Ghost gives me the consciousness. There is no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus. You must condemn Christ glorified, before you can condemn me.

Let us see how this is. I may have learned forgiveness clearly, or I may not. But if I trust in the work of Christ—for it is a present, effectual, and finished work—I am sealed with the Holy Ghost. After having believed the gospel of my salvation, I am sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Here is a new position altogether: “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” I have the place of son by faith in Christ Jesus, who is risen; and because I am one, God has given me the Spirit of His Son in my heart, crying, Abba, Father. I know my relationship, and live in it, not in Adam's. But, further (John 14) “I know that I am in Christ, and Christ in me;” I have changed my place with God altogether, and am in a new one—Christ's who has died and is risen again. I reckon myself dead to sin, the old man has been crucified with Christ, that I should not serve it. And I am free: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” not elsewhere. I am not in the flesh but in the Spirit—not, if I am converted, but—if the Spirit of God dwells in me. I know I am in Christ, and Christ is past sin, the judgment of it, death, Satan's power. That is my standing and place before God. Death is gain, if it comes; for the body is not, as to power, redeemed—we wait for it. But I reckon myself dead to sin, my old man crucified with Christ. I am before God in Him who is glorified—in Christ. This is the doctrine presented by the apostle.

We have owned in our very profession of Christ that we were away from God in the flesh, but have taken our part in Christ's death as a Savior, in order to be with God; and as He died to sin once, so we thus reckon ourselves dead to sin, and alive to God, in Him who is our life, in the power of the Spirit. The result is in Rom. 8, where we enjoy the life in liberty according to the power in which He lives, and as dead to the sin which was condemned in His death on the cross. We are in Him now. The manner of it is that the sin which held me captive and distressed me, as a renewed person, was condemned in Him on the cross (ver. 3), so that there is no condemnation by reason of it for me. But this was in His death, and it is as though I had been there, as He was there made sin for me; and thus the condemnation is past and finished But then, as to the flesh—sin in the flesh, I died; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Thus for faith I am delivered from sin in the flesh, as having died in Christ, in that Christ has, who is my life. It is not resurrection with Him—that carries us farther—but death in Him on the cross as to the old man and state, and He now at the right hand of God, my life. Such is the doctrine and effect: Christ, who died, my life, and I in Him, in the power of the Holy Ghost, and through that dead to sin altogether, He having thus died, and the sin in my flesh condemned there, but for faith I dead to it for I died in Him! The condemnation He took, but it was in death, so that I reckon myself dead to sin in His death, and He is now my life, Christ in me, the only thing I own, and that by the Holy Ghost, as consciousness and power.

I am no longer in the flesh. My Adam place is no longer my place and standing before God. The flesh is there, but I am not in it but in Christ; or not in the flesh but in the Spirit, because the Spirit of God dwells in me. My place is thus summed up in Rom. 8: “There is therefore now no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus: for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and of death: for, what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” The sin in my flesh has been condemned, fully dealt with, in the cross. And afterward, “But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you;” and “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;” and “if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, and the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

Chapter 107

Forgiveness and Liberty: Part 2

But when I speak of Christ my life and Christ being in me, the body dead because of sin, (its only fruit if alive in its own life,) I do not speak of a work done wholly outside me, finished, and accepted of God, so that sin can be more imputed; but of one which, though really and effectually done for me on one side, (or it would be legal efforts, and the spirit of bondage again to fear, as it is in so many,) is at the same time realized in me, so as to be experimental. “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin.” I reckon myself dead. In a word, experience comes in. Hence, while chapters vi. and viii. give me the ground of faith in what Christ has done, teaching me to reckon myself dead, and alive to God in Christ, because Christ has died, and has been raised from the dead, between this, so far as developed in chapter vi., and the enjoyed effect in chapter viii., we find introduced [in chap. vii.] the painful experience of that from which we have to be delivered.

The delivering work was done on the cross, so that our state, by faith in Christ, is, dead to sin and morally, (as to the life this side the cross, in which He, sinless, had to be made sin,) wholly closed, and alive now wholly beyond it all, with nothing but God to live to; and this, not by our efforts, but by faith through grace; yet, as conviction of guilt goes before known forgiveness, so the experimental knowledge of self before deliverance. No effort clears the guilt; no effort effects the deliverance; but there is the knowledge of self, and that we cannot get free by improvement or victory, as there is the knowledge of the guilt which is pardoned; only here it is self-knowledge and present experience.

Of this the law is ever the instrument; we have learned forgiveness already, the form is modified, takes the shape of hoping we have not deceived ourselves, and the like; but it is always a comparison of our state, and what God requires, (and that is law)—very useful for the discovery of our state, but bondage. I repeat, as itis important, wherever we reason from our state to what God's acceptance of us may be, that is in principle law, just as the prodigal son between his conversion and meeting his father. It calls itself holiness, will insist that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, which is necessarily and eternally true, but mixes it with God's acceptance of us, connecting this and our state, so that it is really righteousness, not holiness, that the mind is occupied with; for in holiness we hate evil because it is unholy, not because we are out of divine favor by it; but, whatever shape it takes, it is always really law, a question of evil that makes us unacceptable to God.

Now the doctrine is that we have died in Christ. The law supposes living responsible men, as of course as children of Adam we are. The law has power over a man as long as he lives; if dead, it cannot deal with him as a present responsible person. I cannot accuse a dead man, as a present thing, of evil lusts and self-will. The apostle puts the case of the marriage relationship: death dissolves it, and leaves the person free. We have died under law, but so are dead to law, and now are married to another, a risen Christ, who is as man put in a wholly new place after the question of sin is settled; and then is given the experience of the soul under the first husband, the law, not now as to guilt but as to the power of sin dwelling in us. Here I learn that in me (it is not what I have

done) dwells no good thing, the flesh is simply and always bad. Secondly; it is not myself, being born of God, for I hate it; it is not therefore I. This is often a great relief, though it be not deliverance. But, thirdly, though it be not I, it is too strong for me—I am captive to it. All my efforts only prove this to me. As effort and conflict, I give it up as hopeless, and look for Another to come in and deliver me. I have learned that I have no strength (not that I am guilty), and that is what I had to learn, the lesson God was teaching me; and when brought there, I find it is all done. I am not in the flesh at all: the condemnation of the flesh which tormented me was accomplished on the cross; and I am in Him who is risen and is on high after all was done; and, founded on this, I have life, and power, and liberty by the Holy Ghost, by which I am in Him who is risen and I know it. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death, and the sin in my flesh has been condemned in the cross, on which I died with Christ. I am not in the flesh (that, be it what it may, is not my standing before God) but in the Spirit, accepted in and as Christ is. We have boldness for the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world.

The effects of this are of all importance in many ways. First the soul is happy, and has the Spirit of adoption, liberty in love before God. Secondly, the staff and strength of self is broken. There may be the truest purpose of heart, and yet unsuspected and unbroken self, as when Moses killed the Egyptian. And an experienced Christian will soon see the difference. Many do mischief in the church through this. With self we have ever to contend, ever to judge it; but self-confidence is another thing: there is not then the waiting upon God which characterizes the exercised soul which knows itself. Only I would add, we may find self-judgment, when not delivered, and only on the way to it, but then confidence in God will be wanting.

Further, the whole character of worship is affected where mete forgiveness is known. The ground of it is only deliverance from guilt and ruin—true, but a witness that our conversation is not in heaven, what we were as guilty sinners, rests still on the spirit. Now I believe that the wonders of the grace that redeemed us, and of the value of Christ's precious blood, will be more felt in heaven than here; but we shall enjoy what is actually there, without thinking habitually of where we were. But our conversation is in heaven now, our living relationships for the new man; we belong to it—are in Christ; our affections are to be set upon things above, developed in connection with what is there: the Holy Ghost gives us to know the things freely given to us of God.

And this will affect every part of the Christian's inward life, and his more outward life and service. Hundreds will be found who have found peace in forgiveness, but not deliverance as taught in the word. I add, as it is sometimes a difficulty, that the two parts of Romans must be read not as in necessary sequence as to their contents. The first, chapters i.-v. 11, treats of personal guilt, and grace that meets it; the second, chapters v. 12-viii. 39, of our state through Adam's sin, and the remedy for that.

I would add, as a further help, that if there is heart-indifference, or even sloth, it is not surprising that we do not find deliverance, or if there is a walk contrary to the mind of the Spirit, or what a Christian should seek, deliverance by the power of the Spirit is hardly to be looked for. But, further, if a person who has found deliverance is so walking, though the soul may not get back into uncertainty as to its standing, or return into a seventh-of-Romans state, yet the Spirit, which is the power of that state, being ever grieved, and so communion with the Father and the Son lost, though not the knowledge of the relationship, the affections not being filled with what belongs to

this new position,—all is confusion and obscurity in the soul. One is a child, but where is my father? I belong to heaven, but where for me is the heaven I belong to? What I know of both serves but to make sensible to me my actual loss of them. Hence, though it is not subjectively a question whether I am a son, it is objectively the failure of what a son enjoys, so that darkness is on the spirit; I hardly know whether I can call myself so, though I do not doubt it. For this the only remedy is humiliation, and drawing near to the Lord, and giving up the hindering idol.

In dealing with the souls of others the first point is to discern whether the soul is really delivered, or if it be negligence when it has understood its position in Christ before God. This is a matter of spiritual discernment. Where there is a legal and self-judging temperament, it is not always so easy. And we must remember that there are many true souls who do cry, Abba, Father, with God, but through bad teaching are afraid to take their place in acceptance; these we must seek to make clear by the word.

Chapter 108

Fragment: God's Love in Trials

“ I beg you, dear—, allow not one thought that would question the fullness of the love of God to you to enter your heart. These trials come, and they find out the human sorrow; and with this, be sure of it, God can and does deeply sympathize. They find out the human will, and this God must break down.”

Chapter 109

Fragment: “That Christ Might Fill All Things”

“ That Christ might fill all things.” Faith cannot look out on a place which Divine love and righteousness have not filled. He has come down in love, and gone up in righteousness. “Perfecting of the saints” refers to them individually, as “edifying of the body” collectively.

Chapter 110

Fragment: the Holy Spirit

How sweet to know that the Holy Spirit who gives and directs the joy of our hearts in Christ, making us bid the Bridegroom “Come” (Rev. 22:17) takes equal part in our present griefs and travail of spirit! If we do not know what to ask for, we do know that all things work together for good, as the apostle proves triumphantly to the end of Rom. 8. Meanwhile the Holy Spirit identifies Himself in grace with our weakness and suffering, so as to give it a divine voice to God, who answers accordingly.

Chapter 111

Fragments: Joel 2:28-29

Joel 2:28, 29, is a short independent prophecy, and so are the verses from 30 to the end of the chapter. Verses 28, 29, promise the outpouring of the Holy Spirit consequent on the repentance of the nation, which also accompanied its temporal blessings. The repentance is the point of departure for both. So the partial fulfillment of Acts 2 was on those who repented, though the temporal blessings could not come on the nation. Thus, though there was that which was analogous in the destruction of Jerusalem already accomplished, signs and wonders will come before the great and notable day yet to come. The blood of the new covenant was shed, and all things ready; but the nation would not repent, and could not get the blessing. The remnant get the spiritual part of it with “all flesh;” the Jews will all when they say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” The order in the last day will be repentance, deliverance by the day of Jehovah, temporal blessings, the Holy Ghost, before the day of Jehovah signs taking place. This last stands, therefore, necessarily apart, as the calling on the name of Jehovah of course precedes the deliverance.

Chapter 112

Fragments: Prophecy

Prophecy is sorrowful because it unveils the sin, the ungrateful folly, of God's people. But it unveils the heart of One who is unwearied in love, who loves the people, who seeks their good, although He feels their sin according to His love. It is the heart of God that speaks. These two characters of prophecy throw light on the twofold end it has in view, and help us to understand its bearing. First of all, it addresses itself to the actual state of the people, and shows them their sin; it always, therefore, supposes the people to be in a fallen condition. When they peacefully enjoy the blessings of God, there is no need of displaying their condition to them. But in the second place, during the period in which the people are still acknowledged, it speaks of present restoration on repentance, to encourage them to return to Jehovah; and it proclaims deliverance. But God well knew the hearts of His people, and that they would not yield to His call. To sustain the faith of the remnant, faithful amidst this unbelief, and for the instruction of His people at all times, He adds promises which will assuredly be fulfilled by the coming of Messiah. These promises are sometimes connected with the circumstances of a near and partial deliverance, sometimes with the consummation of the people's iniquity in the rejection of Christ come in humiliation.

Chapter 113

Genesis 1:20 and 2:19

Q. Gen. 1:20; 2:19. Can the translation be correct? The first text seems to teach that the fowl as well as fish sprang from the waters by God's fiat; the second distinctly states that out of the ground were formed the fowl as well every beast of the field.-X. Y. Z.

A. The margin corrects, or rather in giving the true construction leaves no room for, the error. Nothing really is said or intended about the waters bringing forth fowl: the latter are spoken of in a distinct clause. Benisch and Leeser are just as faulty as the Authorized Version, or more so, as they perpetuate the error in the face of its marginal emendation; De Sola, Lindenthal, and Raphall break off from the error, due probably to the Targum of Onkelos, the Talmud, R. Eleazar Hagadol, Rashi, and other Rabbis, who maintain hence the common origin of fish and birds from the waters. Many follow these from Bishop Patrick down to Professor Gaussen; and no wonder as the Septuagint and the Vulgate and the Arabic are wrong, though the Hebraeo-Samaritan and the Syriac are right. The true rendering is, “Let the waters bring forth abundantly, &c., and let fowl fly, &c.” There is no discrepancy in this case to be reconciled.

Chapter 114

God's Dealings With Jacob: Genesis 32

Jacob showed that he was not profane like Esau. He made much of the divine promise and blessing; but, not resting on God for its accomplishment, he employed fleshly means to deceive Isaac.

God, when He takes the title of Father, does not lose His quality of righteousness. As God He acts righteously with regard to him in whom the flesh acts, not to condemn nor to cease loving. He cannot stop short of blessing, but He acts righteously, because He chastises every child that He owns. Because of this, we often bear the consequences of the action of the flesh.

Thus Jacob was obliged to quit his country and his family, to withdraw himself from the hatred of Esau. At his return the angels of God come before him; and when Jacob saw them, he called the place Mahanaim, that is, two hosts, or the hosts of God. Then he learns that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men, and he is afraid and greatly distressed. (Vers. 1-6.) Providences and visions do not take away terror, nor give confidence in God.

Jacob had not feared if he could have said with Elisha, “They that be with me are more than they that be with them.” What about Esau and his four hundred men? The flesh had still the upper hand in him, even when God had just furnished a support to his faith by sending His angels to him. Jacob arranges his plans, though not without prayer (vers. 7-12), and sends his presents (vers. 13-23) to appease his brother whom God had already appeased, since he was come in feelings of family love to meet Jacob. In his appeal to God he recalls His promises, for he had faith however feeble.

Whet Jacob was left alone (ver. 24), there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day; not Jacob with God, but God with Jacob. God wrestles with us: the flesh must be mortified. God can have no communion with the flesh. We have combats outward and inward in which we are conquerors by the faith that God gives us. (Hos. 12:4, 5.)

Every time that our heart truly rests on God, there is not wrestling, but victory. God, in undertaking to wrestle with us, strengthens us, without our being affrighted, to hold Him fast and not to let Him go. He would have us occupy ourselves with nothing less than Himself to bless us. (Vers. 25, 26.) Jacob is made to feel his weakness, he limps all his life. How many there are that remain thus halting all their days, preserving thus as it were a memorial that the flesh ought to have been humbled, even if there be also a memorial of the path of victory! For as a prince he is given to know that he has power with God and with men, and had prevailed. His name was to be no more Jacob, the supplanter, but Israel, a prince of God. But God did not reveal His name to Jacob, though he asked after it. (Ver. 27-29.) He was not allowed yet that communion in the revelation of El Shaddai that he afterward enjoyed. (Chap. 35) There was faith, but not fellowship; the blessing of God, but His name withheld. “Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name?”

What a difference between this scene in the checkered experience of Jacob, and the visit He paid to Abraham His friend in his peaceful tent of Mamre! (Gen. 18) No wrestling of God there, but

Abraham pleaded; and if he pleaded with God, it was not for himself but for Sodom, or at least for the righteous in Sodom, and really too for the glory of God concerned in the judgment that was coming which he knew beforehand. “That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of air the earth do right?” “And the Lord went his way as soon as he had left communing with Abraham.” How beautifully simple! When He had done, He went His way.

Yet notwithstanding the great superiority of Abraham, notwithstanding all the miseries Jacob's unbelief brought on himself, we may remark, what has often had a notice and is worthy of it, that the weakest child of God is consciously greater than the greatest man of the world. When in presence of Pharaoh Jacob says, “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been;” yet did he bless Pharaoh; and, as the apostle says, Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. Be then encouraged ever to look to God, that you may find in Christ strength over the flesh in your nothingness. Never set flesh against flesh; but, distrusting self, confide simply and absolutely in Him.

Chapter 115

The Home of God's Truth

The soul is the dwelling place of God. The ear and the mind are but the gate and the avenue; the soul is its home or dwelling-place.

The beauty of the joy of the truth may have unduly occupied the outposts, filled the avenues, and crowded the gates; but it is only in the soul that its reality can be known. And it is by meditation that the truth takes its journey from the gate along the avenue to its proper dwelling-place. J. G. B.

Chapter 116

How God Delivers Sinners

The passing over of Jehovah, when He smote the firstborn of the Egyptians and delivered His people from the slavery of Pharaoh, is an image of our deliverance; for we were slaves of Satan, the prince of this world, and have now in Christ redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Such is what the condition of the sons of Israel in Egypt represented, when God intervened at the passover.

In one sense Satan has right over us as sinners; and God as righteous is against us, for God had said to man, In the day that thou eatest thereof [that is, of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] thou shalt surely die. Thus Satan can accuse men. But more: Satan says on the contrary, Ye shall not surely die. Your case is not so entirely ruined as Christians say. Satan is always the same liar. God, who is true and just, cannot say to the sinner as such, Thou shalt not die. But to deliver us it is necessary that He should maintain truth and righteousness, and take full account of sin. So too it is necessary that we should own our sins and bow to His judgment of all in the cross.

Pharaoh had power enough to keep the Israelites, because they were accustomed to slavery and to a hard slavery. Pharaoh had no true rights any more than Satan, who meanwhile deceives men. Such is the state of this world, that the higher one's position is in the world, the more is one its slave. A poor man can do many things in the street without being on his guard. The rich dare not wound social habits or usages. Our will contributes also to our slavery. If he told us that we are directed, controlled, fast bound by Satan, we should not agree to it. In fact he employs the things of the world to ensnare us into sin. Judas was drawn into his worst sin because he loved money. Satan entered into him to harden his conscience and to strengthen him to go on. in sin, taking away from him at last all hope of God's mercy. Thus there is first lust; then Satan furnishes the occasion and the means of satisfying it; then he enters the man. Again, he prompts to throw the blame of the sin on others; just as Adam said, The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat, making an excuse from his heart for the evil his hand had done.

In Egypt Israel becomes the object of controversy between God and Pharaoh who represents Satan. You have no right, says the enemy, to claim them: they are sinners. This is too true. For, “All have sinned.” Man then must own in the most complete and absolute manner the justice of God which condemns him. If one is convinced of being lost, impossible not to seek salvation—perhaps blindly; but one seeks it every time that conscience is aroused. Without this men say that God is good, that is, that God should take no account of sin. But ought God to turn heaven into what the world is? And is not this what would be if sin were to enter there? Could man give a measure to indicate to what length one might go, and how much one might safely sin? But our consciences also accuse us and tell us that we cannot get rid of sin. Now sin, when it is finished or full grown, brings forth death.

God has already been dishonored by sin; and in this world God is still from day to day thus dishonored. Here on earth is there a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men, of that which dishonors God. It is here they see Satan degrading the whole creation.

Jehovah said, Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. But He secured His people from judgment by the blood of the Lamb. For us Christ is the paschal lamb sacrificed for our sins. “And when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Our faith rests on God's estimate of His precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. There is our passover. If the blood is on the door-post, can I see it? This is not the point. In faith I put it there; but God sees it. My affair is to keep within the shelter of the blood in whose virtue I believe.

Once the Red Sea was crossed, there was no more pursuit of Israel. They were set free. This was deliverance for the people—not blood only but resurrection by power according to the purposes of God's love, that His people might now sing for joy. The blood met God's eye as Judge; the Red Sea crossed was the death and resurrection of Jesus which annulled Satan's power and delivered those who had been in thralldom. “Thus Jehovah saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.”

Christ is presented to us under three aspects:

1. The blood of the lamb sprinkled on the doorposts staid the judgment of God by the destroyer. In His grace toward sinners God provided the Lamb; but His blood was shed for sins as a propitiation which met His holy nature and His righteous character who could not pass over sin with the least allowance. Faith looks to God's value for Christ's blood on our behalf He was glorified in all His moral being even as to sin in the cross of the Son of man. (John 13)

2. But there must be the eating of the lamb. “They shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover.” There is no question here of having an appetite for the lamb's flesh. Doubtless he who has an appetite enjoys more, and so much the worse for him who has little appetite. But this is not a condition for eating the lamb. The unleavened bread is the essential accompaniment, His person sinless and holy; and His life is ours as we are called thenceforward to walk as He walked. The Israelites were also to eat of the lamb “with bitter herbs,” as we cannot believe in Christ without repentance toward God. When the Spirit recalls to us what we are, there cannot but be bitter self-judgment as we feed on Christ. And while we are in the world, we cannot let our habits flow freely. The loins were to be girded, shoes on the feet, staff in the hand. Pharaoh would pursue. Israel was still in Egypt. It was rest neither for God nor for His people as yet. They were to be pilgrims and strangers, but no longer slaves for Pharaoh.

3. The Red Sea crossed, Christ is risen in figure before God. Sweet thought! The deliverance is complete in the eyes of God. We have Christ risen and before Him. The deepest expression of God's judgment of sin is in the cross of Christ; and now He is risen. The thunderbolt has fallen. For the unbeliever the divine judgment on sin is exhausted. Heaven is pure and calm; and we, having Christ as our life and united to Him by the Holy Spirit, are of heaven, not of the world.

Whenever God called a people, it was to be the “habitation of God.” It was not so in Paradise. God came to have intercourse with Adam, but not to dwell in Adam; for this he must have had the

knowledge of good and evil. Thus in Ex. 29, when Israel were brought out of Egypt, they were to be the habitation of God. In Eph. 2 we have our place in Christ before God, and God has His place in us before men.

Chapter 117

History of Idolatry: Part 1

Man is religious by nature, and the only creature of all that lives upon the earth that was originally created with sentiments and faculties needed for religion, that is, a creature capable of apprehending a Supreme Being, and with a feeling or sentiment of veneration for Him. Man has many faculties in common with the animal creation, as seeing, hearing, and others wherein the lower animal excels man. In the mental faculties the attempt to compare the brute with man is idle. The most sagacious animal is separated from man by an impassible gulf. Scripture declares this difference, and also that to know the spirit of the beast that goeth downward is as much beyond the reach of man as to know the spirit of man that goeth upward. What we do learn from Eccl. 3:21 is that the spirit of man is immortal, and comparing it with xii. 7, that it is capable of worshipping God. Mau was formed to be such. All creation is to the praise of the Creator, but man's praise is the homage of his will. But this capacity to offer intelligent praise is necessarily accompanied by responsibility; and we know that in the case of the first man his sense of responsibility was not a mere vague impression, but was made tangible to his mind by the prohibition of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: a commandment with the penalty of death attached.

This one test was given, and by it is proof of man's capacity to apprehend God, i.e., One to whom he owed obedience, but also his inability to abide in innocency. The tree was the visible means of paying homage to God, the witness of his subjection to the authority of his Maker. Obedience would secure to him all the blessings of Eden, it was the link which bound him to God. That link is the obedience of the will. Being disobedient, he lost his status before God, lost his happiness and was turned out of the garden. The original link was broken, it could never be reformed. If man was ever to be again in relationship with God, it must be on entirely new ground. Into that garden he could never re-enter. It was a garden of delights for innocence alone. And guilt once incurred makes a return to it impossible. There may be forgiveness, there may be purgation from guilt—and blessed be God both are of grace—but the fact of guilt in the past is as true as the fact of forgiveness. God has provided a new garden where the guilty may be restored to more than the pleasures of Eden. That new garden is anticipated by faith, and there is found forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Christians.

Disobedience and expulsion from Eden did not bring man down to the evil of the irresponsible creature; God had breathed into him the breath of life. This breath of life is not an emanation of the Deity, as some phrase it, meaning thereby that man is a part of God, which not only denies the personality of God but leaves no room even for the idea of sin. For if man be a part of God, all that he does must be the doing of God, and all that he is must be the expression of God. Therefore since all is “God,” sin is impossible, or God is contrary to Himself! This is blasphemy. There is no form of infidelity so absurd as this; for even Atheism does not make the deeds of sinners to be the acts of God which must be if the soul be a part of the Deity. This is the germ of Pantheism. The breath of life is not a partaking of the nature of God, but the gift of immortality; sin did not destroy this gift. Man was still as he was before, namely, immortal as to his soul, religious as to his nature. It is this religiousness of nature which makes his fall to be his ruin.

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

But their advance in those things that herald civilization, or follow in its wake, did not prevent the earth being filled with violence and corruption and putting their evil side by side with their knowledge, what a meaning is found in Eccl. 7:29 “God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions;” that is, the things that now make this world pleasant to man, which refine his manners, which extend his power over nature, are not incompatible with the reign of sin and death. No doubt God has overruled the inventions and discoveries familiar to us to meet the need of man; He has permitted human knowledge and power to increase wonderfully, and He is wise and good in permitting it. But we do not forget that man was a sinner when he discovered and

invented.

It is not improbable that all the knowledge of the antediluvians perished with them in the flood, unless we can suppose that Noah and his sons had acquired the whole Encyclopedia and so carried it on to the next generation. But if so, why did nine centuries elapse before we read of instruments of music when Miriam and the women of Israel took timbrels to sing unto Jehovah? It is far more probable—all previous knowledge lost—that this length of time was due to the fact of man having to begin the world's history over again. His life was reduced to a tithe of what it had been, with less energy, and less skill, either acquired by use or imparted by supernatural agency; he neither multiplied so fast nor subdued the earth so rapidly. And it may be that post-diluvians have only partially rediscovered and re-invented what had been lost in the flood.

This was a loss which man could to some extent remedy; but there was a loss which no effort of his could supply, the true knowledge of God. Man did not like to retain the knowledge of God; therefore he was given up to the evil resulting from his ignorance. Before the flood there was no direct interposition. God had His witnesses, but confined to the thin line of Abel, Enoch, and Noah which reached to the deluge. Their faith and righteousness was the sole testimony, and there being no public revelation (if we may so say), the power of Satan was not seen in denying it, or opposing it by idolatry. The word in Gen. 4:26, “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord,” does not necessarily mean that they were righteous; it may simply mean that the idea of God was not wholly lost. For Adam was yet alive. But after that judgment the earth being overflowed with water perished; which would not fail to impress the next generation with the power of God. The religious element of man's nature was developed, and being ignorant of God, he became the dupe of Satan, and a worshipper of idols. And idolatry soon became universal.

To stem its evil and to recall to the true knowledge of Himself, God separated Abram from his kindred and his country. He was called out from idolatry. His family in common with other families of the country were idolators. His separation from the family did not separate the family from idolatry, for we find it with Laban long after.

The knowledge of God being lost, man turned to the resources of his own mind to fill the void. It was soon filled with an object that never attracted love, though it raised fear. The homage paid was the price for averting its wrath. In fact the object took its character from that of its votaries. The debased Egyptian adored an ox, reptiles, leeks; the cruel Canaanite, and the Israelite after him, burnt his children in honor of Molech; the sensual Greek and Roman gave qualities to their gods unfit to name. Going farther East we find idolatry perhaps less cruel and equally sensual, but their idols horrid and monstrous in form.

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

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

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

Chapter 118

History of Idolatry: Part 2

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

After the flood idolatry spread rapidly. For there was a void in man's breast which nothing that he had in common with the lower animals could meet. It was a religious want, and anything that pretended to satisfy it was adopted. Religious practices make one half the history of mankind. The ancient records as given by man are so full of fable that we turn at once to the Bible, where alone we get truth. Not that we shall find there a detailed history of idolatry as is given of faith, but facts here and there which prove its dominancy and universal spread.

The first mention of idolatry is with Laban, whose images Rachel had stolen. That they were objects of worship is plain from his words “Wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?” Nor was Jacob's household free from them till but a short time before the death of Rachel. Evidently Laban and his family were idolators. But it also appears that they had some superstitious knowledge of God—no doubt by tradition. There was a mingling of what they had received from earlier times with the image-worship growing around them. And in such a case even to pay homage to the true God is only superstition. The name of God was not unknown, and the inhabitants of Mesopotamia pretended to revere it, but they joined idols with it. We might ask whether they made a difference in the degree of homage given to Him who was to them “the unknown God,” and homage paid to idols? Was there such distinction practiced then as we find now expressed by the words latreia and dulia? a distinction which where it is conceived only deceives the idolater of the present day with the thought that he is a Christian. For as we see that one feature of ancient idolatry was not the denial of the name of God, but joining it with idols, so the “dulia” of the present day is joining virgin and saints, yea, preferring them, to Christ. It is idolatry.

The next fact is in connection with Egypt, and we find an organized system, and that the inhabitants had made some advance in national life. Idolatry had become a state religion. Egypt was a kingdom when Abram was leading a pastoral life, and the title of Pharoah was given to their kings as afterward that of Cresar was given to the Roman Emperors; and we may reasonably infer that some progress was made both in political and religious cultivation. And later on Egypt is found in commercial relation with other people. Merchants from Gilead, Ishmeelites, were going thither for trading purposes when they bought Joseph to sell there as a slave. There was a market for spicery, balm, and myrrh; and their readiness to purchase Joseph seems to say that he was not the first youth carried thither and sold into slavery. A slave market as well as one for spicery was held in Egypt. But the kingdom was not then so compact as when through the administration of Joseph the Egyptians were no longer proprietors of the soil, but mere tenants “in capite” and servants of the king, paying a fifth of the produce of the land as tribute to him. But if the individual

lost his independence, the nation as a body politic gained power. Authority was centralized, one mind and one will were supreme. There could be no clashing of divergent opinions in cabinet councils, for the ministers had only to carry out the monarch's behests.

When the king is wise and good, no form of government is more conducive to national prosperity, and individual happiness. And when the Lord Jesus takes the kingdom of this world, it will be seen in infinite perfection. For it is God's purpose to give peace to the world by One Man, the Man of His right hand. The dream of this age is of universal peace through the predominancy of the popular element; its motto is Vox populi vox Dei. It would be nearer the truth to say Vox populi vox diaboli. But when God's King is seated onHis own throne, it will be divinely and blessedly true to say, Vox Regis vox Dei. But the world must wait for His reign.

No doubt idolatry was as prevalent before the king's authority established it as afterward. But it is only authority that can organize it, and form it into a system. And thus it was when Joseph was in Egypt; for the priesthood were a separate class, and Potipherah had the position of chief among them, his name bearing the signification of prince. And there were also magicians and wise men whom Pharaoh called to interpret his dreams. These are a class of men always found among idolaters. The cunning magician is the complement of the common idolater. Where the latter is, there will be found the “wise” man who fattens upon the ignorance of the common crowd. But superstition does not prevent secular order. Indeed in a kingdom which is not a mere aggregation of savages, an organized system of religion, and of internal police regulations is always found. Potiphar was apparently chief in secular matters as Potipherah in the religious. There were other official dignities, though not so high in rank, as the chief butler and the chief baker. And so we are not surprised to find wealth and luxury where such as these exist. Joseph had his silver cup, and his chariot before which runners were to shout, “Bow the knee.” These are sure evidences of material progress, and a measure of refinement. But there is with it, or had been up to the time of Joseph's advent to power, a corresponding advance in idolatry. And this is the point before us, that material prosperity aids the development of idolatry. And in Egypt, as in most countries since, the power of the State is used to enforce the religion of the State.

From Gen. 47:22 we learn that the priesthood was a distinct class, and maintained by the State; that is, a revenue was established and set apart for them. But when Joseph was appointed chief administrator of the kingdom, can we conceive him enforcing idolatry by law? No. Nor on the other hand would he deprive the priests of sustenance. Thus while they received state pay their public-worship of idols would be prohibited. Joseph mounted at one step from the prison to the highest power. Only in the throne was Pharaoh greater than he. Inspired by God he had interpreted the king's double dream, and God had given to the king and to all with him the conviction that the interpretation was a prophetic intimation of coming events. Insomuch that the king said the Spirit of God was in him, and therefore the fittest man to carry out the sage counsel he had given to the king. All submitted at once to the immense influence with which the manifest wisdom of God had clothed him What then more probable than that Joseph was able to set aside the public observance of idolatry, and to bring the Egyptians at least outwardly to acknowledge the God of Joseph? The fact of his marriage with Asenath the daughter of the prince-priest of On seems to corroborate this. For “On,” a word meaning the sun, which had the highest place in their mythology, shows Potipherah to he the high priest of their system. Is it not difficult to imagine—if idolatry continued as before—that the daughter of the highest priest would be given to one who

denied their gods, or Joseph could still be next to the king in authority? Possibly Potipherah and his daughter were true converts to the faith of One God, while the majority of priests restrained and forbidden to observe their idolatrous rites would be bitter enemies to Joseph and all his kindred. The priests naturally would seek to uphold the system which gave them importance and to retain their influence over the people. Indeed we find that the Egyptians did keep up a distinction between themselves and Joseph's brethren; they would not eat with them; a presumptive if not a direct proof that in heart they clung to their old gods. While his influence lasted, and while the same dynasty occupied the throne, Joseph's laws and ordinances would be in force. But when about two centuries after a new king arose who knew not Joseph, a not unwilling people went back to their idolatry, and then the Israelites were subjected to a cruel tyranny. The words “new king” seem to express more than merely a successor, and point to a new dynasty. Does not Rom. 9:17 agree with this— “Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up from amongst men?” Possibly the whole dynasty clung to the tradition of Joseph, and were driven from the throne through the adherents of the old religion gaining the ascendancy, and a new king—first of a new dynasty—who annulled all the decrees of Joseph was placed on the throne. But all this I merely submit to the judgment of others, and do not at all affirm as certain.

The Israelites were contemned as being shepherds, an avocation which the Egyptians despised, and hence the kings who protected them were probably called the shepherd kings, and shared the same detestation, execrated as having impiously shut the doors of the temples, and thus bringing upon the nation the anger of the gods. Such was the record of an historian who, ages after, ascribed to idols the judgments that fell upon this Pharaoh. The cunning of the Devil, the blindness of man are here most plain; for the judgments of God were against the idols. Satan makes man believe the “gods” did it as a punishment for shutting up their temples. This historian (Diodorus Siculus) says that a plague broke out in Egypt through the anger of the gods, because there were many foreigners there who) practiced unknown rites in their worship, and in consequence the ancient religion was neglected. The Egyptians feared that they would never be able to appease their gods unless they expelled all the strangers from their country. He mentions Danaus and Cadmus, but the greater number of the expelled was under the conduct of Moses, a wise and brave man, who led his followers into Judea and there built Jerusalem and the temple, and who pretended to be inspired by Jaoh. This was written twelve centuries after the event, and through all that time this tradition which gave the glory of God to idols was received as the truth. Thus it is that Satan has always turned the truth of God into a lie. God's sore judgments were against idolatry; Satan persuades man that these judgments support it. It may be mentioned that chronologists assert that Danaus and Cadmus with their followers did arrive in Greece about the same time that Moses and the Israelites departed from Egypt.

Chapter 119

History of Idolatry: Part 3

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

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

Idolatry has one invariable-effect, it degrades the moral part or the soul. The writings of men who were idolaters, which treat of metaphysics or science, show no want of intellectual power, nor does the literature of that age fail to command the respect of the present, when morality and its obligations are not the theme. And no marvel, for true morality can only be learned from the Bible. Ancient philosophy discourses grandly about it, but never was it observed for its own sake. For the sake of renown great things were done; for the sake of praise a man would be honest and truthful; but to love and follow whatsoever was of good report; honest, true, etc., for their own sake (and this is true morality) is ascribing to human nature a quality which it cannot possess. Nor have I

introduced heart-reference to God, without which no thing is right in heart or practice. Idolatry cannot instil the love of what is pure and lovely and of good report, on the contrary it engenders and strengthens the feelings and sentiments of all that is hateful and impure. And as we know in many instances, it has crushed the strongest instincts of nature, for parents have burnt their own children in honor of an idol. At other times the devotees are seized with a sort of frenzy or madness as the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18), who cried out and after their manner cut themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out. Nothing here surely is of good report. Nor were such things of exceptional occurrence; that and the licentiousness and drunkenness seen, perhaps not less in classic Greece and Rome than among the Canaanitish worshippers of Ashtaroth, all these form the ritual of idolatry. The voices of the prophets declare that Israel had sunk into all these depths of corruption and cruelty, that, while pretending to the knowledge of God, they equaled, if not even excelled, the heathen in the practice of all these abominations.

To keep them from this horrible wickedness God put a hedge around Israel. They were a walled vineyard, with a tower and a winepress in it. His power to protect and His goodness to cheer; also a social hedge, for they were not to intermarry with the nations outside, all intercourse being forbidden, except as individual Gentiles should break away from their own kindred and become proselytes to the faith of one God. A moral hedge was then put round them, which had special reference and bearing upon the idol of Egypt. Such was the law and the ordinances given to them. The great need of a wall of separation, if it were possible to keep them from idolatry, was seen at the very moment that God was providing the means for it; for then it was, remembering Egypt's idols, they made one like it.

The first commandment struck at the root of idolatry. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” There were many “other gods” in Egypt, likenesses of things in heaven above and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, the Sun and the Moon, Osiris and Isis Animals also were the objects of superstitious homage, as the ox, the dog, the cat, the hawk, the crocodile and others. Nor did they limit their reverence to animals, but even deified the vegetables that grew in their gardens. Leeks and onions were invoked as gods. Had we not unimpeachable evidence of such amazing debasement, it would be incredible. It is the derision of one who was himself an idolater. “You enter,” says Lucian, “into a magnificent temple, every part of which glitters with gold and silver. You there look attentively for a god, and are cheated with a stork, an ape, or a cat,” and he adds “a just emblem of too many palaces, the masters of which are far from being the brightest ornaments of them.” The doctrine of the Metempsychosis—which is said to have originated with the Egyptians—was a natural outcome of such a system of idolatry. For the soul to pass into the body of one of the sacred animals must by them have been esteemed a great honor. Modern apologists of idolatry (for what else can they be?) have said that worship was not paid to the animals, but to the gods of whom they were the symbols. So exactly said the philosophic heathen of old. But the vulgar saw only the animal, and though the philosopher might despise, he had to hide his contempt. Paul at Ephesus was in danger of his life because by his preaching many were turned away from the worship of Diana and from the image which fell down from Jupiter. The intellectual at Ephesus might think of “Diana,” but the common people only saw the “image” which they were told fell down from heaven. The rude block or sculptured stone, the little images that Rachel hid in the camel's furniture, or the great image of gold in the plain of Dura, even the lowest animal, or the common leek filled the eye of the ignorant masses, and nothing beyond.

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

History of Idolatry: Part 4

Again, “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work.” The Egyptians dedicated each day of the week to one of their gods. Processions and obscene mirth characterized the homage paid to them. Jehovah commanded the Israelites to keep holy the Sabbath day, and the divine reason for the consecration of this day is that God after the six days' work of creation rested on the seventh day. After the work of six days the command was imperative to rest on the seventh. It is not a bare permission but a command, and in effect the prohibition of idolatrous feasts. Working six days and resting the seventh cut off all opportunity for the riotous feasts of idolatry, and the special guard of the law against it is plain. Moreover we see that idolatry interferes with God's arrangements for the social order of every-day life. Among the heathen, starting from Egypt every day of the week was consecrated to some idol. The same signification of name for each of the seven days is found in the East, in the barbarous North, and in Rome when it was the great center of civilization and of the world's power. The same names used by Pagans are retained by Christendom—names in honor of some god, and a proof—how wide-spread that form and aspect is, that had its development if not its origin in idolatrous Egypt. In our own land the Quakers made a vain attempt against these pagan names by adopting the terms, First day, Second day, etc.; but they were too deeply implanted to be uprooted by such an isolated body. What is in a name? Nothing per se. But the fact of identity of names proves that the stream of idolatry which issued from Egypt has washed the shores of other countries in Asia and in Europe.

When the Lord Jesus was here on the earth He condensed the whole law into two commandments. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matt. 22). If the first and great commandment strikes at the root of idolatry, the second no less denounces the fruits of it. The sins forbidden in the second table of the law are the fruits of the flesh truly, but they flow direct from idolatry; and when the Lord Jesus said “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” He summed up in a word the whole second table of the law. Idolatry forbids none, permits all, sanctions some; for the feasts observed in praise of their idols were the occasions for excess of riot, and debauchery was the incense offered to them. The morality of idolaters is on a par with their worship. Their moral sense was governed by superstition; this led them to vice that allowed no check.

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

shameful.

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

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

Historians say that idolatry as a system was carried from Egypt to India after the age of Joseph, or about the year B.C. 1635, or a little later. That afterward the same organized system spread from the north east of Asia to the north west of Europe, and prevailed throughout this region before E.c. 542. The Hindu doctrine of Brahm seems to confirm this. God's assertion of Himself as “I am” could never have been conceived by fallen man, and it must have been carried to India from the land where that name was first declared. Those who have examined Hindu mythology assert that its fundamental doctrine is one God. (What kind of God it is we have just seen). If so, then there—is the fact of God's revelation of Himself as the One God, to the Gentile world; the responsibility of the idolater in presence of this revelation, and the perversion of this truth by man, under the power of Satan. Divergent in detail and development as this system became in different countries, its identity as to source is also seen in that time is reckoned by weeks and days, and that the days of the week are consecrated to the same or similar gods.

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

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

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

Boodha War—Mercurii dies, W'oden's day—Wednesday

Vrihaspat War—Iovis dies, Thor's day—Thursday

Shukra War—Veneris dies, Free's day—Friday

Themisker War-Saturni dies, Seater's day—Saturday)

Chapter 121

History of Idolatry: Part 5

There are also other traces of Egyptian idolatry. The Ganges in India was accounted sacred as the Nile in Egypt, the sun in both countries, in India a cow, reminding one of Apis. But the worship of cats and dogs, of leeks and onions, is not found in India. There idolatry took a somewhat different direction. Symbols of their gods were not sought for among the brutes, or in their kitchen gardens. They multiplied their gods, but as a rule, all were in the shape of men and women, sometimes with a monstrous and unnatural addition or change when a particular attribute or quality was to be made prominent; as when the head of an elephant was given to a human body to express prudence and sagacity, also four arms to show power. As an expression of an abstract idea, it is that of an untutored and perhaps childish mind; but from an aesthetic point the Hindu idol is disgusting and repulsive.

The ancient form of Hinduism differs from its present,—which is known under the name of Brahmanism. But a mere glance at the course of idolatry after its authoritative establishment and organization in Egypt does not require more that the notice of the transition from the pantheistic aspect of the ancient Hindu mythology to the fundamental idea of one god, as Brahm, with polytheistic associations. There is another idolatrous system, that of Buddha. This is said to be less gross and barbarous than Brahmanism. While Brahm is a myth, Buddha may have been a real personage who, disgusted with the cruelties practiced by the Brahmans, formed a sect of his own. But the Buddhists were driven out of India and settled principally in Ceylon. Some went to China, others to Tartary, and possibly even to Scandinavia. The Brahmans on the contrary would not go beyond the limits of India, their sacred region. In their emigration the Buddhists carried images of Buddha into these countries whither they went, and worshipped him as supreme, but mixed with his worship some of the Brahminical or Egyptian mythology. Thus the stream of that system of idolatry which had its beginning in Egypt has flowed thence over the greater part of the East, and a modification of it sweeping back overflowed all Europe. And this must have happened between the years B.C. 1635 and B.C. 542, for at the later date the Buddhists had been driven out of India.

Among the Greeks and Romans the fabulous deities were not living animals, as are found with the Egyptians, nor images of unnatural shapes and forms as in India, though not quite free from the latter (as Pan with the feet of a goat), but by some of them certain animals, if not deified, were considered sacred to a particular deity, (as the peacock to Juno). With these masters of the world idolatry seems divested of its bestial form, and unaccompanied with the more bloody rites observed in the North. By them idolatry was made attractive, clothed in forms of beauty and voluptuousness. Yet Jupiter, Venus, and Mercury are but different names for the Scandinavian Thor, Irea and Woden, and may be traced to the Egyptian Osiris and Isis.

But if there be room for question as to the practical identity of the idols of one country with those of another, one thing is certain that the same superstition, the same cruelty lurks in all, that the particular character of the development of idolatry is in great measure due to the habits and

education of the people of each country, and that, whatever the development, man is proved in all to be stupid, vile, and lost.

History of Idolatry: Part 6

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

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

Yet notwithstanding the visible effects, and the character of idolatry, it is strange to hear men gravely asserting that, in all ages and regions, the nations of the world (however different in character and manners) have yet united in the belief of a supreme Being. That man had in the age next succeeding the deluge a faint idea of the One God is true; but that in all ages and regions a supreme being was acknowledged is an assertion which lacks not boldness but proof. A “Supreme Being” is more than being superior to other gods. It means no other god beside the One God. Idolaters always had gods. A writer of the past age, speaking of the heathen, says that in their public and private affairs “the Divinity is invoked.” And again, “In every people we discover a reverence and awe of the Divinity.” That the pagan betrayed a servile and superstitious fear both in public and private, and under its influence performed rites to his idol, is true.

But in “public,” as is known, each nation had its own god; even the cities of the same nation did not give preeminence to the same divinity; and as to the “private affairs” all the respectable families had each their own laers et penates. What is the meaning of invoking the Divinity, when the rites observed were a sort of entreaty that the god would not maliciously interfere with them rather than seeking his aid? And why the Divinity, as if there was but one object before the idolatrous world? The same writer (Rollin; see Anc. Hist. Pre.) speaks of the treatment those received who depraved by false philosophy rose up against this “doctrine.” Were there any ever found who spoke against the “Divinity” as the One Supreme? There were some who despised the folly of idol-worship, and were called atheists by the idol-mongers. Was it false philosophy to speak against the abominations which could only shock the feelings of a moral pagan (if such could be found), and would lead the intellectual away from the senseless worship? But to speak of idolatry as adoration of the “Divinity” is a hiding of the sin of “many gods” if not an apology for it.

But the writer is happily inconsistent with himself; for, in spite of the universal adoration in all ages and regions of the Supreme Being, he deplores the fact of man's incapability of persisting in the purity and simplicity of this first principle, that amid the general depravity only a few faint rays, small sparks of light, remain inextinguished. This same lament would have been equally in place had it been over the time of Cicero (or indeed of any time before or since) who is cited as inculcating the existence of a Supreme Being, and the homage due to Him. The words of the great Pagan are “Sit igitur hoc a principio persuasum civibus, dominos esse omnium rerum ac moderatores deos, eaque geruntur eorum geri judicio ac numine” (De Legg. II. vii.) Do “dominos” and “deos” simply mean a Supreme Being, a “Divinity"? Do they not rather show that Cicero advocates idolatry for the citizens in general, though he himself might despise it?

It is a proof how far the mind of man is alienated from God that even in Christendom, where His word is printed and available for all, and in the hands of those who profess and call themselves Christiana, there is more contempt of the folly of idolatry than condemnation of its sin. And why in these “Christian countries” is it contemned, if not through the light of the Word so generally neglected, and by some despised as of no more authority than cunningly devised fables? Christendom is in the condition of one who knew the Lord's will and did it not; its judgment will be “many stripes.”

But there is a worse evil than idolatry and far more guilty; which is not merely a sin inevitably resulting from fallen man's mental constitution, but which implies and necessitates a Revelation from God: that worse sin is infidelity. Revelation was not necessary to make man an idolater; it was necessary to make him an infidel. In its widest meaning as designating those who have no faith, all idolaters in whatever condition of ignorance are infidels. But if we confine the word to its common acceptation, it is evident that a Revelation must be given before it can be rejected. And as the rejection of known truth is of earlier date than idolatry, no process or lapse of time was needed for its development. Its first form was the denial of God's word; as such it sprang fully equipped from the head of the first sinner. God said “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” The Serpent said “Ye shall not surely die.” God's word was disbelieved, and Eve became the infidel. Pharoah was an infidel; when the word of “I am” came to him, he said “Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice.” And Israel as having the oracles and the testimony of God were as much infidels as idolaters. As idolaters they clung to Egypt's idols, as infidels they said Egypt was a better place than Canaan. And if we compare these two grand engines of Satanic craft, in idolatry the sentiments (i.e. fear, dread, desire, awe, admiration) are most in exercise, if not solely; in infidelity the passions have but little play. It is human reason, the intellect, though even the intellect is swayed by the heart, which is enmity against God. Infidelity was usually found rather with the educated than with the ignorant; of late years even the lowest classes in the social scale, and the most uncultured, are swelling its ranks. And as education—the present panacea for all, moral evil!—spreads, so infidelity increases. For if education expands the mind and strengthens its power, the increase of infidelity is inevitable. For, the mind being enmity to God, its expansion is the expansion of hatred, and the strengthening of its powers to spread its own evil. And the means of education which the wisdom of this world has adopted, and the craft of Satan has caused to be used, as to philosophy taught, is under-laid with skepticism; more subtle in some than in others, but therefore the more dangerous. The books of past ages and professors of the present age are for the most part tainted with infidelity, and some of them very deeply. It is the

result of man's mind trying to measure the Revelation of God by the light of reason. Reason was never given to discuss the command of its Creator, never to decide whether obedience was due to God, or whether His Word is credible. Revelation is its own evidence, its own authority. And every one that has read a page of it has more or less, at least once in his life, felt the power and authority of it. Conscience in a measure responds to the truth; but conscience may be silenced, and the general result is that man without conscience falls into the depths of corruption or wanders in the darkness of his own reason, i.e. infidelity. The legitimate sphere of reason is earthly and temporal things. Now that it is darkened, to attempt to subject the Word of God to its authority is the greatest proof of its incapacity for the office. And further we have but to remember that the Word of God is the message of His love to find equal proof of its antagonism to God.

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

Chapter 123

History of Idolatry: Part 7

At the present day, at least in this country, all who reject Revelation seem to be uniting under the name of Secularist. Under that name are found those who assail the Being, the Attributes, the Personality and the Providence of God, and who endeavor by philosophy—falsely so called—to overthrow the Christian's faith in the genuineness, authenticity, inspiration, and exclusive authority of the Word of God. Could they succeed, all belief of a future judgment, and consequently the immortality of the soul, would be derided as an idle dream, and the grossest materialism would become the universal creed. And what do these Secularists propose as a substitute for the Bible? They pretend that sufficient guarantee for morality is found in nature and in human intelligence. What their idea of morality may be is difficult to say; but according to their highest definition, can it fill the craving void felt by every soul at one time or the other? A craving after the unseen and the unknown? A craving which compels the idolater to worship the image his hands have made, and leads the infidel to idolize the god of his imagination, i.e. his reason, himself?

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

banished from the country.

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

There is a kind of metaphysical infidelity which endeavors to substitute “subjective revelation,” that is, consciousness of truth in the soul, for objective revelation, that is, the Bible. So that a man's own spiritual intuition and convictions are to take the place, and usurp the authority, of the word of God. This may be called “inward light,” or even the name of the Spirit of God may be applied to it. But being apart from and independent of the word of God, it is only delusion. Subjective revelation, even if a reality and not a delusion, could never be the standard of truth. For if the whole word of God could be contained by any one mind and divinely understood, something more is needed to make the convictions of one authoritative for another. To accept them as authority is putting man in the place of God. But if subjective revelation was in each living man (if not in each, to some it must be objective), each one would be his own authority, his own standard of truth. And what if these “Authorities” clashed? Two things would inevitably result: first, that man would believe in himself, would worship his own convictions, would please himself, he would be his own god, and therefore an idolater, and as not believing in God, rejecting His word, would be also an infidel; the second result would be that Truth, as such, would be lost. Such a tide of conflicting notions, absurd opinions would flow over the world, that every landmark would be submerged, and the world of ideas (if we are allowed such a term) would be as the earth once was “without form and void.” To talk of Revelation as being subjective so as to deny the inspiration of the Bible is only common infidelity in a deistic guise.

When the light of truth falls upon the dark mind without bringing the conscience into the presence of God, there can be but one result. The truth is opposed, and hated. And hatred of truth is the true parent of infidelity; even as idolatry is the natural fruit of the heart, when left to its own promptings. This fruit of the deceitful heart in any one of its varied forms was never condemned, and its votaries destroyed by others whose form of idolatry differed; each new deity that the ignorance and lusts of men invented was acknowledged by all, though it may be only receiving homage from the men of a particular locality. This was but natural, for if the people of the hills had a god peculiar to themselves, why should not the people of the plains have the same privilege? So the same kind of liberalism, which now accords to each man to think and form his religions creed as he likes, then allowed to each idolater to have his own god, and every idol had a niche in the common Pantheon. But when the truth was revealed from God the antagonism of man was immediately roused against it. When did the truth ever fail to evoke opposition, and make manifest the latent infidelity of the heart? Only when the Holy Spirit by His own direct power opened the heart to receive it.

Paul bears testimony to the fact of the activity of the will against the Word of God. “When the law came, sin revived.” In the case he is describing the law was accompanied with the power of grace, “I died.” There was a yielding to the authority of the Word, there was self-judgment. But

nevertheless, there is the fact, “sin revived.” The heart's dislike of God's word, be it law or gospel, is immediately manifested. Indeed the natural man is more opposed to grace than to law.

When the truth of One God was revealed through Moses, man, already an idolater, became an infidel. He would not give up his idols, and denied that there was only one God. This was the early phase of infidelity, and the Gentile world lies under the responsibility of having denied the truth of one God. The infidelity of Israel was more guilty than that of the Gentile, inasmuch as the unity of God was a special testimony to them. Israel equaled the Gentile in idolatry, but exceeded them in infidelity.

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

History of Idolatry: Part 8

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

Nothing is more subtle than infidelity: it penetrates every form of religious thought, every shade of opinion of which the Word is not the source. It is not confined to the bold deniers of revelation, but is found sometimes in creeds. Every creed, or confession of faith, that has not for its basis the full truth as to the person of Christ, in short, the whole Bible as given of God, is infidel in character. True believers are sometimes touched with it, through adherence to an unscriptural creed; not vitally, of course, but hurtfully; for wherever it penetrates, its baneful influence is seen in evil doctrine and evil practice.

The human mind is infidel in the abstract; but infidelity as a fact could not be till a revelation had been given. In like manner the aspect and form of infidelity will be according to the character of the truth revealed. The grace that was revealed in and by Christ made man plead for law; so that the Galatians, who had been converted from idolatry, thought it right to adopt the law as equally necessary with the gospel of grace. But the worst aspect of infidelity is in its assaults upon the person of our Lord; and this, not as seen in men unconnected with the church of God, but in those who were prominent, or who aimed at prominence, among the saints of God. We see the wretched and absurd theories of those who entirely thrust the Bible aside as a book of God. The theories—if they deserve that title—of the men who have attempted to blend the theogony of heathen philosophers with the truth of Christ, are still more absurd; and, while exceeding the wildest dream that ever came from the head of a pagan, they add insult and blasphemy.

The heresies that first troubled the church are characterized by the introduction of Eastern philosophy, not a little modified by Grecian, into the assemblies, and mingling it with the truth. In this teaching were combined two things which at first seem incompatible, but which, when fully examined, are complementary: viz., the denial of the essential Godhead of Christ, and also of His proper humanity. The Christ of God—the true Savior of the Bible—disappeared, and, in place thereof, the wanderings of a dark but vain mind, the worthless speculations of science falsely so called. Against these heresiarchs both John and Paul wrote. The evil had begun while the apostles were yet here. Satan began immediately his attempts to hide from man (who so needs it) the knowledge, the immense fact, that He who had been here was “the true God and eternal life.”

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

Chapter 125

History of Idolatry: Part 9

But there is more to break this thralldom and free the spiritual part of man from the domination of matter i.e. the body: fasts, vigils, total disregard of the body were enjoined as necessary. By these a man would rise to higher and successive degrees of virtue, would pass through various transformations, or metempsychoses, till he reach the final stage, the absorption of his soul into the deity. If “metempsychosis” was left out, the Gnostics taught the observance of penances and—not the mortifying of our members which are on the earth but—the depreciation of the body as a thing not to be considered for a moment; that is, they denied that the body was the temple of the Holy Ghost. This led some to harsh treatment of the body, others to the extreme of self-indulgence and corruption, because the body-matter was so vile a thing that it might do anything, it was not worth guarding. So from the same evil root of doctrine came two opposite evils in practice. Both extremes met in denying the truth. The latter are the Nicolaitanes of Rev. 2 and Paul in Col. 2:20-23 warns against the former. The “touch not, taste not, handle not” is but man's commandment, a pretense of wisdom, the worship of the will; and the “neglecting of the body” is only “the satisfying of the flesh.”

The influence of this philosophy did not cease with the early ages of the church, it is seen in our time, it was rampant in the middle ages. For what is monachism but the continuation of the attempt to attain to a quasi-holiness by the mortification of the body?

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

One is ready to ask, how could such doctrines and practice be endured in the church of God? would not the least intelligent saint reject both, and abhor the men who thus defiled the church? The epistle to Ephesus (Rev. 2) furnishes the answer. The church had left her first love. This opened the door and paved the way for the entry of every possible abomination and dishonor to the Lord. Soon entered the disciples of Balaam, the Nicolaitanes, and Jezebel calling herself a prophetess. These not only entered but found a welcome. Never would such have found footing in the church of God, had she not left her first love. He who so loved the church as to give Himself for her, would have guarded her from all evil. But the church lost her virgin character, and just as Israel of old went after other gods, so the professing church ends in being the great harlot of Christendom.

But there is worse than corrupting the saints—the infidelity of Gnosticism (how manifestly the work of Satan sowing tares while men slept!) subjected the person of the Son to the mind of man attempting to comprehend His being, as if in defiance of the word that no man knoweth the Son but the Father. The vain intellect of men has attempted to solve that mystery, which angels contemplate with awe and wonder—God manifest in flesh. No where else is man so plainly the dupe of Satan. In the day of His humiliation the demons knew and confessed who He was. Satan,

a liar from the beginning, led man into the labyrinth of his own conceptions as to the person of the Son of God. What could be the result of Satanic power working upon human ignorance, enmity against God and His Christ the sole principle in each? Just what we find in the first heresies, in which the old idolatry of heathendom supplanting the truth of Christianity makes an infidel Christendom. Henceforth the public testimony of the church as a whole was lost. Sovereign grace preserved a few witnesses.

The idolatrous character of the Gnostic infidelity may be accounted for—at least in part. For Oriental philosophy, which influenced the West, taught as a fundamental principle that the Universe was an intelligent being, of which matter was the body and God the soul. This Pantheistic notion of God (which as a form of infidelity seems anterior to the purely Atheistic form) was the prolific source from which were educed the wildest theories—so wild that even heathen mythology might be called wisdom compared to them. Mixed with the truth the amalgam is more abhorrent than Atheism. Professors of Christianity could not of course adopt the gods of Paganism, nor Brahm's development and sudden expansion into numerous deities. These monopolizers of “true knowledge” attempted a compromise. In place of gods they had “emanations” from the “Original Unity,” the “monad” of Eastern philosophy. Each prominent Gnostic had his peculiar theory to which he wickedly but vainly attempted to bend the word of God. Evil as well as good was personified as emanations or “coons” from God. Thus making God the source of evil as well as of good. Christ was an “aeon,” by some accounted the highest and sent into the world to correct the mischief wrought by others. Some maintained that He was by title the Son of God, but inferior to the Father. They denied His humanity because matter was essentially evil. His body was only the appearance of matter. It follows necessarily that there was no real suffering, no real death: it was all illusion. Where are the foundations of Christianity, and of truth? What becomes of the character of God as a Just Governor? Where is the love of God in giving His Son, or the truth of the declaration of John 3:16, if there was no reality in the cross? Without the cross all would be confusion and contradiction, the book of nature and the book of revelation alike unintelligible. The cross is the central point in the whole universe of God. It declares God's righteousness for the past or present, and is the proof of His love, upon which His highest glories hang. If the cross be an illusion, so is exaltation in millennial glory; and our glory with Christ a myth.

Chapter 126

History of Idolatry: Part 10

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

Such the condition of the church before two centuries had passed since its formation. The word errors were taught under the profession of the name of Christ, but a denial of Himself. Not a vital point of truth but was assailed and, as far as man could, undermined. And in these early heresies is the evil root of every succeeding error since known, the pregnant source of blasphemous doctrine and evil practice which have ravaged the church from that time until now.

But we are looking not at mere errors, but marking those chiefly that denied the full truth of the Person of Christ, which are not errors, but infidelity. A man may hold wrong views concerning many things in the Bible. He may be singular in his views as to the mode and subjects of baptism, as to the doctrines of election and the Lord's coming; if he be sound and scriptural as to the Person of Christ, His perfect manhood, and His perfect deity he cannot be fatally wrong upon other and lesser points. But the heretic who denies the true humanity, or essential Godhead of Christ is an infidel.

Infidelity such as this appeared in the first century and sprang from Jewish sources. It was not infidelity in the sense here used, to insist upon circumcision, and the ceremonial law; but when Cerinthus and his followers maintained that the Lord Jesus was simply the son of Joseph and Mary, that there was nothing divine about Him, or that His divinity was simply the communication of the Holy Ghost at His baptism, then appeared infidelity, fatal and the most horrible to a Christian. It is the reappearing of the old Jewish enmity which met the Lord on all sides when He was here. Though veiled under humanity, He declared Himself as God, and the Son of the Father, and that He and the Father are one. The Jew quite understood this, and took up stones to stone Him saying, “thou being a man makest thyself God.” The Jew in rejecting the Person of the Son is without excuse. How much greater the guilt of those who, after He had been declared the Son of God in power by resurrection of the dead, still denied His Godhead. The Gentile element however was not entirely absent during this first age. It then began to be taught that the body of Christ was not a real body. And in the second century the church was flooded with heresies arising from

Eastern ideas, and containing the same blasphemy.

In the third century the Manicheans arose, a sect which held the eternity of matter, as well as denying Christ. In the beginning of this same age the Godhead was declared to be but One Person. The Son and the Holy Ghost wore but modifications of the revelation of the Father. About the middle of the century Sabellius openly taught that the Word and the Holy Spirit were only functions of the Deity; that God in heaven was the Father of all; that He condescended to be born of the Virgin, and thus was the Son, the Word; and that He diffused Himself under the appearance of tongues of fire on the apostles, and thus was called the Holy Ghost. Hence though not the originator, this heresy is called after his name, the Sabellian heresy. The distinction of the Persons in the Trinity was thus denied, and the real incarnation, suffering, and death of Christ go with it. And so intimate is the connection between the truth of God and Christ, and the salvation of man, that if part of it be lost or given up, the foundation is destroyed upon which the righteousness and the grace of God can together provide a ransom for man.

Chapter 127

History of Idolatry: Part 11

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

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

But this paper is no attempt to give an account of the different heresies which infested the early church; its object is to mark briefly the advance of infidelity which is not confined to the deniers of all revelation, but in a very insidious form attempted to destroy the foundation of Christianity while pretending to greater knowledge Amid many notions both blasphemous and foolish from the first denial of the resurrection when the priests bribed the Roman soldiers to say, “His disciples came by night and stole Him while we slept,” down to modern times, one uniform aim has ever been pursued by the religious infidel. The profane world has its aspect of infidelity in Positivism and Secularism, but that which is found in connection with the church (be it ancient Gnosticism, Arianism, Unitarianism and Rationalism of the Colenso school) is a religious infidelity equally fatal as Atheism, and more worthy of condemnation. The person of Christ has ever been the point of Satan's attack, the sole aim of the devil to deny the truth of Him. There were other errors beside Arianism, as are now beside modern unitarianism. For where the will is not subject to God there must follow heresies and divisions; but all unorthodox are not infidel.

The distinguishing mark between secular infidelity and religious is that the former denies God and His judgments, the fatter is the denial of God in Christ and His grace. The former appeared when judgment or penalty was joined to the first command. The latter when grace appeared in Christ.

The former has always been defiant. It began in Eden when Eve dared the threatened judgment, led away by the serpent, that said, “Ye shall not surely die.” There were those in the time of Moses who like Pharaoh said “Who is Jehovah, that I should obey Him?” The same generation appears in Peter's day saying “Where is the promise of His coming.” It is Satan's lie at the beginning, it is the denial of judgment, and is the same now. What infidels deny is what they fear. Did they not dread the wrath of God there would not be such strenuous efforts made to prove the Bible a myth. To these men, immortality is a mere fancy, and the spirit of a man goeth downwards as of a beast. Or if they admit any kind of futurity, it is the pagan notion of Elysium. An infidel poet of the present day prates with unmeaning words of “dwelling among the stars,” just as it was said by the heathen “Itur ad astra.”

Religious infidelity, denying the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ as declared in His word, meeting the need of man ruined and utterly lost, is the special feature of the heresies of Christendom. Grace and truth came by Christ; where is grace if the glorious person of the Christ of God be lowered in any manner from what He truly is? In denying Christ, the God of all grace is denied, and in the way in which He delights to be known to man. Yet with this there was a pretended acceptance of the Bible, or of a part (for much of it was rejected by these heretics). This kind of infidelity is worse than that of the profane world.

The infidelity of the church opened the door for the worst abominations of idolatry, and in nearly every place where the light of Truth has shone the thickest darkness settled down. It was but the natural consequence of departing from the Truth. It was also retributive judgment. The eye of Christendom did not remain single, and the body was full of darkness. “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?” When light becomes darkness, the darkness is greater than before the light came. And such was the case with that which called itself the church. In sovereign mercy God preserved a remnant for Himself; but the few faithful who would not bow to Baal set up in the nominal church were persecuted and despised by the rulers in it. Immediately previous to the Reformation was the darkest time; so dark, that that period is known to the world as the “dark ages” —such a mass of infidelity, corruption and every imaginable evil; such shameless disregard of truth, and contempt by the “clergy” for all that was called sacred. The general immorality of Christendom at that period equaled, yea, exceeded that of heathendom. For while corruption abounded in each, do the annals of paganism record a Tetzel? A man commissioned by the greatest ecclesiastical authority to give people liberty to sin for a pecuniary consideration? No immorality greater than this.

In pitying mercy to man—to the poor deluded masses, God raised up the reformers,—and through a path sprinkled with martyr's blood brought again to light the long-forgotten truth of salvation by faith in Christ alone. And the common people heard it gladly.

The heresies of the early church brought in the idolatry and darkness of the middle ages. And though the Reformation dispelled the darkness in some places, yet there remained such an amount of superstition in most places that in the last century the intellectual were driven into skepticism. In many countries men deprived of the true light by a corrupt priesthood, disgusted with all they saw, ended in Atheism, or infidelity in its most absolute form. Thus it is that infidelity and superstition reacting upon each other have like successive waves rolled over the West. The imaginative and more excitable Oriental is more the slave of superstition. But even in the West, the

places where are found men who boast the loudest of intellect and knowledge, Mediaeval forms and ceremonies are reviving, and the religious world is fast going back into the darkness of the middle ages. The descendants of those who formerly condemned and forsook the forms and the ceremonies of establishments are now adopting them, and chapels are vying with churches in outward show. It is all superstition, though in a form pleasing to the world. It has overtaken the wave of skepticism, which a few years before rolled over our land, sapping the foundations of everything moral, honest and upright. At first the infidel sneaked in holes and corners of the earth; now with unblushing front he treads erect the streets and highways. And at this moment what is the scene which the true believer looks upon? Infidelity and superstition, whose mingled waters are rushing over the land and drowning men's souls; opposite in principle, alike in destructiveness.

If on the one hand infidels are bolder and increasing, on the other there is much more earnestness on the question of religion. By “religion” is not here meant humble and sincere searching God's word for a deeper acquaintance with it, and a life more conformed to its teachings, though that through grace is not banished from the earth. But the two names which divide the religious world are Rationalism and Ritualism. The former is religious infidelity and allied with secularism, and the latter is but another name for superstition, and tends Romeward. Both evidence the activities of a religious nature, in some the deeper misgivings in natural conscience on questions of eternal moment. If the soul is not in the presence of God, the result is that one of two courses is taken, according as the mind is superstitious or materialistic. In the latter case Rationalistic paths are followed. In the former Ritualism attracts; where the sensuous, the imaginative, and the impressible, are snared by gorgeous ceremony, and made captives by the dogmas of tradition. Rationalism subjects God's word to human reason: what it cannot comprehend, it rejects. It is sight, not faith. Even if the Rationalist accepted the whole Bible merely because his reason approves, it would not be faith. Faith says “It is written,” and this suffices. Any other faith is human, not divine.

The Ritualist is fleshly in his devotions: feelings not faith, sentiment not truth, the springs of his activity. Hence that which engages the eye and the ear is cultivated. With this goes the observance of fasts and feasts, days set apart by human authority. Is not the command “Six days shalt thou labor” as much against the observance of saints' days—as against the feast days of idolatry? Worse than this is the surrendering of soul and body to the authority of a man who dares to put himself between God and another's conscience. What is the difference between this blind submission and that of the ignorant pagan to his priest? Circumstances may forbid the debasing rites of idol-worship, but in the sight of God the Ritualist is an idolater.

Chapter 128

History of Idolatry: Part 12

Some few may be anxiously seeking rest for a troubled heart, but seeking it apart from God. Such, weary with their own strivings, turn to that system which pretends to infallibility, not to Him who alone can give rest; for the Book that points the weary to Him is neglected and unread. If Rationalism be religious infidelity, Romanism may, with equal propriety, be called religious idolatry. In it are found image-worship, and hero-worship; or, which is the same thing in principle, the adoration of saints. Nay, I go farther, and say that Romanism is practically infidel as well as idolatrous; for the authority of God over the conscience is set aside, and His word is denied to the poor. In no other system is satanic wisdom more displayed, or a more fearful invention for deceiving souls. The harlot's golden cup contains every abomination.

The evil, now seen in the professing church and in Christendom, began in the first century. The apostle discerned its germ: “For I know this, that after my departing 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 disciples after them” (Acts 20:29, 30). And the Spirit of God through the apostle warns the saints: “Therefore watch.”

The “perverse things,” which so soon were spoken, are the pregnant source of more evil doctrine since that time. The Arians, Unitarians, Universalists all who preach that judgment is not eternal—are the natural descendents of the early heretics, and specially of the Gnostics, who displaced the simple statements of truth by the foolishness of the wise of this world. The pagan, with his philosophy, without the light of revelation, is far less guilty than those who afterward sought to blend these silly fables with truth.

God foresaw the evil, and provided for it. In John's Gospel there is enough for faith to withstand and overcome every possible heterodoxy concerning the person of Christ. No doubt Gnosticism, with its infidel notions, was even in John's day undermining the truth, and John's Gospel may have been written specially against it; but it does meet, with absolute contradiction, every assertion of the infidel school which so early assailed the church with its impious and blasphemous doctrines.

How profound yet simple the declaration, “In the beginning was the Word.” He was, not He became. That is, He, the Word, had no beginning; it is the assertion of His eternal Godhead. Not a creature produced in time, as some said, though the highest; but eternal. “And the Word was with God” —His distinct Personality; not an influence, an emanation, a power put forth, but a person, of Whom it can be said, He was with God. And lest man should infer that though eternal, yet He was inferior to God, it is added, “and the Word was God.” Gnosticism varied in aspect, and divided into different sects, was always opposed to the doctrine of this first verse. Not one held conjointly the Eternity, the Personality, and Godhead of Him here called the Word. And as it were insisting against the infidel heretics of that day upon the oneness, the coequality, yet distinct Person of the Word, the apostle says “The same,” He, the Word, “was in the beginning with God.” By Him all things were created. Not, as some of these infidels said, that spirit and matter were created by different “aeons” previous to Christ, who, as a later “aeon,” came upon the man Jesus at His

baptism (but leaving Him just before His death; thus asserting two distinct persons, Christ and Jesus), in order to correct the evil into which the spirit-part of creation had fallen through being seduced by the wicked principle inherent in matter! Even to speak of such blasphemy is like touching pitch. Oh, the grace of Him who said, All manner of blasphemy against the Son of man shall be forgiven! Did these perverse men comprehend their own doctrine? May we not say of them, as Paul said of the teachers of the law, “Understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm “?

He, the Word, the life, the light of men, was made flesh; not a phantom, the mere appearance of a man, but as truly a man of flesh and blood, as any for whom He died. This mystery of His person is the rock upon which all human wisdom is wrecked. So truly God was the Word; so careful, if we may so say, is the Holy Spirit to maintain and enforce this most necessary truth, that, while we read the Word was God, it is not written in such direct phrase, “The Father was God,” “the Holy Ghost was God.” Nor is it said that the Father dwelt in the Holy Ghost. But, when the Word was made flesh and became the Lord Jesus Christ, then the Father did dwell in the Son, and the Spirit in His fullness. The whole Godhead was there in Him and accordingly another scripture says, “God manifest in flesh.” Not the Father, not the Spirit, but God. Truly the Father was in Him— “the Father that dwelleth in me": “he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” No man hath seen God at any time; but the Word made flesh, “the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” That is, the Lord Jesus Christ was the visible manifestation of God, and of such form— “which we have seen and handled” —as was suited to the apprehension of man.

Gnostic infidelity in its Sabellian form denied this. Amazing truth, certainly; but is this a reason for denying it, attested as it is by every word, every act, by the whole life, of the Lord Jesus? To attempt to explain the mystery of the person of the Word made flesh is a direct road to infidelity. The fact is revealed to faith; but no man knoweth the Son, but the Father. Men deeply imbued with pagan philosophy crept into the church, and began to pry into things not revealed. The result was infidel heterodoxy, of which the fruit yet remains.

How clear in John's Gospel the proof of the Word made flesh! how intimate the blendings of His Deity and His Humanity! And vain man attempted to unravel the mystery. His blessed and most holy person was, when here, the true temple of God; and like the Most Holy of the tabernacle within the veil, where not even the High Priest could go without a thick cloud of incense—not allowed to look upon even the symbols of God's presence—lest he die, so His person, as God and man, is shrouded from the intelligence of man, and known only to God. To believe the fact is another thing, and essential to salvation. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” To believe that Christ was God manifest in the flesh, that Christ on the cross was made sin for us, are facts divinely attested; but can a poor finite creature—even if he were not fallen—comprehend Him in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily? A mere saint may be filled with the Holy Ghost, like Barnabas, just as a small vessel may be filled from the ocean but cannot contain the ocean. Christ, as man, did contain the fullness of the Godhead. None but God can contain God. If the creature can comprehend God, he must be equal to God; and then he may comprehend the person of Christ.

We are permitted to see how the fact of His Deity and Humanity, yea suffering Humanity, was made manifest. At the well, as God, He gave living water; as man, He was weary and sat on the

well. As God, He raised Lazarus; as man He wept, and groaned, and prayed. As man, in the garden, He sweat as it were great drops of blood, and prayed that if possible the cup might pass from Him; it was as God that He showed His power when at His word “I am He,” the whole band fell backward; and when by a touch He healed the high priest's servant, whose ear Peter had cut off. Every incident given in John is proof no less of His proper humanity than of His Deity. The “Word made flesh” is the text, and the whole Gospel the exposition of the wondrous truth.

The epistles of John open with the same truth. It is the Word. In the Gospel, the Word in His own divine nature, that which He is in Himself: “In Him—the Word—was life.” In the epistle, the Word in communication with man: “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.” Life is in Himself, and Word of life to man. Pre-eminently manifest after His resurrection, having overcome death: but what victory would there have been over death if there had been no real body to die, and no real body to be handled after His resurrection? The Lord gave proof of the reality of His risen body, and challenged the fears and doubts of His terrified disciples when He suddenly appeared among them. He bids them touch Him; He was no apparition, but real flesh and bones. “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” It was not only a real body, but the same that had been nailed to the cross. Is it not the rankest infidelity to say that His body was only an appearance, when such testimony as this is recorded? We might think it strange such grievous wolves could enter the church of God; but it is stranger still that such infidel teachers had followers. Alas first love for the person of the Lord Jesus was lost; and they could hear and receive that which denied the love of God, and dishonored His Son. They denied Jesus Christ come in the flesh, and were of Antichrist. The fool who says in his heart “No God,” is not more guilty nor more stupid than these men who boasted that they alone understood scripture, and in the vanity of their minds assumed the name of Gnostics—the men of knowledge. “Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world “?

Paul also, by the Spirit, speaks of these men. Among the Corinthian saints some said there was no resurrection. This was the effect of the Gnostic notion that matter—and so the body—was the principle of evil. Therefore the body could not be the temple of the Holy Ghost, and it follows also that He has not come; but the Lord Jesus said He would send Him. There is denial of His word as well as dishonor to His person.

To the Colossians the apostle writes and warns them of the danger of not holding the Head, and to remind them that “He is before all, and all things subsist together by Him.” “Whom we preach, admonishing every man.” They needed warning, for among them were those who, vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, would beguile them with a pretended humility, but doing their own will. Their notions were only the elements of the world and not according to Christ. “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” When writing to Timothy he speaks of the great mystery. “God has been manifested in flesh.” It is Christ, for He “has been received up into glory.” But in latter times some would apostatize from the faith, i.e., would deny this fundamental truth, giving their mind to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons in the hypocrisy of legend-mongers. The infidelity of the world against the God of creation is not so dreadful as this; for here are men who have in measure looked upon and handled of the Word of Life, did then denied Him. The impress of these early infidels is still retained by Christendom. Every succeeding generation flews it, slightly modified it may be, but essentially the same.

Chapter 129

Notes of an Address on John 3

This chapter tells us of One who has come down from Heaven, who speaks that He knows, and testifies that He has seen. He knows God fully, and He knows what is in man; and He tells us what God requires and what God gives. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. He, the Son of God, came the Light into this world; but men loved, and still love, darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. He was born into this world in grace for you. He has not left us in any wise in the dark about it, but has brought perfect light to your hearts and consciences, which testifies what is of heaven, what is from heaven, and what is needed for any connection with Heaven, and in order to be there. So that, when I come to heaven, there is nothing in its moral nature that is not brought to my heart and conscience now. You will not get a more blessed thing in Heaven than Christ on earth!

Nicodemus had a mere human conviction of Christ; he knew that He was a teacher come from God. When they saw His miracles, many believed on Him. How many Christians are like that now! giving a mere human assent to who He is. It is not insincerity or dishonesty, but they do not know Him. There is no want created in the heart. The Son of God is here: is that enough for you? You do not care to know what He is here for, or whether you have any part with Him! You do not trouble yourself farther, or care to listen to one word He says: not an anxiety as to what He has said concerning you, or interest as to one thought or feeling He might have! Could you be quiet if you thought you were lost? You could not. You are lost! and there is no greater proof of the utter ruin of man than that Christ does not attract his heart, speaking and testifying of divine things. Any bit of news will occupy you—a bit of family interest—a newspaper—a thing passing in the street; and here is news from heaven, news from God, and you don't care!—nor for all the love in His coming down from Heaven to tell it you!

Is it not true that you must have a new nature?

You are indifferent to all that God can do, and you tell me that it is no testimony of the state of your soul that Christ has no beauty that you should desire Him, and yet you are “hoping” to go to Heaven! And what is there in Heaven for you? Do you expect to be happy there if this Christ, who is the very center of Heaven's delight, has no attraction for your heart? Impossible! It is quite clear that, if I am to be happy in Heaven, it is with God. What pleasure have you in God? Is there one thing in your heart now that would make you happy in Heaven, one single affection in your heart that finds its pleasure and company in those who fill Heaven? Oh, may it come home to your soul—the conviction I am all wrong, the tree bad, and as I am, I can never be better. He the Lord, speaking what He knows, says, Ye must be born again. This was what God required.

And now we come to the other side—

“ The Son of Man must be lifted up.”

God gave His Son. This is the grace—this the glad tidings—that you “might not perish, but have everlasting life.” He “must” because you are a sinner perishing! Because you are a sinner, you will

reject Him and prove yourself so bad, that nothing but the crucifixion of the blessed Lord could meet your case. Oh! you must be born again.

But there is another, a deeper, a divine “must;” the Son must be lifted up—terrible necessity of righteousness God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The Son of God spoke that He knew. Oh, how He knew it! With God there is no allowance of evil, not an unholy thought. We have all had plenty of unholy thoughts. Christ comes down from Heaven and says, “The Son of man must be lifted up!” What blessed grace in His mouth! And mark the complete subjection of His soul, the depth of the love in it, the peacefulness and quietness of Christ thus looking at the necessity of His drinking that cup of wrath, that you might not. And further on, when it was going to be accomplished, He set His face stedfastly to go up to Jerusalem, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood as He approached that hour. Yet here, in the beginning of His career, He states it as the thing He had come down from Heaven to do. He came to do His Father's will, and that will was our salvation.

Do you doubt that you are perishing?

Or do you mark how fully grace rises up above all your ruin? Do you discover that the sin that is pressing on your conscience, and plaguing your heart is the very thing that Christ died for?—that He took it off you on Himself? Now you have got to the gospel, to the glad tidings—the grace—that blessed Lord Jesus put Himself in my whole place before God— “made sin,” He who “knew no sin.” Suppose I see Him on the cross, standing thus in my place, answering for me because I could not answer for myself, I see that He has not left a thing that could bar my entrance up to God. He appeared once, in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He has finished the work. Did He put me away into outer darkness? No; that will be day-of-judgment work; but He put my sin away, and set me there before God without sin. That was His Father's will, which He came down from heaven to do, And oh, what unspeakable comfort! there is not a sin in my heart that Christ has not died for. He drank the cup, and God set His seal in righteousness when He said, “Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool:” and now grace reigns through righteousness—grace has risen above all our sin. What true rest to be able to say, “It was all done there, between God and Christ—righteousness made good before the universe! The moment your soul gets hold of what those three hours of darkness on the cross were, you see that all was settled there between God and Christ, outside yourself; for if you had got there, you must have got into wrath. Hence, when you believe in Christ, you come to God to find the whole question settled by Himself—Christ for you—sweet and conscious truth! You can say, “God so loved me that He sent His Son: though my sins were as scarlet, I am white as snow—I can go in peace.” One who came down from Heaven to tell me: “You are the vilest of the vile, but I have taken up your cause—I have redeemed you to Myself, go in peace.” He who made peace by the blood of His cross, who says, “My peace I give unto you” —wonderful love!—He is able to tell, at such a cost to Himself—having drank the cup that you had earned and filled, that He has made peace.

Can your hearts go in peace on His Word?

Don't let any one make you doubt the efficacy of what He has done. And the Lord give you to hear Him declare in the quietness and grace of that moment, that “the Son of Man must be lifted up;” and may He tell you WHY, in applying it to yourself. And may you learn how blessed it is to be in

light—the light of God—where light shows you white as snow; clean, according, to God Himself—and you will know what it is to walk in the light of His countenance. Amen.

Chapter 130

A Few Words on John 8

The Lord's teaching was interrupted by the Scribes and Pharisees, whose aim was to charge grace with antinomianism. They tried to prove Him either inconsistent with His own grace, or disregarding the law of Moses. If they could show Him making it null and void, they would prove Him to be not of God; for the law of Moses was of God. Again, if He adhered to the law, they thought they should put down His doctrine of grace. But He takes nothing from the law, gives it its fall force, and proves them to be guilty under it. They were all convicted by their own consciences, and went out one by one, beginning at the eldest. The eldest had most character to maintain; and so he takes care to escape first. This history is not so much an illustration of grace (though there is grace of course); but it shows Christ as the light; and the light brings conviction to the conscience. We do not find the Lord saying to the woman (as in Luke 7) “Go in peace,” “thy sins are forgiven,” “thy faith hath saved thee; but He brought her to the light, for she was in His presence, and only says, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

In verse 2 He says, “I am the light of the world” —of the Gentiles, and not of Jews only. Everyone has conscience, and the light has to do with God and the conscience: “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. He is the life, as well as the light. Before a man gets the forgiveness of his sins, he must own God's sovereign title in the soul, and there for judgment.

Light must give evidence about itself. Like the Divine testimony, it must bear record of itself. No man can bear record of Him. How can man tell about what is divine? If I attempt to show light, it is a proof that it is not light. Not seeing the glory of His Person, they could not tell about it. They quarrel with Him as man; He replies as God. (Ver. 14.)

In going through this Gospel, we find in chapter viii. His giving His words as a witness, and in chapter ix. His works; but both are rejected. Then in chapter x. He Says, I will have My sheep at any rate. In this chapter His word and speech are frequently mentioned. See His dependence too as a man (verses 28, 47, 55) for the word. It is an amazing thing to say what “My” word is. It is the word of Christ truly. “If ye continue in My word.” There is much said about abiding in Scripture for Christ and the believer. But Satan standeth not in the truth—that was his character. Nothing but what is true abides. Christ is the truth, and what is of Him is sure. “The truth shall make you free.” It is said also, “The Son shall make you free.” Christ in these two characters—the Son and the Truth—is the source of freedom. As law and sin go together, so the Son and the Truth go together. Christ is the truth. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. He is the One who tests everything by His own presence. He is the One who brings out everything, and He is a living and divine Person too, the Son.

We know Christ now as the humbled, the glorified, Christ: two distinct thoughts are connected with Him thus. When we want stirring up, or energizing for action (as in Phil. 3), we have the glorified Christ presented to us in order to give us power to go forward. When we want to have the affections softened and molded (as in Phil. 2), it is the humbled Christ.

The difference between speech and word is this: word is the sense of divine things, and speech is the expression of it. It is the converse of natural or human things; for Jesus ever speaks, addressing the conscience, but above natural understanding. In natural things you get the meaning of the words, and thus learn the thing. In spiritual things you must understand and indeed get the thing, and then you understand the words.

From verse 41 to end, it is wondrous to see these evil men contending with Jesus. They drive Him up in a corner, as it were, and oblige Him to tell them what He is, or, as He says, He would be “a liar like unto them.” He lets them know that “He that is of God heareth God's words.” God's words! What infinite grace!! A person speaking God's words among men!

But the grace of God brings out the enmity of man. Yet what grace to go on speaking! In Him, the Son, God's speaking to us is in itself infinite blessedness. “Before Abraham was, I am!” He is the Eternal. The Messiah is Jehovah, True God, and Eternal Life. He is the Light of the world (not of Jews only), the Light of life for dark and dead sinners, the Word known by the word, He is the Son, yea, a God Himself, the self-existent One, a despised and rejected man, yet the Savior God on earth.

Chapter 131

Joshua or the Spirit of Christ in His Own

The character of certain remarkable personages in the Word of God typifies that of Christ's; in particular so does Joshua, who introduced the people of God into the land of promise. It was neither Moses, apostle of the Jewish profession, nor Aaron their High Priest, but Joshua who prefigured Christ acting by the Spirit in His own.

Accordingly all the Book of Joshua shows the power of the Spirit of Christ in His people to bring them into the effects of salvation.

Joshua comes before us for the first time in Ex. 17:9 in the war with Amalek. Moses, Aaron and Hur go up to the top of the hill. When Moses holds up his hand, Israel prevails when he let down his hand, Amelek prevails. When his hands were heavy, Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands till the sun went down; and Joshua discomfited Amalek. Thus was it made plain from the first that strength nor courage, nor skill, nor a righteous cause, decided the victory, but intercession with God: on His blessing from on high the success of His people wholly depended. Nor was it all over in one fight, but Jehovah's war with Amalek must be from generation to generation. Moses prays, and Joshua acts. Israel has no force but by continual blessing from above. Joshua is the leader of the people in the battle, as the Spirit of Christ conducts us in spiritual combats.

The second time that Joshua appears, he accompanies Moses as his minister, when he went up into the Mount of God, Ex. 24:13; but Jehovah does not speak to him.

Joshua is seen again in the expedition of the spies to Canaan, Num. 15

At the end of the book of Deuteronomy (xxxi., xxxiv.), Joshua is named as the successor to Moses, who should bring in the people to possess the land of Canaan. Moses went near to the Jordan, figure of death: it is Joshua that leads the people into the enjoyment of their privileges.

Two things present to us the Christian life: the wilderness, where the patience of God's people is tried in passing through this world, a dry and thirsty land where no water is; and the land of Canaan where they have to fight against the powers of evil, Eph. 6:12. The Christian has to do with both. Everything in this conflict is done by the power of God, as was set forth plainly in the fall of Jericho. The accursed thing enfeebled Israel because the power of God cannot be used to the profit of the accursed thing. Such is the principle on which He uses His power. The details of the life of Joshua are those of the Christian life. That power, though under the power of the Spirit, has a responsibility; it must reproduce the character of God. When lie introduces His people into conflict, they have crossed the Jordan. It is when we have passed from death into life that the conflict begins for us. In vain does Jordan overflow all its banks; the power of God stays its waters above, or those below fail and are cut off, so that the people pass over on dry ground.

It is death and resurrection with Christ: Christ's work not merely in its efficacy for justification, but as applied by the Spirit to the soul's realization for life in the heavenly places, where Christ is with whom we are united. Death is the destruction of the earthly life, of man as he is naturally. Such is

the way by which we must go in order to enjoy the things above where Christ sits, a way not passed heretofore. There must be a means of dealing with the flesh, of delivering us from all in us which gives Satan an advantage in the warfare we have to carry on with him, in order to realize our heavenly privileges. It is the judgment of God on and in the cross of Him who died and rose and ascended; and God has quickened us together with Him, having forgiven us all offenses. One with Him by the Spirit, I am dead to sin and the world; and I am risen with Him, yea seated in Him in heavenly places, Col. 2 iii.; Eph. 2 The Christian knows death and judgment borne by Christ for us, that we might be now associated with Him in His living acceptance in glory before God. The way into Canaan lay through the river, and all for Israel, depended on the ark of the covenant which rested in the bed through which before rolled the proud waters of Jordan. Thus does death lose its previous power, and is no more for us than the pathway of faith into the heavenly land, the entry into the enjoyment of the things above. It is the efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection as a present thing for the conscience and heart. Before Israel was the Jordan overflowing all its banks all: the time of harvest; on the other side, the possession of all the promised blessings, but even then not without conflict for every foot of the land. Israel passed dean over Jordan where God for them had cut off its waters before the ark of His covenant. Into the midst of the greatest difficulties, into the midst of Jordan, the ark was borne; but it was of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passing before Israel into Jordan, and there it stood firm until all passed over. God is for us. Death and judgment become the certainty of our salvation from the moment we lay them on Christ who bore their effect on our behalf. We have spiritually passed out of death into life. Our wrestling not against flesh and blood, but against Satan, against principalities, against powers, against the world, rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies.

The principles of this conflict, it may be noticed, are at the beginning of the book of Joshua. When we fight in communion with God, Satan flees. When we reject the accursed thing, the enemy has no strength longer. With God our victory is continual; without Him our force is lost. Never expect to find any strength in the co-operation of the world. From the first chapter we see good courage urged because of confidence in God's presence and power, but only in the path of His word—of obedience: Never does He introduce into the conflict with the assurance of victory, demanding of us the courage of faith, an entire confidence in Him. He orders us to be strong, because He is our strength. Think of Israel asking, Have we passed the Jordan? What ingratitude to doubt or even forget it! When we have passed it spiritually, God is for us in fighting for the Lord. The worldly man fears not God but Satan. A Christian does not dread God but he does Satan, because he knows himself to be weak. We have to fight Satan, but God is for us, having already given His Son for us. When there is confidence in God, when the life of Christ is in activity, sin is as it were behind us. This confidence gives us the courage to look at all the will of God: We dare not do so when we have not the confidence that God is with us.

There are Christians which tremble at the thought of an unknown future: God does not fill their future. People tremble just so much as they confide in themselves. The power of God leads us to the accomplishment of the will of God: our continual dependence on God is the result of God's power in us and of confidence in God. When the blessing of God inspires us with confidence in ourselves, it is turned against us. Christ was perfectly dependent on His Father. Such dependence makes us humble and gives us all power. God says as it were to us, “Now therefore arise,” He introduces us Himself into the conflict because He has Himself trodden the road. He is with us

wherever we go. God makes us “prosper” there, but not in worldliness. When we are not before Him, our knowledge, our victories are snares, because they inspire us with confidence in ourselves.

Chapter 132

King Saul: Part 1

There is not in Scripture a character that furnishes more solemn warning than that of King Saul. As we pass on from stage to stage through his history, it fills the soul with very awful thoughts of the treachery and corruption of the heart of man; and as we are sure that it has been written for our learning (Rom. 15:4), we may well be thankful to our God for the counsel that it gives us, and seek His grace that we may read the holy lesson to profit.

But this we should know, that, though the Spirit of God may have thus graciously recorded these acts of the wicked for our learning, they were all executed by the hand and according to the heart of the man himself. God is to be known here, and in similar histories, only in that holy sovereignty which draws good out of evil, and in that, care for His saints which records that evil or their admonition.

The first Book of Samuel has a very distinct character. It strikingly exhibits the removal of man and the bringing in of God. It accordingly opens with the barren woman receiving a child from the Lord; this being, in scripture, the constant symbol of grace, and the pledge of divine power acting on the incompetency of the creature. It then shows us the priesthood (which had been set in formal order and succession) corrupting itself and removed by judgment, and upon that God's Priest (who was to do according to his heart, and for whom he was to build a sure house) brought in. (2:35.) And then, in like manner, it shows us the kingdom (at first set according to man's desire) corrupting itself, and removed by judgment, and upon that God's King (who was also after His heart, and for whom He would also build a sure house) brought in. Thus, this Book exhibits everything, whether in the sanctuary or on the throne, while in man's hand coming to ruin, and the final committal of everything to the hand of God's anointed. And this anointed of God, we know, in the dispensation of the fullness of times, is to be none less than the Son of God Himself, God's King to hold the immoveable kingdom, and God's Priest to hold the untransferrable priesthood.

The history of King Saul properly begins with the eighth chapter of this book. There we find the revolted heart of Israel, which had been departing from the Lord, as He there tells Samuel, ever since He had brought them out of Egypt, seeking still greater distance from Him, and desiring a king in the stead of Him. The ill government of Samuel's sons at this time was their pretense, but it was only a pretense. There is no doubt that they did act corruptly, and Samuel may have been at fault in making them judges, consulting perhaps too much with flesh and blood, and too little with Israel's welfare and the Lord's honor. But the Lord discloses the real source of this desire for a king, saying to Samuel, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” Like Moses in such a case (Ex. 16:7), Samuel was nothing that the people should murmur against him or his sons; their murmurings were not against him, but against the Lord.

“Israel would none of me,” says the Lord, “so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels.” (Psa. 81:12.) They shall have what their soul was now lusting after, but they shall find it to be their plague. Their own king shall be their sorrow and ruin, as all our own

things are, if we will follow them and have them. “He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart turned him aside.” What but ashes (sorrow and death) does the labor of our own hands gather for us? So is it always, try it in what way we may, and so was Israel now to find it in their own king. (8:11-17.)

But in wonted grace, the Lord here gives His people space to repent of this their evil choice before they reaped the bitter fruit of it. And this was just what He had done before at Mount Sinai. When they were there bent on accepting the fiery law, as though they could keep it and live by it, Moses is made to pass and repass between them and the Lord, in order, as it seems, to give them space to turn and still trust in that grace which had redeemed them from Egypt, and not cast themselves on the terms of Mount Sinai. (See Ex. 19) And so here, I believe, with the same intent Samuel passes again and again between the Lord and the people, But as they there listened to their own heart in its confidence and self-sufficiency, so here they will have a king in spite of all God's gracious warning. They take their own way again.

And I ask, dear brethren, is not this His way, and alas! too often our way still? Is He not often checking us by His Spirit, that we go not in the way of our own heart, and yet are we not like Israel, too often heedless of His Spirit? And what do we ever find the end of our own way to be, but grief and confusion? For the Lord has only to leave us to ourselves, if He would fain leave us for destruction. Legion is the fearful witness of this. (Mark 5) He presents man in his proper native condition, choosing the captivity of Satan, and, as such, being one whom nothing could relieve but that sovereign grace which does not atop to take counsel with man's own desire (for then it would never act), but which goes right onward with its own purpose to rescue and to bless.

But such was Israel now, knowing only their own will in this matter of the king. And this at once prepares us for the manner of person that we are to find in their forthcoming king. For the willful people must have a willful king. Of none other could it be said that all the desire of Israel was on him. Of none other could Samuel have said, “Behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired.” None other could have been the king of this people.

But all this forebodes fearful things, in the king, and fearful days for Israel. And so shall we find it. In the divine order such a time as the reign of King Saul has its appointed uses. Showing us the kingdom in man's hand, it serves to set off the kingdom in God's hand—mischief and corruption and disaster marking the one, honor and blessing and rest the other. The kingdom brought in by their own desire would let them see how unequal they were to provide for their own happiness; just as “this present evil world,” which our own lusts have formed and fashioned, is found unequal to satisfy, leaving us subject to vanity still. But with all this, God's workmanship will stand in blessed contrast. The kingdom under Saul in all its wretchedness and shame might set off the glorious and peaceful days of David and Solomon, as this world of ours will set off “the world to come” in the days of the Son of man.

But however the Lord may thus serve His own glory and His people's comfort by this, it is Israel that now bring this season of shame and sorrow on themselves. They sow the wind to reap the whirlwind. Saul comes forth, the chosen one of a willful and revolted nation, to do his evil work. And thus he stands in one rank with another more wicked than himself. He stands as the type and brother of that king in the latter day who is to do “according to his will” the one who is to come “in his own name,” and say in his heart “no God.” Saul was now coming forth the first of that line of shepherds or rulers who were “to feed themselves and not the flock,” to eat the fat, and clothe

them with the wool (Ezek. 34), and do all that evil work that is here prophesied of Israel's own king, and fill out that character that is here drawn of Saul.

Into the hand of such shepherds Israel is now cast, seeing they had rejected the Lord their good Shepherd, and desired one after their own heart. The first of them, as we here find, was of that tribe of which it had been said of old, “Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf, in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.” (Gen. 49:27.) And he was of that city, in that tribe, which had already wrought such mischief in Israel, and been the occasion of nearly blotting out the memorial of one of the tribes from among the people of the Lord. (Judg. 19-21)

But we further learn of him, that though belonging to the least of all the families of his tribe, and that, too, the smallest tribe in Israel, his father Cis was “a mighty man of substance.” And from this description, I gather that Saul and his father had prospered in this world, being men who were wise in their generation, people of that class who “will be rich,” though nature and family and circumstances are all against them. And Saul is first shown to us searching for his father's assess. Something of the family property was missing, and it must be searched for—their own ass had fallen into the ditch and it must be taken out. But though thus careful of his own things, he seems, as yet at least, to have had no great care for the things of God, for he does not at this time know even the person of Samuel, who was now the great witness of God in the land; and soon after this, his neighbors, “who had known him aforetime,” wonder with great wonder that he should be found among the prophets, so that to this day he is a proverb. All these are notices of what generation he was, telling us that though as yet in an humble sphere, his and his father's house had been formed rather by the low principles of the world, than by worthy thoughts of the Lord of Israel. And such an one was just fit to be directed to Samuel at the time when the worldly heart of the people was desiring a king. His mind was upon the asses, as Samuel seems to hint. The world was set in his heart, though from circumstances it had not as yet been developed in many of its proper fruits. And this is awful warning, beloved. Circumstances, as here, may indeed be needed in order to prove the ground of the heart; but it is the heart itself that determines the man before God (chap. xvi. 7), and sooner or later will determine the life before men. (Proverbs iv. 28; Matt. 15:19.)

In accordance with all this, on being introduced to the intended king, we have no mention whatever of any moral qualifications that he had. All that we learn of him is this, “that he was a choice young man, and a goodly, and 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.” Thus and thus only is he spoken of. He is judged of simply after the flesh, looked at only in the outward man, and thus was suited to man who had desired him, for “man looketh on the outward appearance.” Therefore when the people saw his stature and nothing more, they cry, “God save the king.” This was the king after their heart. He was of the world, and the world loved its own.

And here let me say, that if Saul be thus the man after man's heart, and David, as we read afterward, the man after God's heart, we learn in the one what we are, and in the other what God is. And the distinctive characters of the two kings is this: Saul would have everything his own and be everything himself; David was willing to be nothing and to have nothing, but still in whatever state he was, to be the diligent unselfish servant of others. And thus man, to our shame, is presented in the narrow-heartedness of Saul, but God to our comfort in the generous self-devotement of David.

All this character of Saul will be awfully disclosed in all the passages of his future history, but the same principles are even now early at work. It may be that the less practiced eye cannot discern this, and it is indeed well and happy to be “simple concerning evil.” But heart will sometimes answer to heart, and make some of us, beloved, quicker to detect its treachery than others. Thus in Saul keeping back Samuel's words touching the kingdom, in hiding himself among the stuff when the lot had fallen upon him, and again in holding his peace when some would not give him their voices, there is in all this, I judge, only the show of virtue. For the love of the world and of its praise can afford to be humble and generous at times. It can even send forth those or any other virtues, taking care, however, to send them forth in such a direction as to make them bring home, after a short journey, some rich revenues to the ruling lusts.

In the hand of such an one is the kingdom of Israel now vested, but such an one was not “God's king.” To give them a king, however, appears to have been God's purpose from the beginning. The prophetic words of both Jacob and Moses upon Judah, as also the words by Balaam (Num. 24:17), intimate this; as also Moses' title, “king in Jeshurun.” And more than these, the ordinance touching the king in Deut. 17, and the fact that the Lord Jesus Himself sought the kingdom when He was here (Matt. 21:1), and in the end, at His second coming will take it (Psa. 2:6), prove that God's first purpose was to give Israel a king.

But things were not ready for the king all at once; various previous courses must be accomplished, ere that top stone in the divine building could be brought forth. Israel at first had to be redeemed from bondage—then to be carried through the wilderness to learn the ways and secrets of God's love—then to get their promised inheritance delivered out of the hand of the usurper. Till these things were done, all was not in readiness for the king. Had these things been simply accomplished, the king without delay would have appeared to crown the whole work with the full beauty of the Lord. But each stage in this way of the Lord Israel had sadly interrupted and delayed. After redemption from Egypt they had given themselves, through disobedience, forty years' travel in the wilderness; after taking the inheritance, they had again, through disobedience, brought pricks into their sides and thorns in their eyes; and now they forestal God's king, and through disobedience and willfulness again bring their own king, as another plague upon them. But this is the way of man, beloved, the way of us all by nature. Through unbelief and willfulness we refuse to wait God's time, and we procure a Saul for ourselves. It was thus that Sarah brought Ishmael into her house, and Jacob his twenty-one years of exile and servitude upon himself. Our own crooked policy and unbelief must answer for these sorrows. God, if waited for, would bring the blessing that maketh rich and which addeth no sorrow with it; but our own way only teaches us that he that soweth to the flesh must of the flesh reap corruption. To this day Israel is learning this, and reaping the fruit of the tree they planted, learning the service of the nations whom, like Saul, they have set over themselves; and their only joy lies in this, that God's counsel of grace, in spite of all, is to stand, and His own king shall still sit on His holy hill of Zion.

But in spite of all this, and though Israel is now transferred into other hands, God will prove that nothing should be wanting on His part. He had not only signified Saul to Samuel, and Samuel had then signified Saul at the sacrificial feast, and anointed and kissed him, (9:10.), but in the mouth of several witnesses the divine purpose had been established, and the Spirit, as faculty for office, had been imparted, and an “occasion,” as Samuel speaks (10:7) for proving that God was thus with the king, now arrives.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 133

King Saul: Part 2

The insult of Nahash the Ammonite towards Jabesh-Gilead was this “occasion,” and the Lord gives Israel a complete victory over him by the hand of their king. For this battle was the Lord's, inasmuch as the Lord would fulfill His part in this matter. We need not inquire where Israel got their instruments of war, if now there was “no smith found throughout all the land,” for this day was won not by might nor by power, but “by My Spirit, saith the Lord.” This victory might therefore have been gained as well with lamps and pitchers, or with the jawbones of asses, or with slings and stones from the brook, as with the battle-ax and bow.

Thus again, as in ancient days, the Lord approves Himself not wanting, however willful and stiff-necked His people may be found. And after this, the king is accepted again of the people (12); and this chapter reminds us of Ex. 20 as the eighth chapter reminded us of Ex. 19 For in Ex. 20 Moses transfers them into their new position, but convicts them of the terribleness of it; and here Samuel formally plants them under their king, but convicts them again as with the thunder and tempest of Mount Sinai. The thunder and rain came upon them here, as the fearful pledge and prelude of the end of their own kingdom, as the shaking of the earth at Sinai pledged the end of their own covenant. And under it they cry out in Terror here, as they had done there. There they had said to Moses, “Speak thou with us and we will hear, but let not God speak with us lest we die,” —and here they say to Samuel, “Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not, for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.” And in mercy Samuel here, as Moses there, encourages them still to hold fast by the Lord, who, in spite of all, was still graciously owning them as His people.

These two occasions are thus in strict moral analogy, and show us that king Saul was introduced into the Jewish system now, as the law had been at Moan Sinai, through the willfulness and unbelief of the people, Saul being no more God's king than the law was God's covenant. Israel has again lost their peace by all this, and cast themselves into sorrows and difficulties that they little counted on; but the Lord pardons and accepts them, as He had done at Sinai, and now sets them in the way again in their new character.

And now comes the trial again. “Fear not,” says Samuel to them, “ye have done all this wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.” But, ere the first scene in the kingdom closes, all is broken and forfeited, just as the covenant from Sinai was broken ere Aaron and the people had left the foot of the Mount. There the people grew impatient at the delay of Moses, and, in violation of the very first article of the covenant, made a golden calf. So here Samuel had left Saul for awhile, telling him to go down to Gilgal, and wait for him there till he should come and offer the sacrifices, but now Saul offers the sacrifices himself. (xiii.) He forsakes the word of the Lord: The first act of the king was thus again a violation of the first command he had received. And thus was it all again, as at Sinai so at Gilgal, the immediate breach of the covenant on the part of man. The Lord, it is true, had grace in store for Israel while they were thus destroying themselves; as at Sinai He showed the witnesses of mercy on the top of

the Mount, while Israel was sinning away all their present blessing at the foot of it. But still, in the king's hand now, as in the people's then, all was disaster and loss.

Speedy and yet fully ripe fruit was this of their own way. But, beside this one great act of forfeiture, there are traits of character now displaying themselves in the people's king that strongly mark his generation. We see him acting now after the manner forewarned of Samuel. He chooses three thousand men of Israel to wait upon him, sending the rest to their tents, thus dealing with them as his property, having right to do what he would with his own. “When Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him” —taking thus their sons and appointing them unto himself, as Samuel had said. And all his ways are in the same tone of self-will, fully opposed to the manner of God's king as prescribed by Moses. (Deut. xvii.) In the sovereignty of his own good pleasure, the people's king now does his own will, exalting himself above his brethren, blowing the trumpet throughout the land, speaking as with the voice of a god and not of a man, and saying, “let the Hebrews hear;” thus bringing, as it were, the people to his own door-posts, and there boring their ears, that they might be his servants forever.

And he would be priest as well as king. He would fain sit in the sanctuary as well as on the throne; in disobedience, he will himself offer the sacrifice; in all these things giving us awful pledges of the ways of him who is still to be more daring, magnifying himself above all, planting his tabernacles on the glorious holy mountain, and sitting in the temple of God.

Such was Saul, and such will be his elder brother or antitype in the latter day. But as, in spite of all the trespass and breach of covenant at Mount Sinai, the Lord did not allow the enemy to triumph over Israel, but brought them into the good land that He had promised them; so here, in spite of all this, He works deliverance for them from the Philistines as He had promised, and that, too, in a way that more marvelously displays His hand than the day of Gideon or of Samson. (14) This victory at Michmash, like the victories of Joshua, verified the faithfulness of the God of Israel. Not one good thing could fail. He had promised strength against the Philistines now, as He had promised the land of the Canaanites then, and this day of Michmash and that which follows fulfills the word of the Lord. (9:16, 14:47, 48.)

But all this, as everything else, serves only to develop the people's king more and more. The ways of a willful one are strongly marked in all that he does. His course is uncertain and wayward, because it is just what his own will makes it. But in the midst of all the present gathering darkness there is one object of relief to the eye—the person and actions of Jonathan. He is the one in the apostate kingdom who owns God and is owned of Him, the remnant in the midst of the thousands of Israel, the one who stood in the secret of God, and knew where the strength of Israel lay. And thus he is in full readiness for all the openings of the divine purpose. We see him in immediate sympathy with David, as soon as David appears. (18:1.) His deeds in Israel, before David is heard of, savor of the very spirit that animates David afterward; for the victory of Michmash which his hand won was in full character with that in the valley of Elah, which David afterward achieved. God was trusted in both of them, as the only giver of victory. The spirit with which Jonathan entered the passages between Bozez and Seneh carried David into the front of the battle against the giant. And this, I may say, is the character of every remnant—they walk in the spirit of the hope set before them, so that when it is manifested they are ready for it. As here Jonathan was ready for David,

Anna and Simeon waited for “the consolation of Israel,” and embraced the Child the moment they saw Him. In the latter day, in like manner, the remnant will be looking for the Lord as an afflicted and poor people; and so, in the meanwhile, we should watch for the heavenly glory in the spirit of holy retirement from the world and the things of the world. In spirit and conversation we should be as “children of light and children of the day,” thus signalizing our remnant character, though the night is still around us; that when the light of the morning breaks, and the day of the kingdom comes, we may find our native place in it. The oil in the vessels of the wise virgins tells us this. It tells us that they had counted the cost of being wakeful to the end—that they knew themselves only as “prisoners of hope” in this world, and that it was still but night-time, which would need the lamp, till grace should be brought to them at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

And the character of the apostate is marked in the very opposite way. It is this remnant that they hate, and their hope that they are not preparing for. It is this righteous Jonathan who now moves Saul's envy. Saul, it appears, would now have sacrificed him to his lust, as we know he afterward sought to slay him. For envy, or the love of the world, cares not though it have even a child of our own bowels for its prey, as we know, in the case of Joseph, it craved a brother for a sacrifice. In Saul it also hunted David like a partridge in the mountains, and even would have killed Samuel, to whom under God Saul owed everything. (16:2.) As says the divine proverb, “wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy?”

And with all this, he had no courage in the Lord's cause when the trial came. He makes a stir and bustles a good deal with his six hundred men behind him at Gilgal; but as we follow him to Gibeah, where the battle was at hand, he tarries in the uttermost part under a pomegranate tree, nor do we see him in the field till the day is won. He rages after the fight, but strikes no blow in it; and all that he does is to sacrifice the honor of Israel to his own will, for in the mere exercise of his own good pleasure, he adjures the people not to touch any food till the evening, and that curse hinders the full overthrow of the Philistines.

Thus all that he really is, on this memorable day, is the Achan in the camp. Jonathan is the strength, and he but the troubler of Israel. But with all this, he can be very religious, when religion does not turn him out of his own way, or when, like Jehu, he can serve himself by it. After the offense of the people eating the blood with the flesh, he orders the table of the camp himself in due religious form. But this, instead of crossing his own desire, only serves it, for by this he seems to take the honor of the priesthood to him, and thus to exalt himself. He bustles again as though he were the one object of importance in the whole scene, thus gathering the thoughts of man to himself, and walking in the full light of the world's countenance, which was everything to him, the thing that he lived for.

All this is indeed darkness, but we have gloomier shades to penetrate still.

When Israel entered the land, they received a commission to destroy the nations, for the day of their visitation had come. But here I would observe that it was not the whole earth that was thus to be destroyed, but only those nations which had been guilty of doing despite to God, and had filled up the measure of their sins. The Canaanites had had God's witnesses among them in old time, for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been there, but they remained Canaanites still. The Egyptians had known Joseph and the grace and power of the God of Joseph, but they had ceased to remember Him. And Amalek had, seen the God of glory leading His hosts out of Egypt, with His

cloud over them, and the water from the rock following them, but the hand of Amalek was at that moment raised against the throne of God. Of these three, Egypt, the Canaanites, and Amalek, Egypt and the Canaanites had been already judged, and the day of Amalek had now come; for surely when the Lord's cup was passing, they could not be forgotten.

But Israel had not been fully faithful to the commission which they had received against the Canaanites, as the 1st chapter of the Book of Judges shows us; and now our 15th chapter is just that chapter again under the hand of king Saul. The kingdom was now received, as the land had then been, and the king gets his commission now, as the nation then did. “Go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that he hath,” says the Lord to Saul by Samuel. But Saul makes terms with Amalek, as the tribes before had done with the Canaanites. He spares Agag, as Benjamin had spared the Jebusites, Manasseh the people of Dor, Ephraim the people of Gezer, Zebulun the people of Kitron, Asher the people of Accho, and Naphthali the people of Bethshemesh. (Judg. 1) And thus we have here with the king, as there with the tribes, the disobedience of man, and the consequent forfeiture of all blessing and honor. “Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord,” says Samuel to Saul, “He hath also rejected thee from being king.” (15:23.)

And this was as the loss of Eden to the Lord. The land of Israel should have been the earthly rest, where God would have kept His sabbath. But now it was defiled, as paradise of old; and as of old God repented that He had made man on the earth (Gen. 6:6), so now does He repent that He had made Saul king over Israel. (15:35.) Thorns and briers and sorrow of heart the kingdom was now to yield, as the cursed earth did then. Samuel goes away to weep, and the Lord takes no pleasure in the kingdom.

Thus all is ruin under the hand of the people's king, and the lust of his heart is seen again to work in this scene with fearful power. For he seeks at once to turn this conquest of Amalek to his own profit and glory, careless as he was of the word and glory of the Lord. He first flies upon the spoil, and then sets him up a place (15:12), that is, erects some monument to his “own name, thus seeking to make this victory serve both his pride and his covetousness. It is true, he says, “I have sinned;” but so said Balsam before him, and Judas after him. And even in that confession, the desire of his heart was not towards God's forgiveness and peace, but towards his own honor before men. For these are his words to Samuel, “I have sinned; yet honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel.” This was his lust—he loved the praise of men. He would at all cost have the honor that cometh from man, and Samuel now delivers him over to a reprobate mind. He turns for a moment with him towards the people, but then leaves him forever.

King Saul: Part 3

Thus the judgment of God lies upon him, and an evil spirit from the Lord comes to trouble him. (xvi.) And now the time has arrived for revealing again “the secret of God.” For in all the seasons of man's destruction of himself, there has been another thing going on in the plans of the blessed God. Thus of old, the promised seed is sown in man's field of briers and thorns. (Gen. 3) While his brethren are filling up their sins and sorrows in Canaan, Joseph, unknown to them, is growing up in Egypt for their help: while Israel is in the heat of the furnace, Moses is preparing to be their deliverer in the distant solitudes of Midian: And again, while disasters follow sins in quick succession, the Judges are brought forth as God's deliverers for the people; and at last, when the priesthood was defiled, and the glory gone into the enemy's land, Samuel the child is brought forth to raise the stone of help.

Thus had it been before, and so is it now again. Saul and the kingdom are bringing ruin on themselves, but David, “the secret of God,” is under preparation to set the throne in honor, and the kingdom in order and strength. And what are all, these things but notices to us of Him who is the true secret of God. For as such, the blessed Son of God is now, though flesh and blood decay, the hidden seed in the believer, that is to burst forth in the resurrection a plant of glory. And as such He will by-and-by bear up the pillars of the earth, when all things else are dissolving. He will then come forth out of His secret chambers, as Joseph or as Moses, as Samuel or as David, and shall be as the light of the morning, after a dark and dreary night, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.

And this is always the way of grace: it comes into exercise after man has been convicted of entire insufficiency. It speaks on this wise: “Except the Lord had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.” Man makes Jerusalem a Sodom, a filthy rain, and then out of that rain, God in His own grace and strength builds again “a city of righteousness.” (Isa. 1) And this grace ever takes for its instrument the weak thing and the foolish thing of this world. Such was Jesus of Nazareth, such was Paul with a thorn in his flesh, and such is David now. “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart.” Man had already, as we have seen, looked on the outward appearance, and found his object in Saul, who in person was the goodliest of the children of Israel. But God's choice was not to be ordered by such a measure. (Psa. 147:10.) A rod out of the stem of Jesse is His object, a root out of a dry ground in which there was no comeliness before the eye of men, the one of whom his father, “according to the flesh,” says in scorn, “there remaineth yet the youngest, and he keepeth the sheep” —the one, who like a greater than he, man was thus despising and the nation abhorring. (Isa. 49:7.) This one, this youngest son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, the keeper of a few sheep in the wilderness, is now God's object. “Arise, anoint him,” says the Lord to Samuel, “for this is he.”

And here again I must notice something that seems to me to have great moral value in it. I allude to what appears to have been the different condition of Saul's house and David's house, when

they are severally brought before us. Saul's house, as we have seen, was of no repute in Israel, but had made a fortune as people speak. David's, on the other hand, had once been in honor, was of the tribe of Judah, and in its genealogy bore the distinguished name of Boaz, who had been, perhaps, the first man in his generation. But now it seems to be otherwise with them, for David and his father and his father's house have no distinction now, but simply take their place among the many thousands of Israel. But what of all this the world finds its object in Saul ("for man will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself"), and God, in David. And these things teach us, beloved, that it is safer to be "going down," than "getting up," as the word. is, in the world. And they tell us also that whom God will exalt, He first abases; whom He will glorify, He first humbles. He puts the sentence of death in the children of resurrection. But with the wicked there are no bands, their strength is firm. (Psa. 73) Saul went through no sorrow up to the throne, as David did. Esau, the man of the earth, had dukedoms in his family, while Jacob's children were still homeless strangers on the earth (Gen. 36), yet it is written, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated."

God's way is according to this, hard indeed for flesh and blood to learn, and God's hand thus found its object in David, and we now have accordingly a new feature in the scene before us. We have David, God's chosen, as well as Saul within, and the Philistine without. David is before us in the strength of the Spirit of God, and he soon gives proofs of his ministry both upon the rejected king and upon the uncircumcised. Both are made to own the power of the Lord that was in him. Whether it were the harp or the sling, his hand is skilled to use either. The king had an evil spirit in him, and the uncircumcised is breathing out slaughter, but David stands above both in the strength of the Lord. The unclean spirit goes oat from the king at the bidding of his harp, and the Philistine giant falls under his sling. (16, 17) It might be thought that king Saul's evil course was interrupted by this, but it soon appears that this was rather only another stage in his downward way. The sow was to return to her mire. The unclean spirit goes out only to gather and bring in seven other spirits more wicked than himself. This quieting of the evil spirit was but a flattering of God with the mouth, for the king's heart was not thereby set right with Him. He was not estranged from his lusts by it. His love of the world and its praise, his self-will, and hatred of the righteous, rule him still, and God and His word and His glory are as little regarded as ever.

Chapter 135

King Saul: Part 4

AND in all this we see Israel; for (like prince, like people) Saul is the representative of Israel in apostacy, as he is the forerunner or type of their king in the latter day. This way of Saul under David's harp has been the way of Israel under God's ministers. Elijah raised among them for a moment the cry, “the Lord He is God, the Lord He is God,” but all was quickly “Baal” again. In the light of John the Baptist they afterward rejoiced, but it was only for a season; and when the hand of the Son of God Himself was among them to heal them and bless them, for awhile they flocked to Him in thousands, and when He preached they wondered (Luke 4), and when He entered their city they cried “Hosanna” (Matt. 21), but all soon ended in the cross. The evil spirit had been charmed, the unclean spirit had gone out, but the house was still ready for it, and for it only. And thus the harp of David and the grace and ministry of the Son of God were only the same stage in the downward paths of the king and the people. They were, both of them, disobedient and gainsaying still. And it was this case of David's harp, as I judge, which our Lord had especially in mind, when He said, “If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?” thus likening to Saul that generation of Israel to whom He was preaching, and making the power of David's harp the same as the power of that preaching. And the parable of the unclean spirit going out and returning with others more wicked than himself, which the Lord then delivers (Luke 11), is thus a setting forth both of the history of Saul and of that generation. And so we shall find, that the spirit which now went out of Saul came into him again with increased strength, as the casting out of devils and cleansing the house of Israel for a time by the Son of God ended only in His becoming the victim of their lusts and enmity. For Saul was the man after Israel's heart, the full representative of the revolted and unbelieving nation.

But Saul's sin is not to hinder God's mercy. David has a work to do with the Philistine, which must be done, be the king never so unworthy. And in this we still see the way of the Son of God. He came to destroy the power of the enemy, as well as to heal the daughter of Zion; and though she, like Saul, may refuse to be healed, the Son of God must do His work upon the great Goliath. He must lead captivity captive. He must make an end of sin. He must break down the middle wall of partition and nail the handwriting to His cross. He must slay the enmity and abolish death. He must accomplish all this glorious triumph over the full power of the enemy, though He find none in Israel, who were His own, to receive Him, nor any in the world, that He had made, to know Him

This again is shame and comfort to us: shame, that we could thus treat His love comfort that His love survived such treatment. And upon this, I would further notice (for it carries another lesson to ourselves), that though Saul knew the power of David's harp for a time, he never knew David himself. He had not learned David, if I may so speak—David was still a stranger to him (xvii. 56). And how does this tell us of man and of Israel still! Man will enjoy the rain from heaven, and the fruitful season; but remain ignorant of the Father who orders all this for him Israel was healed of Jesus, but did not learn Jesus; many pressed on Him in the throng, who never touched Him. And all this is like Saul who could be refreshed by David's music, but still have to ask, “Abner, whose son is this youth?”

And this, beloved brethren, is truly sad and solemn; and I think I can say that I never felt more awed, while meditating on scripture, with thoughts of what man is, than in this meditation on poor wretched miserable Saul. The subject is indeed very solemn. It gives us the way of man, the way of a child of this world, who goes on in self-will, with desperate purpose of heart, to take the world for his portion at all cost. And it is no theory, nor singular thing. It finds its counterpart in our world every day; and would in ourselves, but for the gracious keeping of our God. And I do pray, beloved, that neither my pen nor your eye may travel on through these dreary paths of man, without our heart feeling what a thing it is thus to live and thus to die a lover of this present evil world. “He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” (Prov. 29:1.)

Through the next chapters (xviii.-xxvii.) David becomes the principal object; and all that we see in Saul is only the course of a vexed and disappointed man of the world, who by the goading of his own lusts rushes on to destruction, as a horse to the battle. He feels that he is losing the world, and that is everything to him He cared nothing for the kingdom, for its own sake; and he valued its welfare, only so far as that served the world in his heart and his honor among men. The evil spirit now returns with others naive wicked than himself Before, it was a spirit that troubled him, but now it irritates his lusts, and ill too strong for the harp of David. (xvi. 14, xviii. 10.) He had now become one of that generation who will not hearken to the voice of charmers; charming never so wisely. (Psa. 58) The song of the women had, the rather, awakened all the evil passions of his soul; and envy and wounded pride and hatred of the righteous work, and express themselves fearfully through all these scenes. That fatal song was to Saul what Joseph's dream had been to his brethren, and what the tidings of the wise men was afterward to Herod—it stirred up all his enmity; and David's first successes are, of course, only fresh irritations of his lust (xix. 8, 9); and nothing roots it out. Convictions, disappointments, resolutions all fail. And the ruling passion is strong even in death; for while he confesses that David shall soon have everything, and he himself be laid in the grave, still he says, “Swear now, therefore, unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.” Truly, this is all a solemn warning to us. Saul's eye was set on fire of hell, and he kept it fixed on the righteous as its prey. “Saul eyed David.” And it is not in the power of the prospect, or the approach of death, to heal “the evil eye.” The spirit of envy and of strife will work in us, even to the very last gasp; and the only divine cure for it is, to learn through the Holy Ghost, with enlarged hearts, to cease looking to our own personal honor or interest, and to take our place in God's interests; to know that we have our honor, our enduring honor, only in that mighty and glorious system to which the ten thousands of others, and our own thousands are all contributing. That will give divine victory over the world. But the world was Saul's end, and he must get it at all cost. He knew nothing beyond “his own,” and had never learned the glorious and enlarging lesson, that all things are our's, if we are Christ's, for Christ is God's.

But Saul would have David fall by the hand of another, rather than by his own, for he had some stings of conscience in the business as it was; and beside that, he saw that David was “accepted in the sight of all the people.” He plots against his life first by the Philistines, then by his daughter, and at last solicits even Jonathan to be the executioner. But these failing, and only forcing David out from the court and the camp, he then proclaims him a traitor; and would have his people treat him as an outlaw. But no weapon formed against him can prosper. Every snare of the fowler is

broken, no craft can surprise, no strength can overthrow him. When the officers of the Jews came to take Jesus, they had to return, saying, “No man ever spake like this man;” and Saul himself and his officers are turned into prophets, that every band that would bind this anointed of the Lord might be loosed also.

And David, in the exile and shame of an outlaw, gathers round him a company, in the world's esteem, as. dishonored as himself; but who prove the real strength and the only honor of the nation then, and who afterward shine in the brightest ranks of the people, when the kingdom is set up in righteousness. For it is to this David, this exiled David and his band of distressed and discontented ones, that Israel look in their trouble (xxiii. 1); and the enemy is made to know, that the presence of the God of Israel is with them. The Philistines are routed by them, and the Amalekites spoiled; but they defend and rescue their exposed and threatened brethren. (xxii. xxv.) Such and other famous deeds are done by them, and the priest and the prophet and the sword of Goliath (the symbol and the spoil of glorious war) are with them. As afterward with the greater than David, there was another dishonored company, who still were “the holy seed” of the nation, the publicans and harlots, the Galilean women, and she out of whom He had cast seven devils. Saul and his friends kept court, it is true, and the Scribes and the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, but these were whited sepulchers; and the only place of real honor was to go without the camp, and there meet David and Christ, and their dishonored bands. For this is the blessed way of Him who stains the pride of man, and lifts the beggar from the dunghill.

But because David was thus the Lord's chosen, Saul is his enemy, the victim that his enemy lusted after; and the more wisely David carries himself, and shows that God is with him, the more with infatuated heart Saul fears him and hates him and would fain kill him; in all this, going the way of Satan who; knowing the Son of God in his day, trembled before Him, and yet sought to destroy Him. So fully was Saul found to be of “the children of this world,” and “the children of the wicked one;” a suitable king for the revolted Israel, his whole course showing us that nothing is too horrid for man, when God gives him up because of his wickedness. Does not the massacre at Nob, by the hand of his Edomite, show us this? Does not the massacre at Bethlehem by another Saul, show us this? And these are but samples of the ways of that “violent man,” in the latter day, who doing according “to his will” shall “go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to make away many “

But Saul can weep when he meets David; but so did Esau when he met Jacob. There is, however, no trusting these tears. They may but indicate the stony ground at best, while all the time the heart is not right with God. David could not trust Saul's tears, but turned away from them to his hold in the wilderness, and says, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul.” (xxiv. xxvii.) So with the Son of God; when many were believing in Jesus, beholding the miracles which He did, He would not commit Himself to them (John; so unworthy is man, though he put forth his best, of the confidence of God.

And Saul can prophesy too. But so have others of the same generation. Balaam the prophet prophesied while loving the wages of unrighteousness. Caiaphas the priest prophesied, while he was thirsting for innocent blood. Judas the apostle wrought miracles while he carried the heart of a traitor. And Balaam the prophet, Saul the king, Caiaphas the priest, and Judas the apostle, are all of one generation. A new heart, or “another heart,” as a gift for office, had been imparted to each

of them, and in the Spirit they prophesied or wrought miracles. But all this tells us that it is not gifts that make us what we should be, and that nothing will do, if the heart be not with God.

Chapter 136

King Saul: Part 5

My present business I will not forget is with Saul; but I cannot entirely pass by further notices, which these chapters suggest, of David and of Jonathan.

In David we see much that is indeed beautiful and excellent, richly savoring of the Spirit of God. But still we see also the failing of man. Troubles prove temptations to him, and such temptations as are at, times too strong for him He lies to Ahimelech, feigns madness before Achish, purposes vengeance on Nabal, and seeks a refuge among the uncircumcised. For such is man found to be even in this, one of his best samples. But such was not the Lord. He stood faultless, the author and finisher of faith. The faith of David at Nob or at Gath was not what it had been in the valley of Elah, but all was full and equal brightness in Jesus from the manger to the tree.

In Jonathan also we see beautiful faith. His soul was knit to David the moment he saw him, and he empties himself in order to fill David—he strips himself that he may clothe David. For God gives Jonathan clearly to see the divine purpose touching David. But then the question is, this being so, did Jonathan go far enough? ought he not to have more fully left his father, and joined the little outcast band in the cave of Adullam? and is not his inglorious fall at Gilboa the wages of his unbelief? I judge that is so; and thus Jonathan gives us another proof that there is none perfect but the Lord, that none but He has ever gone the walk of faith without some backward step, some error to the right hand or the left.

But I must now hasten to the closing scenes of this solemn and affecting history. For the night of Israel is now setting in with many a dark and heavy cloud. (xxviii.) Samuel is dead, the Philistines as strong and threatening as ever, David the deliverer of the people forced without the camp, and our poor king, the slave of his lusts, all fear and confusion. He inquires of God, but there is no answer, even as it is written, “because I have called, and ye refused, I will mock when your fear cometh.” The Lord was now building against him, and—setting him in dark places—He was hedging him about, and making his chain heavy, and when he now cried, He shut out his prayer. It was indeed a day of darkness and trouble to Israel, as it will be by and by. There was now a forsaking of the living for the dead, and a seeking unto wizards that peep and that mutter, as there will be in the vexation of the latter day. The day of Israel's final iniquity is now anticipated—it is “trouble and darkness and dimness of anguish,” as it will be then. (Isa. 8:20-22.)

At different seasons of the ripening of man's iniquity, there has been a confederacy of kings and their counselors against the Lord and His Anointed. Thus Pharaoh took council with the magicians.to withstand Moses. Balak sent for Balaam to curse Israel. The Jews with Caiaphas their counselor rage against the Lord, and imagine evil. And so in the latter day, the confederacy of the beast and the false prophet will form itself against the power, and in despite of the glory and worship of God. And thus at the close of the iniquity, whether it be in Egypt, in Midian, in Israel or in Christendom, man puts forth his full strength, forming confederacies between the wise ones and the great ones of the earth “The carpenter encourages the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smites the anvil;” but all that is only made to show forth the greater glory of

Him who sits above all waterfloods. His patience has then been despised, His waiting to be gracious has then been neglected, and “the grounded staff,” the decreed vengeance, has only to take its course.

And now, in our history, we get another instance of the same desperate effort of man of the consummation of his sin. Saul with the witch of Endor is another apostate king in consultation with his evil counselor for the filling up the measure of his iniquity. (1 Chron. 10) The cup was now about to be full, and judgment at the doors ready to enter.

Saul, I may here observe, had never set up an idol in the land, though that had been so much the way of Israel both before and after him. He had rather been moved with the desire of setting up himself, thus more clearly marking his brotherhood, as I have before observed, with that willful one of the last days, who is not to regard any God but to magnify himself above all. And with this desire he had already cleared the land of wizards and witches.

But even this light was darkness in him; for it was himself and not, the God of Israel that he would fain bring in instead of the idol. But now that he is losing himself, and the world, as he fears, is departing from him, he will readily enough strike hands with any helper, and form confederacy with even the witch of Endor. The way which the Lord now takes in hand to deal with this confederacy, is very striking, By his prophet Ezekiel he has said, “Every one that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him according to the multitude of his idols.” (Ezek. 14:1-8.) Now this, I judge, was just the way of the Lord in this case. Saul was a corrupt man, in whose heart, and before whose face, the world, as his idol and stumbling block, was set; and because of this the Lord now answers him Himself. He takes the business out of the hand of the witch altogether, gives Samuel for a moment according to Saul's desire, but it is only in judgment, only “according to the multitudes of his idols,” only to tell him of the vengeance that was now at the very doors prepared for him, his house, and his people. The witch is set aside, just indeed as Balaam had been. Balak, like Saul, had consulted the prophet; but the prophet, like the witch, had been overruled and disappointed. He could not go beyond the word of the Lord, but simply speaks as the Lord constrained him; as here the witch is confounded, and cries out in fear, not knowing what she saw, for the Lord had taken the business into His own hand according to the word of the prophet. And thus this appearance and word of Samuel was another hand-writing upon the wall, marking judgment against another profane king with the finger of God Himself.

The Lord thus in Saul illustrates His own principle of acting as revealed by Ezekiel. It was too late now for anything but an answer in judgment. Like Esau, Saul might have had God for his portion. The birthright was his, but he sold it. For the honor that cometh from man, he sold it, as Esau did for a mess of pottage. And now there is no place of repentance for him He beseeches Samuel, but the door was shut, and the master of the house had risen up.

And Saul was no more renewed by all this than God was led to repentance by it. The prophet going from the dead will not persuade, where the living prophet has been refused. Esau might weep at the loss of the blessing, but he still hated his brother. So here Saul for a while is amazed and troubled, lying on the earth and refusing to be comforted; but the trouble and amazement pass by, and he takes of the woman's hand and is refreshed by her dainties. Thus all this is only another stage in his downward path, rather progress than interruption in his dark and evil way. As

in Israel His people afterward, the raising of Lazarus did but strengthen the enmity against the Lord, and carried them onward only the more rapidly to finish their sin at Calvary. (John 11:47.)

And now we have only to follow our infatuated king to the place of judgment, the “day of visitation.” He had rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord had rejected him. His sin had gone before unto judgment—no inquiry after it need now be made. Every passage of his evil reign had declared it, and now he has only to meet the judgment. Accordingly in the strength of that food which he had received at the hand of his evil counselor, he goes out against the uncircumcised, but it is only to fall before them. (31.) But not the death of all men does he die. He dies as a fool dies, slain by his own sword; his sons fall with him, and his army is routed by the enemies of the Lord. “Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men that same day together.” For it was the Lord, and not the Philistines, that had a controversy with him. The day was the Lord's, and in the day of the Lord the apostate king and his host fall. “They lie uncircumcised with them that go down to the pit “; and he comes to his end, as another shall do, and there is none to help him. (Dan. 11:45.)

Thus all ends in the fearful day of Mount Gilboa. Our king has presented us with a fearful pattern of the apostate and his end. He was one indeed who left his first estate. Chosen, anointed, gifted for office, he stood at first in the full title and exercise of the throne; but by transgression he fell, and his office another is to take. Lost, infatuated, child of this world! Here was death the wages of sin again, here was the end of man's and of Israel's way, ruin and confusion and the full power of the enemy, the harvest of whirlwind from the wind which they had sown, the end of that storm of rain and thunder which they had been called to listen to at the beginning of their sin.(12.)

Our Lord has said, “For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.” So is it in these scenes. (29.-31.) Here “the lame take the prey,” and the stout ones “bow down under the prisoners.” The poor outcast David with his little goodly band does mighty deeds which are still to be had in remembrance; but Saul, with the strength of his camp and the glory of his court perishes, the sport and reproach of the uncircumcised. The spoils of Amalek go among David's friends, while Saul's armor hangs in the house of Ashtaroth and his head in the temple of Dagon. “This is David's spoil,” was said over Amalek; while the Philistines had to publish every where among their people, that “Saul was dead.”

Thus are the bows of the mighty broken, while they that stumbled are girded with strength. Because for judgment has the Lord come into the world that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.

Well, beloved brethren, surely we have reason to remember Saul, as we are charged by our blessed Master to remember Lot's wife. In him we see the man of the earth perishing in his own corruptions; and in his history we read the end of one whose inward thought was that his house should have continued forever, but whose way proved his folly. “Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.”

Can you and I sit down on the ruin of all that which Saul lived for, and still find that we have lost nothing? Can we look at the world failing us, and yet know that our real inheritance is untouched?

Has “the God of glory” as yet led us out from the world? Have we as yet cast our anchor within the vail? Is our “good thing” with Jesus? O brethren, is there not a cause to sound the warning of the history of Saul in our ears? does it not show us, that “the friendship of the world is enmity against God?” He sought its honor, and what it had to give; and that he might make sure of that, he gave up God. And are not we pressed and tempted by the same world that ruined him? O that our blessed, blessed, Lord may, by His grace set our hearts upon Himself, and our eye upon His glory, so that we may stand on the wreck of all that can be wrecked, and still find that our portion is like the everlasting hills! Amen, Lord Jesus!

Chapter 137

On the Kingdom and the Church

(Matt. 18)

A main design of the Holy Spirit in this Gospel is to mark, not only the true glory of the Messiah presented to Israel, but the consequences of their rejecting Him who was not more surely Son of David and Son of Abraham than Emmanuel and Jehovah. Hence here only do we find “the kingdom of the heavens,” here only in the Gospels “the church.”

But as our Lord in Matt. 16 speaks of building His church or assembly as a future thing, so uniformly is the kingdom of the heavens said to be “at hand,” never come. Indeed it is one pointed difference from “the kingdom of God” (though of course substantially the same, and so corresponding in Mark and Luke), that this last phrase admits of a moral force (Matt. 6:33), and might be applied when Christ exercised its power as a present thing (Matt. 12:28); whereas “the kingdom of the heavens” is a state of things, which supposes Messiah's rejection in order to His glory as Son of man on high. Accordingly in the great cycle of parables in chap. 13 the first is not a likeness of that kingdom; for the Sower is viewed as on earth. When He from heaven carries on the work in the world, the kingdom of the heavens is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. It was that kingdom in mystery according to the Gospel whilst the Son of man is above; it will be that kingdom in manifestation according to the prophets when He comes on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

The very aim of the first similitude is to show that under the kingdom in mystery the crop is spoiled by the enemy, darnel being mixed with the wheat, till judgment come in the consummation of the age. It will not be so for the millennial age when the kingdom, ushered in by a judicial clearance, is established in power. Matt. 17:24-27 in no way teaches the contrary, but witnesses to His divine rights, which He shares in grace (as far as this can be) with His own, without at all denying the necessity of the cross to free the disciples from Judaism or of His ascension to bring in the kingdom of the heavens. Conversion so as to become like little children is inseparable from being “born again,” as John 3 puts it, and goes with real entrance into the kingdom. Now as always is the heart purified by faith. It is the character of those actually blessed, when Jesus though come is rejected and does not reign manifestly. It is not the means or title to enter, which is and will always be of faith according to grace, never by works or making sacrifices, though faith working by love does deny self and suffer.

Obedience of faith is preeminently demanded now. Rom. 1:5; 16:16. Rom. 2:7-10 is not another way of salvation for another day (which is strange doctrine), but God insisting on moral reality before He develops the grace which can justify the ungodly through faith in Christ. The very terms “glory and honor and incorruption” imply Christian knowledge by the gospel, and neither a past state nor a future. The believer profits by such warnings as Matt. 18:6-10; unbelief explains them away for another time and other people, and will surely pay dear. “We (not others by and by) must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God,” say the apostles. If we heed Paul, we must now preach the kingdom, the gospel, and the church, all deeply (though I say not equally)

concerning Christ's glory. The Lord was not referring to the crisis, but to all the time while He is away, any more than in the beginning of Luke 12 or the end of xiv. His own grace in saving the lost is the pattern of all loving care for the least and weakest, while He urges unsparing self-judgment, which are conspicuously, if not distinctively, Christian principles.

Chap. 16 gave us, on the evident and unbelieving rejection of the Messiah, His promise of the church, and to Peter His gift of the keys of the kingdom, the new and two-fold order of things which we know since Pentecost in contrast with Judaism, not future but present. So here in chap. 18 we have the spirit suitable to the kingdom, and practical ways for those within the assembly or church to be founded as distinct from the synagogue. Those the disciples deeply needed to learn, and we too. The allusions to the law, and Jewish imagery, do not touch this in the least, being found everywhere. It is the Christian, and the assembly, as the disciples would ere long walk in the power of the Spirit, far indeed from the earthly righteousness of the law. Every intelligent reader has seen that the passage does not go beyond the offended saint who seeks to win the offending brother, even to the point of bringing him before the assembly. Putting away is not spoken of here, but in connection with wicked leaven in 1 Cor. 5 What the assembly may do is not said, but that if the offender will not listen to it, he becomes, to the brother who in vain sought to win him, as one of the heathen or the publican. The individual's line is pursued to the end, which closes the account. Only in this connection we are told most solemnly of authority to bind and loose, and also of assured answer to united prayer, all being set on the blessed ground of the Lord's presence with even two or three gathered unto His name.

The various parts form one whole, the order is perfect; and the provision of grace is bound up with that which is most vital, the Lord's presence in the midst of two or three gathered to his name. Inspiration has nothing to do with the case, but authority from Christ for His own to act in His absence. Neither “Verily,” (verse 18), nor “Again,” (verse 19) severs; but as the one draws attention to the heavenly sanction of what they do judicially on earth (with which compare 1 Cor. 5 and 2 Corinthians the other assures of the Father's making good their requests in one mind, both having the blessed guarantee of the Savior's presence in their midst if gathered to His name. The whole characteristically savors of grace to and in the church throughout, if but two or three were thus gathered.

Nor can any authority be higher than His there. An apostle or a far less than he might rouse the saints to their responsibility; but it was theirs to bind and loose, as well as to expect answers from the Father, because He (Christ) is in their midst. I do not speak of power as in Acts 5, or as in 1 Cor. 5:5, and 1 Tim. 1:20, but of authority to act in His name—of course by His word in obedience. To put obedience in opposition to authoritative action is erroneous; it is obedience of His word on the contrary which gives firmness no less than humility: And the greatest of the apostles writes; “To whom ye forgive anything, I also": not, To whom I forgive, ye must, as man rising up against the Lord soon made it in the world-church.

So, in John 20:23, the disciples were charged of the Lord, as receiving the Holy Spirit: “Whosesoever sins ye remit; they are remitted to them; whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained.” Some divines, we know, have misapplied this to inspiration; others to miracles; but it is the inalienable place of grace and holiness which the saints have as God's assembly here below to represent Christ, in that divine love which is superior to evil where faith is discerned, and in that

holy jealousy which discerns unbelieving evil under the fairest forms. As an eternal question the Lord alone decides; but we speak of the assembly as here privileged, and now as ever bound, to act for Him in the Spirit according to His word.

Hence our being in the church is quite consistent with our being also in the world field of the kingdom of the heavens, where wheat and darnel both grow together until the harvest.

A renewal of inspiration for future saints seems as dangerous a doctrine as taking away the kingdom and the church in Matt. 18 from those who wait for the Son of God from heaven.

Chapter 138

Man's Will and God's Grace: Part 1

My dear Brother, I have often thought of our last conversation, as we walked on the sands at S—, and as often felt the regret which I then expressed to you, that the subject of the eternal security of God's children should be so generally approached through the medium of texts and considerations which are supposed to be attended with difficulty as to it, instead of the substantive testimony to it with which the Word of God abounds, being fairly considered, and difficulties and objections viewed in the light which is thus afforded us. But in turning to the subject, with the thought of fulfilling your request, that I would present you, in a condensed form, with what I regard as the positive testimony of Holy Writ respecting it, I have been divided in my mind between these two modes of presenting it, namely, that of taking the passages in the order in which one comes at them in reading the New Testament, or that of classifying the passages, arranging them under several heads. I had pretty nearly determined to confine myself to neither; but, commencing in the former mode, to take any opportunity which might arise of acting on the latter also; an inquiry into one passage often naturally suggesting a reference to others of like import, even though they should not follow in exact order of occurrence; when it seemed to me, that, ere commencing either, it was almost indispensable to devote a little attention to the previous inquiry, of how a man becomes a child of God. If it be, as so many suppose, by an act of our own will, choosing to turn to God and believe in Christ, that we become Christians, then, it is a doctrine feasible enough, that by another act, or by other acts, of our own will, we should finally cease to be such. But if the sentiment placed at the head of this paper be the truth of God, and can be proved to be such, then it will be manifest, that in order to the utter and final defection of a Christian, it requires not only a change in his will (which is indeed fickle and unsteady as the wind), but a change in the grace of Him by whose will and power it is that he has become a Christian—a child of God. The Lord grant us true simplicity and subjection to His word in looking into these matters.

Two passages would of themselves be sufficient to settle our souls as to the subject before us, if we really read them with unquestioning simplicity of faith— “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13); and “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18). In the former of these, the new birth is expressly declared to be, “not of blood,” or natural descent; “not of the will of the flesh,” or the natural will or choice of the person who is born again; nor of the will of man,” any agency which other men may choose, or will, or pretend to exercise upon him. In both passages, it is expressly declared to be “of the will of God.” Here I might leave this subject; but, knowing how the thought haunts the minds of those who have had the kind of training both you and I had— “Well, but are not life and death set before us in Scripture? And are we not called on to choose life that we may live?” —I would not thus summarily dismiss the inquiry. There are passages such as these in the Old Testament; and there are some of a somewhat similar character in the New; and every word of God is sacred, and true acquaintance with its meaning important. But it does now appear to me, that they who use such passages as those just referred to, to show that the new birth is dependent upon an act of the human will, in the reception of

Christ, or of the gospel that sets Him forth, have entirely mistaken the scope and meaning of those passages, and betray their ignorance of the scope and design of a great part of the Word of God.

To you I need hardly say, that all doubtless who have been saved in all ages have been saved by grace through faith; but there is a wide difference between the testimony and dealings of God before the crucifixion of Christ, and since that event. Until that event took place, God's dealings with mankind were one continued trial, so to speak, of whether there be in man anything whereby he can, under any circumstances, retrieve himself. Not that such trial was needed for God. He knew from the beginning, yea, from before the foundation of the world, what man's course would be, and how he would demonstrate the utter hopelessness of his condition, if left to his own will, with every possible inducement to act aright. But this was to be demonstrated to man himself, and hence the trial. I would not at present dwell upon man's trial in Eden. He was then tried as to whether he could maintain his innocence, by withstanding temptation from without. There was then no tendency to evil within. But when man had fallen—when the great deceiver had succeeded in poisoning all the springs of moral action in man's nature—God neither summarily cut off the offender, nor at once sent the Savior. Wrapping up a promise of a Savior in the curse pronounced upon the enemy, he left man, now driven out of Eden, to multiply and fill the earth, and make manifest, without the restraint of an express law such as Adam had been under, what the bent of his will was, the promise all the while affording a resting-place for faith, wherever there was a heart, (such as Abel's, Enoch's, or Noah's,) opened to receive it.

What was the result of this trial? “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (ver. 11, 12). The evil rose to such a height, that God could no longer tolerate its existence; so the flood was sent to destroy man from off the face of the earth. Noah had found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and was, with his family, preserved to people the earth. Man was thus put on trial once more. After the flood, a new element was introduced to restrain the violence which had before filled the earth. The ordinance, “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,” made man a check and a restraint upon the violence of his fellow-man. But how does man acquit himself under this new principle of human government, thus in its essence introduced? Alas! Noah, the one in whom the authority was naturally invested, debases himself with wine; and when thus degraded, his own offspring take advantage of his state to degrade him further still; Babel too, and the cities of the plain; Egypt, with its idolatries and oppressions; and the cities of the Amorites (see Deut. 18:9-12), all form specimens of what man proved himself to be in the interim between the flood and the giving of the law. Rom. 1:21-32 presents us with a gloomy picture of what man at this period proved the desires of his heart and the bent of his will to be; as well as of the consequences to which God gave up the Gentile world. But when He did thus give up the Gentiles, He made choice of Israel, that in His dealings with that nation, brought outwardly nigh to Himself and favored with every possible advantage, further trial might be made, within a narrower sphere, of what the heart and will of man would produce. It was to this people that the law was given. And Moses, in recapitulating the dealings of God with this people in the wilderness, states that the object was “to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no” (Deut. 8:2).

It was to Israel that the words, so often quoted to prove that life or death is at our own choice, were spoken “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, and His statutes, and His judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply,” &c. (Deut. 30:15, 16). Again, “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (v. 19).

Was it, then, that any were saved by thus choosing life that they might live? This would be to affirm that life could come by keeping the law; and Paul says plainly, If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Galatians hi. 21). But then he also says, “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21). This would indeed be a terrible conclusion to come to. And if you should inquire, as some did in the apostle's days, “Wherefore then the law?” let the apostle answer: “It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made” (Gal. 3:19). And if you should still say, Why added because of transgressions? take for answer the same apostle's words in another place, “For by law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). And again, “Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound” (Rom. 5:20). And again, “I had not known sin, but by the law” (Rom. 7:7). And again, “But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful” (ver. 13). Yet once more, “The law worketh wrath” (Rom. 4:15). Now, it seems to me a serious thing, in the face of all these inspired declarations of what ends the law was designed to answer, to affirm that any were saved by “choosing life” according to the tenor of the words of Moses, which have been quoted. Life was then offered them on condition of obedience to the law; and the Holy Ghost solemnly assures us, that “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified” (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16, 21; 3:11); that is, in other words, they could not have life on the terms proposed by Moses.

Of this, Moses was quite aware. In the very next chapter to that from which his words are quoted, we find that the Lord appeared and said unto him, “Behold thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people shall rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them” (Dent. xxxi 16). They had already broken one covenant of works, in token of which Moses brake the two tables of the law, which were in his hands, when he came down from the mount (see Ex. 32:19). With an unchanged nature, and placed under a similar covenant of works, what could be expected now? What but the results which the Lord assures Moses, and Moses assures the people, would actually ensue? “Now therefore, write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel; put it in their mouths that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I sware unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed; for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware” (Dent. xxxi. 19-21).

Can anything be more solemn or decisive than these last words? God declared to Moses, that instead of choosing life that they might live, the people would turn to other gods, provoke Him, and

break His covenant; and He speaks of these future acts of evil, as only the display of what He knew to be at the then present time working in their hearts. “I know their imagination” &c. Hence, Moses said to them, “Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God.” Why? That they might choose life, and live by keeping it? Nay, but “That it may be there for a witness against thee.” “For I know thy rebellion,” he proceeds, “and thy stiff neck; behold, whilst I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death” (ver. 26, 27)? “For I know,” says he again to them, “that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands” (ver. 29). Surely we need no further answer to those who use Moses' words to prove that salvation depends on human will. If it did, who could be saved?

Chapter 139

Man's Will and God's Grace: Part 2

Joshua's words are sometimes quoted for this purpose, as well as those of Moses; and with as little reason or force. After reminding Israel of the condition in which their fathers were, serving other gods, when the Lord took Abraham from the other side of the flood; after rehearsing to them the wonders which God had wrought, and many of which their eyes had beheld; he exhorts them to fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away other gods; and then he adds, “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15) The fact is, he does not call upon them to choose between the Lord and idols. He says, “If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye” whether ye will serve this class of idols, or that. He, through grace, as we know, was resolved on serving the Lord. But when the people, with good intentions perhaps, but in a spirit of self-sufficiency, declare that they too will serve the Lord, how does Joshua receive their protestations? “And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you after that he hath done you good” (ver. 19). And when the people still vow and protest “Nay; but we will serve the Lord,” Joshua says to them, “Ye are witnesses against yourselves, and ye have chosen you the Lord to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses” (ver. 21, 22). Ah, yes; to have our words witness against us is the only result that can flow from our declaring that we choose the Lord and His service. And, as though to show in what a poor condition they were for taking such vows upon them, Joshua immediately exhorts them: “Now, therefore, put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel” (ver. 23). There were, then, strange gods among them! Their hearts, too, needed inclining to serve the Lord! Plain proof that they were, as we know the human heart is, averse to His service.

Of this we have still further evidence in that part of their history which immediately succeeds. The Book of Judges is but the history of their sins, and of the calamities which these brought upon them, with the Lord's merciful interpositions for their deliverance. Into this I do not now enter. Nor shall I pursue the thread of their history throughout. It would lead me too far. One point, however, must not be omitted; I refer to the ministry of the prophets. It differed materially from the law simply considered. The law left no room for repentance. It demanded obedience; but failing to obtain that, it had nothing to pronounce or bestow but condemnation and the cure. It was obedience, uniform unvarying obedience, which the Lord required; not repentance and a return to obedience.

But the prophets were sent to propose, as it were, new terms. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:7). “Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers: yet return again to me, saith the Lord” (Jer. 3:1). “Go, and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause

mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep mine anger forever, O house of Israel. Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done he shall die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live—he shall not die" (Ezek. 18:25-28). Such was the ministry of the prophets.

But was this, to prove, any more than Moses or Joshua's language respecting the law, that it was possible for man, of his own will, so to turn from his wickedness and do that which is lawful and right as to live thereby? Surely not. It was a further test—a milder one—to prove whether it was in the heart or will of man to turn to God, and serve and obey Him. It was as though God said, I will not rigorously enforce the claims of My law. It claims uninterrupted and universal obedience. That you have utterly failed to render, and the law knows nothing of repentance, But now I give you an opportunity to begin again. "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live." It was a fair offer to blot out all the past, and begin again; and this offer was made, be it remembered, to those who were complaining that their destinies were not in their own hands. Could a fairer offer have been made? But need I say to you, my brother, whether it were possible for any fallen man to be saved thus? What! by keeping all God's statutes, and doing for the time to come that which is lawful and right Surely this would have been for the doer of these to live by them, which Paul declares to be the righteousness which is of the law. It was simply affording, to those who thought they would have done better than their fathers, an opportunity of showing what they could do!

And what was the issue of this trial of man by the new proposals of repentance and amendment of life! "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" (2 Chron. 36:15, 16). These patient dealings of God with Israel were continued after the captivity; and John the Baptist was the last of the long line of those who were thus sent to Israel. "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matt. 11:13).

Did I say, the last in the line of servants who were thus employed? But there was One greater than all these servants of God, who came after them all on the same errand. Will you turn, my brother, to Matt. 21:33-xii. 14, where you will find the summing up of all we have now been considering together, and that from the lips of our blessed Lord Himself? You know the two parables which constituted this passage. A certain householder plants a vineyard, and lets it out to husbandmen. When the time of the fruit draws near, he sends his servants to the husbandmen, that they may receive it. The husbandmen take the servants, beat one, kill another, and stone another. Again he sends other servants more than the first; and they do to them likewise. Last of all he sends his son, saying, "They will reverence my son." So that one object for which the Son of God was sent was to seek fruit of those to whom the vineyard had been entrusted. How was He received? "But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and

slew him” The meaning of this cannot be mistaken. The Jewish nation were the husbandmen. All the privileges God had bestowed upon them were the vineyard. The obedience He required was the fruit, which they ought to have rendered. The law demanded it, but in vain. Prophet after prophet came seeking it; but maltreatment or death was all they received. Last of all came Jesus, the heir. Him, also, they put to death. What can be done more? What further test of man's heart and will can be applied? There is a further test; and the application of this, with the result, is illustrated in the next parable, at the beginning of chap. 22.

Jesus came, not only as the last of those whom God sent seeking fruit from man; He came as the messenger and minister of God's grace to man. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come.” Here it is not the Lord of the vineyard seeking fruit—God requiring of man the service, the obedience, due to Him. No; it is a king inviting to a wedding feast: God, in His grace, providing everything for man, and inviting him to partake. But he is no more inclined to receive God's bounty than to satisfy God's claims. They would not come. But this is not all; the first refusal is not received as final. “Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.” Christ, as seeking fruit, is rejected and slain. He is equally rejected as inviting Israel, by means of His disciples to partake of the feast which God had provided. But when they have thus rejected Him, grace still lingers over them, and His very death is made the occasion of renewed invitations. “All things are ready” (this could hardly have been said before): “come unto the marriage.” But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise; and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully and slew them.” Such is the reception with which all God's overtures, as well as His claims, are met on the part of man. He claims obedience, He seeks fruit-man will not render it. He publishes grace, providing a wedding-feast, and inviting guests— “they would not come.” He repeats His invitations, descanting on the plenteousness of the provision, and declaring that all things are ready. It is all to no purpose. Some light-heartedly despise His bounty, preferring their merchandise or their farm: others, more cruel in their rejection of grace, spitefully entreat and slay the servants who are sent to invite them. Such is man; and such is man's will with every possible advantage short of that Almighty grace which subdues his opposition, and makes him willing to receive Christ, and the salvation He has brought. Such grace it is, and such grace alone, by which any become the children of God.

The marriage was made by the king for his son. The feast was provided to grace this marriage. Is the king's son to be despoiled of his marriage-feast, because of the perversity and obstinacy of those first invited as guests? These, or many of them, perish for their contempt of God's grace; but other messengers still are sent out—not now to those who might have expected to be invited, but—into the highways, to bid as many as they find. “So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.” In Luke 14, where we have a similar parable, the servants are told, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in thither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” They were to bring them in. It is not an appeal to their will, as to whether they will come; they are to be brought in. When this is done, the servant says, “Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out

into the highways and hedges, and COMPEL them to come in, that my house may be filled.” If we are really guests at Christ's table, it is not that we have of ourselves chosen to come when invited, nor even when urged; but because we have been brought in, or compelled to come. That is, the opposition of our natural will has been overcome by that Almighty grace, which, in thus overcoming our opposition, has made us willing, and brought us in. This is beautifully expressed in the well-known lines:—

“Nay, but I yield, I yield,

I can hold out no more

I sink, by dying love compell'd,

And own Thee conqueror.

No man becomes a child of God by an act of his own will!

Affectionately yours in Christ, W. T.

Chapter 140

The Meat Offering

Leviticus 2

In the burnt-offering we had the way in which Christ, sin being in the world, offered Himself without spot to God. Here we have more His perfectness in detail brought down to us. The priests ate part of the meat offering, they ate nothing of the burnt-offering. We have what Christ was in His perfectness down here, all the characters and traits of that perfectness, but brought to us. The burnt-offering was not brought to us, but was burned entirely before God. Sin was there, atonement made—not sins, but sin—and it was a perfect sweet savor to God. Here it is more the detail of what He was as a man, but burned with fire—the test of His perfectness.

Verse 1. Here I have the general character of the Lord: fine flour, perfect humanity— “this man hath done nothing amiss,” as the poor thief said on the cross; then the oil (the Spirit) and frankincense put upon it. Perfect in Himself, without sin, in every sense, He was given the Holy Ghost, sent in bodily shape like a dove, and abiding on Him. He could not join Himself with Israel, for they were sinners and unbelieving; but there was a remnant called out of God by the ministry of John the Baptist, and He goes with them in their first right step. When He thus came out publicly, the Holy Ghost came upon Him. He takes His place, in a public way, among this remnant who were going right, under the testimony of John the Baptist; and so, blessed be His Name, He does with us in our first right step. We need redemption to bring us into the place where He stood by reason of His own perfectness. He was sealed with the Holy Ghost; we are sealed because of the blood. The leper was first washed, then sprinkled with blood and then anointed with oil. Christ made the place into which we are brought by redemption. Heaven opened on the Man on earth, upon whom the Holy Ghost descends and abides; and the Father's voice came, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;” but He must die to bring us into it. The gift of the Holy Ghost was confined to Him until redemption was accomplished. He had to finish the work and take His place on high for us to receive the Holy Spirit.

Here we see the fine flour, and the oil, and the frankincense upon it, the perfect sweet savor of His life to God; the sweet savor, not of the sacrifice, but of all His life, His words and works: a sinless Man, passing through this world, all He said and did was by the Holy Ghost. He was the Anointed Man, which is what the name Messiah or Christ means. “He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure.”

Verse 2. Here we have what was very sweet as to the path of Christ, in which we have to seek to follow Him. The handful was all burned to God, Christ, looked at as Man, was offered to God; “the flour thereof, the oil thereof, and all the frankincense thereof.” Here I find the perfectness of Christ in His path—that He never did anything to be seen of men; it all went entirely up to God. The savor of it was sweet to the priests; but it all was addressed to God. Serving man, the Holy Ghost was in all His ways; but all the effect of the groom that was in Him was in its own mind always toward God; even if for man, it was to God. And so with us; nothing should come in, no motive, except what is to God. We see in Ephesians (iv. 82; v. 1, 2) the grace towards man, and the perfectness

of man towards God as the, object, “Be ye imitators of God as dear children.” In all our service as following Christ here we get these two principles: our affections towards God and our Father, and the operation of His love in our hearts towards those in need. The more wretched the object of, service in the latter case, the truer the love and the more simply the motive is to God. We may love down and love up; and the more wretched and unworthy the persons are, for whom I lay myself out for blessing, the more grace there is in it. “God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” But while this is true, yet as to the state of my heart, the higher the object the more elevated the affection. With Christ it was perfect. How can a poor creature like me be an imitator of God? Was not Christ an example, God seen in a man? And we are to “walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God,” He gave Himself for us, but to God; it was God's grace towards poor wretched sinners.

If we look at ourselves, we shall soon see how motives get mixed up, and things come in, even where there is right true-hearted purpose; and that is where we have to watch. In Christ all was perfect; all, every bit of it, as to spring and motive, was for God's glory in this world. No thought of men, as to pleasing them, but that singleness of eye which looked to God alone, though full of kindness to man—loving down, in that sense, but over looking up, with His God and Father before His eye, which made Him perfect in everything. He was perfect of course, He could not be anything else.

Now, it is not that the priests could not smell the sweet savor of the sacrifice; but it was not offered to them, it was all burned to God. As regards His own path, not a feeling that was not entirely to God for us, but to God. It was that which was perfectly acceptable to God.

Verse 3. Here is where we are brought, looked at as priests, our eye opened. It was the food of the offering of Jehovah, but it is our food too. We must be priests to have it: it is most holy to the Lord. I may see external beauties in Christ, I might write a book on the beautiful traits in His character, but that is not Christ's life. It is an entirely different thing when the priest gets it as God's food. (I am bold to use the word, for scripture does so.) The priests ate it, while as to the frankincense everything was burned wholly to God. In the burnt-offering the priest did not eat anything; it was the absolute offering of Himself to God. There was a sustaining power, a perfectly holy power, and all perfectly acceptable to God; but then at the same time, it is what we feed upon as priests. We get our souls formed into delighting in Christ, by realizing in our spirits what God Himself, the Father, takes such delight in: It is a blessed place we need and have to seek spiritual apprehension to find what it is that makes Christ the delight of the Father—what was the expression of that grace, always well pleasing to Him.

We follow His path in the Gospels, and we see always perfect love to us poor things, but everything perfectly and absolutely done to the Father. Turn to Matt. 17 where we have a bright example of the condescending grace with which He associates us with Himself, while showing Himself to be the Son of the Father, in divine knowledge and power. It was just after the transfiguration, where the heavenly glory of the kingdom was revealed: His ministry as come into the midst of Israel, according to promise, closed, so that He strictly forbad them to say that He was the Christ. But what does He give them instead, if not yet in the glory revealed on the mount? This tribute was not to the heathen emperors, but what had been ordained in Ezra's time for the expenses of the temple services. They come and ask Peter, Does not his Master pay it?—in fact,

was He a good Jew? Peter says, Yes, he does not look farther. But when he comes into the house, the Lord anticipates him. He shows who He is, He knows all divinely, the Son of the great King, Jehovah, and He joins Peter with Himself; children of the great King of the temple. Then He shows His divine power over creation, and makes the fish bring Him the money, even the exact sum, and again puts Peter with Himself; “that take and give them for thee and Me.” We find the place He took in lowliness down here, but, while taking the low place, bringing us into the high place with Himself. We are changed from glory to glory as we gaze upon Him; but it is the humiliation side, as in Phil. 2, which wins our affections.

Satan sought to take Him out of that absolute singleness of eye, in which He was perfect “command that these stones be made bread;” but He had no orders to do it, no word out of the mouth of God: that was His manna, and He came as a servant. In Phil. 3 you see the other side Christ glorified, and Paul running after to win Christ; the energy which hinders other things getting possession of the heart. But it is the humiliation side we have here—Christ humbling Himself, making Himself of no reputation, that I may run in the same path and spirit, for the glory of the Father. Was He ever impatient? Did He ever do a single thing for Himself? It was always God His Father, in one sense, His disciples and the poor world, in another. And where the affections are drawn out, it is always on this humbled side. It is touching to go through the Gospels, and to become sufficiently intimate with Christ, to see His motives in everything; yet this is much to say, and requires to life much with Him; but this is blessing. When I hear “thee and Me,” what a strange putting together that is! And He does it with no too. Knowing who He is, the Son of the Father down here, He says, “thee and Me.” If you get to trace Him through all the path, you never get anything but perfectness.

When I think of the death of Christ, His love to the Father, taking the cup the Father gave Him to drink, I find my delight, my soul bowed down at the thought of all the love and obedience that was in it. And He says, “Therefore doth my Father love Me.” It is God's food too! We shall soon see how far He is beyond our thoughts.

Now (ver. 4) we get some details to bring out Christ more perfectly— “Unleavened cakes.” The general truth was there before, but here we find no trace or form of sin in Him, nor indeed employment of mere amiability of nature, or what refreshes nature (neither can be in a sacrifice), unleavened cakes with no honey in them. Leaven is not found in an offering except on the day of Pentecost, when we come in; there consequently there is. Those cakes were offered to God, but not burnt on the altar for a sweet savor, and a sin-offering was offered with them. There are two characters here: Christ, looked at as man, was born of the Holy Ghost, no sin in Him; we are born in sin, and get anew nature. But He was personally perfect, no leaven in Him at all. Instead of leaven, it was fine flour mingled with oil—as to His flesh, He was born of the Spirit. Then it is added, “unleavened wafers anointed with oil:” Christ received the Spirit as man, down here, to walk as man, in the power of the Holy Ghost, in obedience; and then, having gone up on high to the Father, He sends the Spirit down upon us. The Father (John 14) sends Him, that we may cry Abba; and on the other hand, Christ sends Him from the Father, as the testimony to what He is at the right hand of God. We cannot get the anointing and the sealing, that is, the Holy Ghost, till we are washed with water and have faith in the efficacy of Christ's blood.

Verse 6. “Thou shalt part it in pieces;” every bit of Christ (in figure), every word He said, everything He did, all was perfect, the expression of what was divine in a man down here. Not only did His general life express the fruits of the Spirit, but every word, every work, was all absolutely perfect. Now we may in a general way walk in the Spirit, but we often fail. But I can follow Him any day, and every day, and find “nothing amiss.” It is a wonderful thing to look round this world of sin and wretchedness, and be able to trace one Person everywhere and every when, and find nothing but what was perfect. No matter what it was—obedience, love, grace, firmness—all that came out was the expression of what was perfect in and for the place where He was. Beloved friends, I am sure I trust you do, but I would exhort you, in that way, to feed on Christ; “he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.” In studying Him down here, the soul gets intimate with Him; we feed on that on which God our Father feeds.

Verses 7-9. Here I get another element. When the fire of God's judgment tested Christ, there was only a sweet savor. Now, if we get tested, alas! often the flesh comes out—I do not say always. He got tested by the evil of man, the terribleness of death, the power of Satan, and finally by the judgment of God (the proper meaning of fire as a figure), and nothing came out but what was absolutely a sweet savor. God says He is the elect and precious stone, and to the believer He is precious too!

Verse 11. “Brought to the Lord,” that is the point. I must have a Christ, wholly and entirely giving Himself up to God. “Nor any honey.” Mere sweetness of nature cannot come in. There are sweet things which God Himself has established; but Christ was entirely outside all these things, not as condemning them; for when His work was over, He could commit His mother to John. There are things which God graciously gives us here, but you cannot offer them as a sacrifice. They are of God in themselves; only sin has come in and spoiled the whole thing. The honey itself was not wrong. The coming of Titus comforted Paul; he got in the conflict, like Jonathan, a little honey on the top of his rod, so to speak. And the comfort was of God, who comforts them that are cast down. The poor woman at the well, the thief on the cross, were Christ's comforters. Honey cannot come into the sacrifice: neither the sin of nature, nor mere natural joy, can come into the sacrifice of Christ. The condemning it is all a mistake: Christ carefully maintained what God had originally established. But now we get a drunken husband beating his wife, children who are a torture to their parents, &c; for sin has come in, though the relationships are of God. But when you come to what is for God, there can be no more honey than leaven.

Verse 13 shows another principle here. I get” salt,” which is not sweetness, but complete separation of heart to God—the salt of the covenant of our God. God in sovereign grace has taken me up, and separated me to Himself. It is the positive side, which preserves me for God and with God; and that, beloved friends, is what we are to desire. It is not merely no leaven and no honey; which is the negative side. There is no separation by ourselves in us; we cannot make holiness. It is holiness to the Lord, the heart separated to God in everything; a separation of heart and spirit with no pretension in it; “for ye were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body.” Through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the everlasting covenant, we are brought to God. Do I go and leave God to go to some vanity?—I do not say sin; nor do I care what it is:—the savor of Christ, of God, is gone But in Christ, and walking with Him in the heart, I see a man always separated in heart to God: it stamped everything.

It is not that we are to be heroes every day. I may see a person energetic in His service, but it may not come directly from God; it is a totally different thing, as regards our service, when it does. Look at 1 Thess. 1:3; Rev. 2:1, &c. You get here the three things spoken of in 1 Cor. 13, faith, hope, love. In 1 Thess. 1 there is the principle of direct association with God, in each operation of grace, which gives it its power and character. It is work, patience, and labor; work of faith, patience of hope, labor of love. I may go and serve the poor—very right and sweet; but is God's love in it? Patience is a very good thing; but am I waiting for Christ to come? In Rev. 2 there was work and labor and patience; but they had left their first love. The freshness and spring was not as it had been, not coming forth from and in immediate intercourse with God, so as to carry it in the power of God to the person's soul. There should be the salt of the covenant of our God; it is obligatory to have our service right through sovereign grace; always serving in immediate intercourse with God. It is not merely that there is no sin, leaven, or honey, but positive spiritual energy that associates my heart with God in all that I do. Only remember, that with us there is no holiness without an object, “changed into the same image from glory to glory.” We cannot have holiness in ourselves; that is God's prerogative. We cannot do without that which is perfectly blessed before us. Only God has so bound us up with Christ, that while He is the power of the life in which we walk in it, He is the expression of that divine life in a man down here; and, beholding Him in glory, we are delivered from the motives which would have hindered our walking thus, and furnished with those which form us into His likeness.

Verse 14. Here we see Christ as the first-fruits to God. But there is another thing: He has been in the fire. All this blessed grace in His life has been fully and perfectly tried, even to death and judgment—not looking at Christ's death as atonement, but looking at Him in His trials to see whether nothing but a sweet savor would come out. The only time when He asked that the cup might pass from Him, it was piety. When it was the terrible cup of God's wrath, He could not go through it without feeling what it was; it was piety which shrank from the forsaking of God, it was the thing that tested His obedience absolutely. He had been tried by man's hatred, by Satan's power in death and the terror of judgment; but it was a very different thing, when He had to drink that cup, the Holy One of God to be made sin and be before God as such—the One eternally in the bosom of the Father having to say, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” But here was His perfectness “The cup that my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?” He was tested, and was always perfect. Supposing it had been possible He had not gone on, it would have shown all His obedience to be imperfect, that, when perfectly tested, it would not stand. But there was not a single thing but His own absolute divine perfectness that stood! His disciples forsook Him; all else were against Him; and when He turned to God, it was, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” There was absolute testing, and He went through the fire as a sweet savor. “Therefore doth My Father love Me.” Sin, death had come in, Satan's power; and He goes through it all in the power of absolute obedience and love to His Father—the testing to the end. There is the perfection of the thing which we have seen; perfect in its origin, perfect as sealed by the Holy Ghost, and now perfect when tested to the utmost, obedient unto death. Therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name. He has gone back there as Man in virtue of what He was down here.

And here, beloved brethren, is what we have got to think of: all Christ's perfectness in His life, and on the other side, perfectness according to the covenant of salt in His death. Not then saying, “I

know that Thou hearest me always, “but, though doing that which perfectly pleased the Father, of which He could say, “Therefore doth my Father love me,” yet as to relief and comfort at the time, none from man, could be none from Satan—none from God! The basis of eternal blessing was laid then according to the glory of God.

I have got Him, in all His life through as the meat-offering, to feed upon, study, get acquainted with—to feed upon that which was perfectly offered to God.

The Lord only give us to do it, and then, when we meet Him, it will be joy.

Chapter 141

Notice of a New Version of the Old Testament

The “Holy Scriptures” commonly called the Old Testament. A new translation from the Hebrew original. Part I. Genesis to Joshua. London: G. Morrish, 20, Paternoster Square, E.C. (Price 3s. 6d.

This brief notice is only meant to direct attention without delay to this new English version of the earlier books of the Old Testament. It is based on the Hebrew text with the help of a collation of the late J. N. Darby's German and French Versions, and had the benefit of his revision in this English form.

Chapter 142

On Some Hindrances to the Interpretation of Scripture

The Bible is the only book that is not allowed to tell its own tale. No theories are too absurd, no doctrines too outrageous to plead the authority of its sacred pages. Given a pre-conceived notion, no matter how originated, perhaps through some unhappy warp of the mind, perhaps only the misunderstood tenet of another, and then to the Bible for authority and sanction, We need hardly say that the wrong consists not in regarding God's word as the sole and divine standard, but in perverting its words in order to build up false theories. If this were confined to fanatics and visionaries, it might be a waste of time to call attention to it. But it is peculiar to no ecclesiastical sect, to no class of persons. Some of the most lamentable illustrations of this deplorable evil might be found in people in other respects sober enough and not without reputation for piety. And on the other hand Christians less zealous, at least apparently, may be free from such vagaries in a general way through mistrust of themselves or merely common sense, which in the absence of spiritual discernment may perhaps exert a salutary negative influence.

Still it would be rash and unfounded in fact to pronounce any position or any one wholly free from this snare, even the most enlightened, as it would certainly be invidious to give instances of such a general danger. We have, in truth, each one's peculiar infirmities, and not the less because we may be able at the same time to see very clearly the failures of our neighbors. In sacred things, as in secular, men's minds tend to run in grooves, and the deeper their own rut, the less good they are fain to see in the tracks of other people. To use a less homely illustration, their infirm vision can see little else than that on which they are directly gazing. Thus it is that, when occupied with the interpretation of scripture, they leave out of consideration any special circumstances of time and place, people addressed, &c.; though one would think the rashness of such a procedure carried its own refutation. It is obvious that any book may be made to say anything when quoted with indifference to context. In natural things we would recommend the advantage of a cautious and reflective mind. But in divine matters, such as the right dividing of scripture, spiritual judgment is essential. It is the Spirit that searches the deep things of God. And the infallible securer of the Spirit's guidance is an eye single to Christ with self-judgment and humble prayer. But are we always sure that prayer precedes our conclusions? Does it not sometimes merely follow (if its aid be sought at all), and is not humility so ethereal that “it is gone if it but look upon itself,” as has been well said?

Sound intellectual habits, though (as we have hinted above) they may be salutary as a check, will not do us any positive good in the things of God—it is no question now of communicating to others, of which shortly—but they may at least lead us to pause, and will be good servants, if only servants. They may enable us to see the untenability, perhaps the grotesque untenability, of other people's opinions, and of our own too sometimes, though these indeed we sometimes cherish with unhappy fondness, just because our own rut is so deep. Of course it is natural and in one sense it is right that we should hold our religious convictions firmly, because in fact we do not hold them as mere opinions, but believe that, in very deed, we have the mind of Christ. If they are merely our opinions, the sooner we drop them, the better. But let us be very sure that we have the right

interpretation, or at least a right interpretation, as scripture is many-sided. Nor with looking to God is this such a difficult matter. We have, true Christians have, the mind of Christ, and the wayfaring man though a fool may read. He may have no exquisitely keen perceptions, no delicately balanced judgment, and yet he may know God's mind about him if he only be simple enough. So may even a little child. Indeed the confiding nature of a child is the very attitude that becomes us in God's presence, and in searching His word. Thus shall we have the truth positively. We shall not halt in sad despairing skepticism, afraid to hold anything at all, because we see the woeful delusions of others before our eyes, delusions born of rash assumption, and due necessarily to insubjection of heart. For is it not a fact that views are hold arrived at by no spiritual discernment, but through some flaw of reasoning, some mental peculiarity, perhaps because some favorite teacher holds them, or simply because such is our pleasure? Then, of course, when the position is challenged, some text has to do duty.

It must nevertheless be borne in mind, that this handling of the Bible, to which we call attention, and to which, as we all know, no other book is subjected, is due to the fact that it is the Bible, and thus indirectly a homage. It is God's word, that word which He has “magnified above all his name.” The infidel who would subject it to his puny criticism, and the well-meaning Christian who tries to bolster up his delusive theories by sheltering them beneath its august sanction, alike pay it tribute, though that of the skeptic be involuntary. But even he feels its power. As one has said, “Men do not fight against straws, but against a sword whose edge is keen and felt.” The Christian man, who through insubjection to the Spirit of God theorizes on scripture, of course does not mean to fight against it. But he has not done with himself, he has still some confidence in his own powers, and if he be not kept back by natural modesty or natural skepticism, he will propound rare theories. We may acknowledge the paramount authority of God's word, but, we repeat, without humble dependence we may drift into any unknown sea of error. In the extreme case it is “wresting scripture to our own destruction.”

We have not been concerned so much with the exposition of the Bible for the edification of others. This is undoubtedly a different matter. The “several ability,” which is certainly not necessary to our having the “mind of Christ,” and feeding on the word for ourselves, still less in any devotion and meditation, is used by God in the function of ministry. To suppose it otherwise is to run in the teeth of facts, and savors of religious fanaticism. As radicalism is never so rampant as among the inexperienced who obey its promptings with characteristic fervor, it is also never so repulsive as in the things of God, on the principle of optimi corruptio pessima. Nay, ministry is a distinct gift, and the man who can enjoy the truth for himself is not necessarily able to expound it to others. Such are generally endowed with natural clearness of perception, as well as breadth of mind, and soundness of judgment. But such need, in even greater measure, that humility and prayerfulness, without which the most brilliant natural abilities are worse than useless.

In fine, men are apt to err in two antagonistic ways, the skeptical and the fanatical. For the latter this paper is specially intended. To the former the inadequacy of more human cleverness needs specially to be presented. But, unless we beware of both evils, pride of intellect and fanatical ignorance, we shall garner but little grain, in the whirl of barren chaff to which only we can liken the thoughts of men on the word of God.

Chapter 143

Open Brethrenism

Dear Brother, I received your note this morning, it being sent after me during absence from home. I am sorry to be obliged to return the stamps you enclosed, having to decline the paper you require me to send you. For however those whom you call “exclusives” may have failed, and however this may be for us, their failure does not in the slightest degree amend the sad position of those with whom you have associated yourself, and whom you justly call “open brethren.” If I had to choose between the two, “exclusiveness as it is” and “openness” or “inclusiveness” as you understand it, I by far prefer the former. Satan wants God's people to walk either with a narrow heart in a narrow path, which is sectarianism, or with a broad (that is, a large) heart in a broad way, which is latitudinarianism. Now if I had to choose between these two evils, I should prefer the former; for bad as sectarianism is, it is at least based upon some portion of divine truth. But latitudinarianism is indifference to all divine truth, whilst owning it outwardly; and this is the worst of all.

No man on earth ever walked in such a narrow path as the Lord Jesus Christ; and none had such a large heart as He. May He give us grace to walk with a large heart in a narrow path.

If we truly love His all-glorious and all-beauteous person, we cannot be indifferent to His glory and honor. There is no such thing as neutrality in divine things. It is true that the Lord says, “He that is not against us is for us” —this against sectarianism. But you and those with you appear to have forgotten that the Lord said also, “He that is not with Me is against Me,” to guard against latitudinarianism.

Those who formerly were called “Bethesda” or neutrals, who now call themselves by the self-commending but in fact self-condemning name, “Open Brethren,” are exactly in the position of a son whose brother has written an impiously dishonoring paper against their common parent. But instead of remonstrance with his wicked brother and refusing him fellowship after admonition had proved fruitless, he goes on shaking hands as if all were right under pretense of the duty of brotherly love. I should think that such an one would justly be looked at as taking part with the disgraceful child and sharing the sin of dishonor done to their parent (2 John 11).

Put Christ in the first place, and the nice Christians in the second, and you will be all right. But you and those with you do the opposite, and therefore are all wrong. Diotrephes is bad enough, but Open Brethrenism immensely worse.

Pardon my frankness. I wish not to write unkindly to you; but neither — nor — was crucified for me, but Christ Jesus: to Him alone is my allegiance due. Whilst desiring to speak the truth in love, I am equally desirous of loving my dear brethren for the truth's sake. Faithfully yours in Him. J. v. P.

To —

Chapter 144

The Peace Offering

This portion is different in character from what we had before, and closes this particular class of offerings.

The burnt-offering was not for particular sins, but it was atonement—Christ made sin for us (the difference may be clearly seen in Heb. 9 Compare John 1), but offering Himself entirely to God, so that, in the fact of being made sin, the highest perfection of love and obedience were found: all the perfectness of Christ Himself towards God, and surely of love to us; but more—all that God is—perfectly glorified.

Chapter ii. takes up Christ as a man upon the earth, the character of Christ as thus come; burned in the fire, that is, tested by the perfectness of divine judgment, and nothing but a sweet savor: all the frankincense went up to God. It is a wonderful description in detail of what Christ was in all His path, no leaven, no honey, no earthly affection, or comfort in His sacrifice (He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief), but salt and a sweet savor to the Lord. In one case the cake was broken to bits, and every piece was anointed, to show that everything He did or word He spoke was by the power of the Spirit.

Chapter iii. gives us not only the offering, but the fellowship of the saints in the offering. While in the previous ones Christ Himself was presented, He is here presented along with our partaking of it; they ate it: the blood and the fat were offered to the Lord, and then the offerer partaking in what was offered. Other elements were connected with it; but in all this there was nothing to say to sin—an immensely important principle as to what is properly worship.

In the burnt-offering there was nothing of positive acts of sin, but rather the notion of sin being in the world, and approach to God referring to its presence there, and Christ glorifying God as a victim for it, doing such a service that He could say, “therefore doth my Father love me;” but the work in itself was a perfect glorifying of God, as He could not have been glorified otherwise: “That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, even so I do.” There was perfect love to the Father, besides the question of our sins, and perfect obedience; perfect love when He was forsaken, and the obedience was perfected when it cost Him that forsaking. His motives too were perfect—love to us surely, but love to His Father, obedient when God was forsaking Him. The more terrible the suffering, the more dreadful the cup, the greater the sacrifice. It is such a comfort for us that the question of sin before God has been perfectly gone into and settled. That solemn question Christ takes up and puts Himself forward in grace to glorify God in it and by it, where man was against Him, the devil against Him, all the world against Him, the disciples ran away, comfort He had none, and in death God Himself forsook Him. When everything outward, human and devilish, was against Him, and He cried to God, then He was forsaken of God: it was the righteous judgment of God against Him, because He was made sin for us. Then He goes up as man to sit down on the right hand of God. Thus is all settled, and I can look at Christ as the sweet savor, in the absolute perfectness in which He offered Himself to God and was tested in His obedience.

Then in chapter 2 all the blessed perfectness of Christ in His life (tested, tried, broken to pieces) comes out.

In chapter 3 we get worship they fed upon what God fed on. In our association with God, our intercourse with God (in worship), there is nothing about sin—it is treated as all gone, through Christ's offering Himself for us; and then I come to God with Christ in my hand, so to speak, and present Him to God and feed upon Him. I come with that which is perfectly acceptable to God. It is not that there are not faults and failings in us; but here I dwell on the offering itself; it was a perfect burnt-offering made by fire unto the Lord. All that was in the inwards, everything that is in Christ, was absolutely offered to God. There is the blood which was the life, the fat, the sign of the energy of nature, all given to God—no thought nor act with Christ, no object, but His Father: it was for us, thank God! but still absolutely to God. There was no infirmity, no listlessness of heart; but all given to God entirely, all the inward fat burned to God. Mark, it was not bearing our sins—that is never called a sweet savor except in one particular case. He was made sin, and this was not a sweet savor, though He was never so holy and perfect as then.

When we come worshipping, it is not even about Christ as the One who put away our sins; I can approach to worship because of that, my conscience being purged; but worship is in the sense that the thing I am feeding upon is a sweet savor to God, what my soul feeds on and nourishes itself by. The worshipper is connected with the sacrifice, and the question of sin is not touched in it, though blood always supposes it to have been there; it is the food of God become my food. It is a blessed thing to see Christ's perfectness;—that every thought, feeling, motive, everything He was, every movement of His heart was absolutely to God. “In that he liveth, he liveth unto God” (I take the principle merely). In everything in which there was energy, there was no energy of self-will; it was a perfect giving of Himself to God—the only One in whom it ever was in that perfectness. “Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us.” (1 John 3:16.) We ought to walk like Him, to love the brethren, to lay down our lives for them; but then it should be to God.

I bless God, that in His sovereign grace His blessed Son took my sins and bore them upon the cross; but when I go to God to worship, it is as occupied with that One who is perfectly acceptable to God. Abel came with the fat of his lambs, and God gave testimony to his gifts. Here the worshipper comes and feeds upon it, and the Lord had His food of the offering; it was what characterized it. And see how close it brings us to God. Why, so to speak; I am sitting at the same table with God, feeding on the same thing He is feeding on (only all was offered to Him, and so I eat it)—the Lord's food of the offering! I sit down and eat: there is no question of my sins, but of the sweetness of Christ. I am talking to God about it: our true intercourse with God is that. “He that eateth me,” &c. Here I find that the very thing my soul is feeding on and delighting in is the food and the delight of God; we have this nearness to God, the soul enjoying what God Himself is delighting in; the offerer comes to God by it, and has intercourse with God about it. It is not prayer; the peace-offering was never prayer. When I pray, I go to God about my wants, and prayer will occur even in the highest place; for when I think of the blessedness of Christ, I say, Would to God I were like Him and it turns to prayer. But still this is a different thing from worship, though it may and will accompany it. I pray as regards my need; I worship in the sense of what I have got. God delights in what Christ is—inexpressibly of course; my soul draws near with Him in my hand, and I find I am going on with God. It was put upon the burnt-offering to show that I was identified with it. Now there is communion; and I eat.

But all this worship of God supposes no more conscience of sins “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” It is no question whether I can be accepted or not; but coming with Christ in my hand I come by Him, as having offered Himself, in the consciousness that my soul is occupied with that which is God's highest delight. A wonderful thought! It shown what we ought to be and what our worship ought to be; and what we eat turns to be part of ourselves.

The character of the peace-offering was participation in Christ presented to the Lord. It is not as bearing our sins; for all true worship of God supposes the question of sin to be totally settled forever. Chastening we may get in passing through the wilderness but the question of imputation, of having sins on us before God, is done with forever. Sin is a dreadful thing; but it was all settled between God and Christ, when He was made sin for us.

But the heart is apt to stay there in thinking of sin-bearing. Now without it we could not get into heaven; but the proper worship of heaven consists in delighting in what God is, what Christ is, when He offered Himself a sweet savor to God. We cannot come at all except by that sacrifice; we turn to God and we find Christ bore our sins. But what I press now is, that as regards our sins the whole question is settled: “Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” “When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down.” We are not like the poor Jews, we enter into the holiest; but is there not more than that? Have I nothing to bring? has my heart no offering to bring to God? Yes, in Christ there is that in which God delights, and I come to God presenting Him.

In chapter 7:13, we see that, besides the unleavened cakes, leavened bread was offered; here we have ourselves. I come with the offering that has been slain, with Christ in my hand, and I find too all the blessed perfectness of the meat-offering, His perfection as man, the fine flour, no leaven at all: God delighted in Him as a living Man. I get it anointed with oil, mingled with oil, the perfectness of His manhood; and, besides, there is now leavened bread, there am I, the worshipper. If I come to God, I own the sin, the leaven, in me; but this cannot be burned as a sweet savor. I come with the leaven, I cannot say I am sinless as Christ; I cannot be “that Holy thing,” but I come with Christ in my hand. I come with the knowledge of my imperfection, but with that in which I am most perfectly accepted. God takes knowledge of that by which I come; all my sins are blotted out and forgiven. But I cannot say I have no sin—that is all a mistake; it is leavened bread, the leaven within, and we cannot escape or deny its being there, though not allowing it to act. The point is, I go with the sense in my soul that I have leaven; if I say I have no sin (as a present thing), I deceive myself, and the truth is not in me.

There is no forgiveness for sin—for sins there is; but “what the law could not do,” &c., God condemned sin in the flesh, I get deliverance from any thought of this leaven hindering me, for I find God condemned it when Christ died. I do not talk of His forgiving it; it was all gone when Christ died. I cannot say I have none in me, but I can say I died with Christ, and I am not in it.

“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.” (1 John 2:12.) There is no such thing as an unforgiven Christian. It is very interesting to see the work of God in a soul on the road towards peace; all has its place. But that is before I have got the knowledge of the blood which cleanses it all, of the blessed truth that the blow, which rent the veil and opened the holiness of God upon me, presented me there without a veil, but fit to stand in it. A Christian is a forgiven person, but I cannot say sin is not there. When I see the sin, I say, why God must condemn me for it! and in one sense it is quite true: He must; but why condemn you, when

He has condemned it in Christ already?

I do not come denying that I am leavened; I own it. But what I present to God is not myself—it could not be burnt for a sweet savor; and I have a title, in that sense, to forget it, because God has dealt with it in Christ, and then I come with unleavened bread to keep the feast.

When the offering was a vow, they could eat it for two days; when a thanksgiving, for one day only. If my heart is fall of Christ in the power of the Spirit of God, it connects all my worship with the value of Christ's offering to God, it is associated with that before God, I have fellowship with God as to it. But supposing I go on, and sing (say) a hymn, and, instead of thinking of the blessedness of Christ and of the Father's love, I get enjoying the singing; I disconnect the worship from Christ. Take our common worship: is it connected with Christ's acceptableness to God? If not, it has lost its savor; apart from that sacrifice, what is it worth? There may be enjoyment of the ideas, it may go as far as that; but it has lost its savor; and this is a thing that creeps in very easily. I cannot be with God to know the blessedness of what I have, unless it is connected with the sacrifice to God. And what a thought, beloved friends! that when I do go, it is with the acceptableness of Christ, with what God finds His delight in! If I go to pray—all perfectly right—I am a poor needy creature, who wants everything from God. But worship is another thing; I go with that in my hand which I know to be God's delight. I go, Christ having died for me, my soul having the consciousness of God's positive delight in the sacrifice of Christ; and if my worship in any part gets separated from that, it has lost its sweet savor.

One other thing. The priest who offered it ate part of it. It was a joy to all, but Christ takes His part, His joy is in it too. God has His food in it, I have my food; but the priest has his part too. It is the fullest association of God with Christ and the worshipper. It was for all who were invited too, love to all saints; the heart takes in love to all. It shows what true worship is, when I get there: it is not merely my sins are borne, but I have my delight in what I know is God's delight, and must be. It is what the whole community of the saints must delight in; and He says, “In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”

It connects all with the glory in blessedness. Being such in ourselves, we anticipate (in the weakness we are in now) the worship of the saints in eternal ages.

I desire that the two great principles and substance of the blessing may rest upon our hearts—that I am there with God, the heart giving itself up to God in thanksgiving. I go to God with this offering of Christ, and I know He does not impute anything to me; when I look up to God, I know He cannot.

Here God has found in Christ what His soul feeds on—what He delights in—we may say it reverently. I delight in it, a poor weak creature, and I know God delights in it. He receives me in worship according to His judgment of Christ.

How far do our souls so enter into God's thoughts that, when we come to God in worship (all our lives ought to be in the spirit of worship), it is in the spirit of our minds, as connected with God's value for the offering of Christ? In our every-day walk, never to lose sight of what the sweet savor of that offering was to God?

The Lord only give us that it may be thus associated in our hearts with what Christ was towards His Father!

Chapter 145

The Perfect Servant and the Perfect Saviour

The Lord Jesus became a Servant that He might be a Savior. Impossible to be the Savior of men without being the Servant of God. As He was a perfect Servant, so He is perfect Savior. The Word opens the volume of the Book, and we read the eternal counsel of God. It was written therein before the world was made, “Lo I come to do Thy will, O God.” The Son who in due time came to be a Servant is the Creator. Not only were all things created by Him, but for Him; a sphere where He might do the will of God. Creation is the steppingstone to redemption. In Heb. 10 we read, “A body hast Thou prepared me,” for sacrifices and offering God would not. “Then said I, Lo I come to do thy will, O God.” Redemption is here the will specially referred to. A body was not needed for creation, it was for redemption. The Lord was here as Servant in the prepared body, doing the will of God; came here as a man to glorify God in a world that had rebelled against its Creator, not by the destruction of the rebellious creature, but by providing a way of salvation This was a way wherein God was more abundantly glorified than by the destruction of the sinner.

But if God be thus more abundantly glorified, it must be in a way that completely vindicates His character in all its infinite perfectness. This is what the Lord Jesus did. It is this great work which He came to do, and in doing it became God's servant. God would saver and sent the Lord Jesus to be a Savior. On the very threshold this question had to be answered, “How can God be just and justify the ungodly?” This was of the utmost importance, for God must be just, whether any ungodly soul was justified, or not. Let the whole creation be lost rather than one of the infinite attributes of God be sullied. If the demands of righteousness were inexorable, the resources of infinite wisdom and love were able to meet them all. In the cross is the sternest vindication of righteousness and the fullest declaration of His love, and the love not less holy than the righteousness. Every question which could possibly occur to any created mind as to the moral attributes of God finds its answer there. Blood, precious blood, was shed there, therefore a holy and just God can remit sins. In view of it there was forbearance for the sins that are past; as an accomplished fact, unlimited grace now with highest blessing. It makes every act of mercy a righteous thing; it justifies, nay, we might say, spite of the God-dishonoring notion, but pretended human thought of mercy of the non-eternity of hell-punishment, it makes it necessary and righteous. For when we consider who it was that died there, that all creation is nothing in comparison with the value of the blood there spilled, what less penalty than eternal death could be righteously meted to those who have despised and rejected the Savior that hung there? God knows the value of the cross, it is His Word that pronounces eternal death, it is His vengeance upon the despiser of Christ. For the One that died upon the cross is the Son of His love.

To give a divine ground whereon God might righteously forgive and save was the great work the Lord Jesus came to do. It was to declare God's righteousness while receiving sinners justly condemned. To do this the Lord had to take the place of a servant. In never doing His own will as His own, but always because it was the Father's will, He shelved His perfectness as a servant. Yet He was the Son, the Word who was with God and who was God. As the Eternal Son, coequal with the Father; as man, of no reputation, humbling Himself even to the death of the cross. This was

His service, this the will of God He came to do.

The Gospel of Mark presents the Lord as The Servant; but (I judge) rather as the servant for man than the servant of God. It is in Mark, service as meeting the need of man. All through this Gospel it is the servant hasting to do His work, constantly going about from place to place. As soon as one thing was done, “immediately” He proceeds to another. Untiring love scattering blessings all around, and teaching by means of bodily cures, the grace and power that was present to heal the soul, if any had eye and heart to see and feel Who it was that was there in the guise of a servant. But it is not Mark but John who brings out the true servant character of the Lord in its most absolute form. Mark is full of the doings of the Lord, the servant, John gives the spring of action the ever present motive. Mark may present man's need, in John it is the Father's will that is prominent. No where else do we find more absolutely expressed the Lord's entire submission to the will of the Father. As in John 5:19, “The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” Here also in John we have more fully set forth than in the other Gospels that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God; and the two—Son of God, and Servant—for the most part blended together in the same verse. So in the verse just quoted, He could do nothing of Himself, He only copied what the Father did. Could a mere man do what the Father did? If the Lord as the Servant only did what He saw the Father do, He must be God to see—to comprehend all the ways of the Father—and no less to do. The Godhead shines through the Servant in marvelous power and brightness; but a brightness which can only be apprehended by faith. This is the wonder of His Person. He is the Incomprehensible, the mystery, now revealed. Faith believes His Person, and bows before Him in silent adoration. If He took a servant's place, He would be as perfect there as when sitting on the throne of God.

In John 6, He is the true bread from heaven, but it is the Father's giving, so that in coming into the world He was simply obeying the Father. Many would not receive Him as such; they saw Him, but would not believe. He was the true bread, there to give life to the world; and to each one coming such power of life that he would never hunger nor thirst. Some there were whom the Father gave to Him. Whoever they were, as a true Servant He would receive each and all on the ground that they were brought to Him by the Father. They shall come and He would in no wise cast them out. It was enough for the true Servant to know the Father's will. “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.”

In this chapter it is not so much the fact that the Son became the Savior as a sequence of being a Servant (though this is true, for it was service to come into the world, and take a Servant's place) as that He was a Servant in the act of saving. In saving a soul from death and condemnation He was doing His Father's will. When this truth is apprehended by faith, it delivers the soul from the dishonoring thought that the Lord Jesus by His death had to reconcile God to the believer. Many a believer has suffered in consequence of allowing such an unscriptural thought in his mind. For however expressed, when put nakedly before us, it is that the Lord Jesus had to persuade God to receive sinners and forgive them. This is so contrary to the truth that here in John it is the Father bringing souls to the Lord. And in a previous chapter the well-known and oft-quoted verse “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” Such a notion is not only soul-injuring but it falsifies God's character. How often the Lord speaks of Himself as the “Sent” into the world. This thought of God, which is not confined to a few doubting Christians but is found in public writings and hymns, is a hindrance to true communion and confidence. in God, and denies Him in the very

thing in which He is most manifest, viz., His love.

We who believe are reconciled to God, for we were haters of God; but God commendeth His love to us that while we were enemies Christ died for us. So that it is equally unscriptural to say that the cross reconciled God to the world. Love caused the cross, not the cross caused God's love. The cross was needed as the only way by which God's love for a lost world could be known. Sin had barred every other way. The Lord Jesus became a Servant according to the exigencies of Divine love.

The Father has given souls to the Lord Jesus, and His will is that not one should be lost, but that the Lord should raise it up at the last day. In caring for those given to Him, guarding them so that they are not destroyed by the enemy, nor lost by their own folly, keeping even the body when laid in the grave so as to raise it up again at the last day, in doing all this the Lord Jesus is the Servant doing the Father's will.

The Lord, by the will of the Father, came as the object of faith, and every one that saw and believed on Him has eternal life, and having life the Lord would raise him up at the last day. Here too as the resting place for the soul He is the Servant; it was the Father's will that He should be such. The previous verse is simply the Father giving souls to the Lord, and confiding them to His care. This gives faith's connection between the Lord Jesus and the believer: Those who are given see and believe. And mark the sovereignty of grace, and the perfectness of the order of scripture in showing how a soul is saved; for he is not given to the Lord because he sees and believes, but he sees and believes because he is given, born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God. The Father gives, and the Lord receives from His hand, and faith forms a moral connection between the Savior and the believer. In both the Lord is the perfect Servant doing the Father's will. “I will raise him up at the last day.” The tie of faith cannot be broken; it is beyond the power and domain of death.

The murmuring of the Jew brings out another truth, that none could come save those drawn by the Father. No one would come. But again the assurance, “I will raise him up at the last day.”

It is a question of life; and that the bread which came down from heaven might be eternal life for man who believed, it was necessary that He should die. Therefore to eat of that bread and not die could only be after He was offered up to God as a sacrifice for sin; only by death did the Lord Jesus become bread of life. The Jew again objecting, the Lord gives a fuller statement, that unless they eat His flesh and drink His blood they have no life. He is not only the One upon whom we feed as the living bread—eating His flesh—but the additional truth (as I judge) of drinking His blood; it is the owning that our blood was justly forfeited to God, but that He bore our judgment. To drink His blood is confessing that we deserve death but are redeemed by His blood. On the cross He was the divinely appointed substitute by the Father. Through His death we have eternal life, and for the fourth time the Lord Jesus says, “I will raise him up at the last day.”

In all this the Lord is the perfect Servant. He is also the perfect Savior. It is by and in perfect obedience to the Father's will that He is Savior; the act of service is the act of saving. He was sent to save, and saves perfectly and eternally. What more perfect service and devotion to the Father's will than to die, and then to retake His life? But this was the Father's commandment, that He might be a perfect Savior, One who had conquered death, and conquered for the sake of those who

believed in Him. So that service to the Father, and salvation for man, are both expressed in “I will raise him up at the last day.”

John 13 shows the Lord Jesus still a Servant for us even while He is on the Father's throne. That which the disciples could not then understand, we now know. As our High Priest, Intercessor, Advocate, He is still girded with the towel and washes the feet of His saints, Perfect Servant, and Perfect Savior.

Chapter 146

Perilous Times: Part 1

Never, perhaps, in this world's history was the human mind so engrossed as it now is with the things of the world. The very struggle for existence, or at least for life's maintenance, seems to be constantly on the increase. What keen competition there is in every department, and often for the bare necessaries of life! And again, where this is not the question, how keen the pursuit of gain, as gain, or as a source of power how keen, too, the pursuit of pleasure, whether in its higher or in its lower forms! If we glance for a moment at politics, how urgent and absorbing is the public state of things to minds engaged in public affairs! Never was there such a state of things. Even with the best intentions how preoccupied often is the mind with care, how distracted the attention, and this necessarily to the detriment of the soul! Education is pressed on under the fatal delusion that knowledge is the true remedy, the grand panacea for every evil. Yes! but not the knowledge which is of this world. You may inflate the human mind with knowledge, or with fancied knowledge; but what can this do without the knowledge of God, except to develop infidelity? What, under such circumstances, must be the result but increasing ungodliness, with political and social disorder? And so it is and will be increasingly. Morality,—private, social, or public,—forms little or no part of modern instruction; liberty, equality, and fraternity is the prevailing and influential idea of the age. Whether in the church or in the world, popularity is the great power: pander to this and you may succeed; refuse to do so and you become more or less marked. People dream that the world is getting wiser as it is getting older, that things are getting better, and that in due time education, the arts and sciences, commerce, &a., will ameliorate matters, the evils which afflict society will be rectified; corruption and crime will disappear, wars will cease, and the world will at last enjoy a sort of Millennium of its own production,—all will end well. A few of the more sensible are unconvinced of this: to them things seem tending in a very different direction. The Christian should be in no danger of being deceived. He knows it will end in bringing God's judgments on a scene of ripened iniquity and of revolt against God. Believing as he does in Divine revelation, he is not left in darkness; God in His word and by His Spirit has given him a knowledge and a wisdom which is not of this world, and which prevents him from prophesying smooth things, when he knows that to do so would be to deceive. This is a knowledge that never inflates the intellect. Remembering as the Christian does his own weakness, and that he was once of the world, conscious of his own unceasing need of Divine grace, it is in this spirit he contemplates the sad condition of the world in which he yet dwells, and beholds in sorrow the misery and sin of his fellow-creatures, whilst abhorrent of wickedness in itself.

Well then do we understand how little time for serious reflection generally is left amidst the pressing duties and cares of daily life. Yet it is to this we would endeavor with our readers to draw aside for a brief interval. Would that all would seize such opportunities as Divine providence may from time to time give, to turn their thoughts from the things of this world, and to consider their eternal interests! How often has that opportunity occurred which has proved to have been the last, and the state of the soul for eternity become unalterably fixed! If we contemplate our own being, and the circumstances which attend and affect it, how mysterious it appears! We find ourselves in

existence quite irrespective of any will of our own in the matter. We soon find it (all of us more or less, but some, perhaps, more than others) one of much trouble. Death constantly stares us in the face. What becomes of us then? We look around, and find the world in which we are for the most part a mass of selfishness, wretchedness, and vice. What a subject of reflection for thoughtful minds! And the more we reflect, the more we must be convinced that the mind, the rational soul, cannot die,—the body alone is perishable. What will be our future destiny? Such have in fact been the reflections of the best and noblest of human minds in all ages. Strange were it not so. The almost brutish indifference of lower natures was not theirs. Yet a satisfactory answer to these higher mental cravings they found not.

Theories indeed, one after another, were propounded by the so-called philosophers, but the entire history of human philosophy will be found to be little else than a repetition of the same process, viz., construction, destruction, and eclecticism; nor was there any power in their philosophy to raise them morally. True, in these days men think they have at last reached terra firma in the positive philosophy. And perhaps finality it is, for infidelity can scarcely go farther. But they will accept and confide in it to their ruin, for what could be more ruinous than a “religion of humanity,” in which Divine revelation is unceremoniously cast to the winds, and almost mathematical demonstration insisted on even with regard to spiritual things? We say “even in regard to spiritual things,” almost forgetting that these are virtually denied, and that the supernatural is too often derided. But a fallen creation is in an abnormal state, and it might justly be thought is a sphere in which a God of grace would act at times, exceptionally, to demonstrate to His fallen and alienated creatures, tint He is acting either for their good, or to reveal Himself in some way. Why should the reasonableness, or the possibility of this, be denied? Truly the days are evil, as well as sad. What is the true and deep cause? what will be its issue? are solemn questions for each one of us. And Divine revelation alone adequately answers them, whilst at the same time it vindicates Divine grace and Divine righteousness.

Disobedience to God, i.e. sin, has brought sorrow into the world, and sin perpetuates it. “Sin is lawlessness” (■νομ■α), the principle of self-will and independence in the creature, insubjection to God; and this too often is carried to such an extent as to lead even to the rejection of all religion, whether natural or revealed.

Being, the great French naturalist, in a most graphic and ingenious way, makes Adam narrate his first sensations and actions on being created. Enraptured with all which was around him, and contemplating his own being, it was but gradually, and by considering in detail one thing after another, that he could realize where and what he was. It is a most interesting sketch, and may be found in his Natural History. But it is vitiated by one fatal defect: Adam is occupied with himself, and with nature around him, God is nowhere in the scene. And how exactly is this what man is doing to this day! Occupied with anything and everything but God? Is it conceivable that God, having created, omitted to reveal Himself to him as his Creator? Impossible! On the contrary, with his first consciousness Adam found himself in the presence of his Creator. The first impression Adam received was the presence of his Creator and Benefactor. God was his companion, his guide, and his instructor in the first hours of his existence, and before he had any other companion. He was left to no surmises or reflections of his own, still less to the approach of the enemy, till he was acquainted with his Creator, with his destiny as innocent; forewarned and forearmed against any possible enemy to God and to himself. He was then furnished with a

companion similar to himself, the gift of God designed for his happiness and advantage. But how solemn these words, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” —would that they might sink deeply into the heart of every human being who has heard or read them, for assuredly every human being they immeasurably and everlastingly concern.

“Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands.” Though the complete fulfillment of this will be in the person of the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Adam was, as it were, the representative (as Eve of the Church), yet it had a very real accomplishment in Adam. How noble his origin, how wonderfully constituted, body, soul, and spirit, what a realm, was even this terrestrial one, to be set over! Creation in each part was indeed “very good.” Whilst our first parents were in a state of innocence, all was harmonious. Liberty, in the true and proper sense there was, because liberty meant, not license, not the exercise or Adam's part of a will antagonistic to God, but freedom and power to act at the same time in accordance with the suggestions of an unfallen nature, and in harmony with the Divine will. Under such circumstances constraint was unknown. Constraint is requisite to fallen beings; to those who are self-willed, and can pat no proper limits to their passions. To act agreeably to his nature was to Adam unfallen, entire freedom in conformity with God's will. It was necessary, however, that the principle of obedience to his Creator should be before Adam. No obedience was then possible which implied privation. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil marked the principle, but involved no privation, inasmuch as it was the sole restriction, unnecessary to his happiness, and on the other hand destructive of it if he disobeyed; without it Adam must almost have thought himself the God of this lower world. The existence of the moral agent must be conditioned, however a higher power may act in relation to that agent, and with a view to his preservation. Innocence was an absolute safeguard to Adam and Eve, unless on the one point of the forbidden fruit. Here only could they be tempted, or put to the test, and even here the temptation ought not to have been seductive, i.e. temptation in their case could have had only the meaning of “put to the test.” There was external suggestion, but no internal proclivity towards, or tendency to, evil, at least until Eve chose to listen to the voice of the stranger. From that instant she was no doubt in danger. Opportunity to the enemy was therefore reduced to a minimum, and could thus far serve only as the simplest test of obedience, scarcely to be called a moral test to a person in a state of innocence.

Nor could Satan appear to Eve or to Adam in propriβ personβ. He therefore avails himself of that one of the lower creation, which, through its subtlety, appeared best adapted to his purpose. How he could so take possession of the serpent is no doubt to us mysterious, but we read later of the man Judas that “Satan entered into him.” A willingness to be so possessed might, if God permit, make the way easy; for a spiritual being may in this be able to do what one possessing a natural body could not do, and may find it difficult to understand, as for instance to take innerpossession of another. We see the fact, however, in the case of demoniacal possession, during the time our Lord was upon earth, and so with the herd of swine. Though such possession may at present, in any very palpable way, be little known, still the possibility of it, if tied permit, has been demonstrated, and might occur again. The modern “spiritualism” is, without doubt, allied to the same power, the so-called “medium” being the human agent very directly acted on. Men and devils are seeking for illicit power and intercourse, and for their punishment God may yet again allow it to some extent to take place (in the Antichrist very completely). This is one of the greatest

snares of the day, and Christians should be most careful not to be deluded by it. There is probably far more in it than mere jugglery, though jugglery and jobbery may make use of it.

Satan is the “prince of the power of the air,” and it is with wicked spirits in heavenly places that Christians have to contend, as their enemies. If true to the Lord themselves, they cannot be deceived. The account of the fall as given in Gen. 3 is in fact the only rational explanation of man's condition. God certainly did not create the world in the state in which we see it. A disturbing cause has entered since Adam was created, and the account given in Genesis simply and satisfactorily explains it. The creature lives by dependence on God, the moral agent consciously so. The Fall and its consequences teach us what disobedience is, in principle, i.e. even in the taking of the forbidden fruit, the result how terrible! and the more so that in itself it is irrevocable and irremediable. Yet how little we realize this! Satan in the light, and untempted, fell: for him therefore there is no salvation. For man God has found a ransom,” for verily he (i.e. Christ) taketh not up the cause of angels, but he taketh up the cause of the seed of Abraham “(Heb. 2:16).

But here, again, man is a moral agent,—we do not say exactly a free agent, for he is trammeled by a sinful nature; still, as we see in the seventh of Romans, the will may be right, and the law of sin in our members only then becomes the more apparent, and the more odious. Hence while on the one hand the Lord says, “No one can come unto Me unless the Father, which hath sent me, draw him;” so on the other hand, and to those whose wills are opposed, He says, “Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.” God has provided a way, and but one way of salvation. Mach as men may differ in the degree to which they practice sin, and in the extent to which they may stifle the voice of conscience (and in those respects they do differ very greatly), yet we are all born in sin, we all inherit a sinful nature, and in the case even of the best of men, when tested in the light of God's presence, or tested by the law when spiritually understood, how perfectly plain and palpable is the defect, either from a perfect state of innocence, or from a perfect state of renewal in Christ!

But imperfection can never satisfy God, and, besides, it really means sin. Hence justification by faith is equally needed by all, the righteousness of God by faith. Blessed be God, in virtue of the work of Christ, God can be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. The respective offerings of Cain and Abel were typical of the forms which religion ever has assumed or ever could assume, for these forms resolve themselves simply into two kinds: viz. man's endeavor to propitiate God, and to render himself acceptable to Him; and the owning that our rain is too complete for this, and that our acceptance by God mast be in virtue of the work and merits of another. Doubtless Cain's offering cost him more personal effort than Abel's, for the latter had but by the sacrifice of a victim to recognize the grand gospel truth of substitution. Nevertheless Cain's offering WAS without conscience, and indeed insulting to God,—virtually saying, that the fruit of the ground, which for Adam's sake God had cursed, was a fit offering for God,—that the efforts, the religious efforts, of our fallen human nature, are suitable offerings to God. And indeed what else could we do had there been no testimony to the precious truth that “God would provide"? But testimony to this was given as soon as our first parents fell, not only in the figurative words that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, but in the typical act of the death of the victim, which furnished a cover to their nakedness. And we shall find that this double testimony of God's word, and of typical or symbolic acts, runs through all the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. But God having given this testimony, men are inexcusable for still choosing their religious delusions, and the religion of Cain, the religion of “good works” for our acceptance by God, is one

of the great sins and dangers of the day. No doubt when God has saved us in a way which vindicates both His own glory, and His grace, He looks for good works from us, and other fruit of the Divine life in us, that is, as is often and truly said, the Christian works from life, and not for life.

Nor is there in reality the least conflict or obscurity of Scripture as to this. There is a co-ordination of truth in Scripture, but no contradiction. Those who would take any one truth of Scripture out of its place and order, and insert it elsewhere, necessarily produce the greatest confusion and apparent contradiction. Scripture is, so to speak, an organic whole, the truths and doctrines it contains are co-related; but to Fee the bearing and proportion of the several parts, or in fact to understand the things of God at all, we must be taught by the Holy Spirit. The number and diversity of religious sects and denominations is too often quoted as a reason for submission to a central human authority, such as the Pope. It proves indeed the insubjection of the human mind to Divine teaching, and the true remedy is, subjection of our own spirits to the Lord by the Spirit of God; but undoubtedly those who advocate as the remedy the setting up a man in the church, with claims to an infallibility which no apostle over assumed or pretended to, show how far they are impressed with a sense of what is due to the Lord, and to Him alone. That our justification is in Scripture regarded from different points of view is most true: for instance, we are justified meritoriously, by Christ's blood (Rom. v. 9; 3:24); we are justified judicially, by God (Rom. 3:26; 8:33); we are justified mediately, by faith (Rom. 3:28; 5:1), and we are justified evidentially by works (James 2:24). Deny this, and you set Scripture hopelessly at variance with itself, and destroy the integrity of the texts quoted, as well as the general and concurrent teachings of Scripture. “For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast.”

(To be continued.)

Perilous Times: Part 2

But from what are we saved? clearly from eternal judgment (Heb. 6:2). No, say some, not eternal, but age-long. It is admitted that whether the meaning of the word α■■νιος is age-long or eternal, depends upon the context. Where God's governmental dealings with this world are concerned (i.e. where α■■νιος is spoken of in reference to the duration of a dispensation, or to a course of things in this world), it no doubt has the accommodated sense of age-long, and this is the sense of "forever" almost invariably in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament, where the curtain which previously shut out the future, is, as it were, drawn aside, and eternal issues, in the strictest sense of the term, are disclosed, we find the word α■■νιος used in its most absolute sense in reference to God, and as the context proves in an absolute sense also as regards either the future happiness or future punishment of men. Nothing, for instance, could be more arbitrary or illogical than to assert that the word α■■νιος signifies different periods of duration in the two clauses of Matt. 25:46. If the life is eternal in the latter clause, and in the absolute sense of the term, so it is in the case of everlasting punishment, i.e. in the former clause. And in whatever sense the Spirit is eternal in Heb. 9:14, in that sense as to futurity is judgment eternal in Heb. 6:2. Nor is the meaning of never-ending (in contrast with what has a termination, i.e. with what is temporal) unknown to Greek classical writers; on the contrary, it is distinctly used in this contrast, as convincingly pointed out by others. It is therefore deeply to be regretted that professed teachers in the Church assert otherwise. Far safer and more true is the opinion of Pearson, in his "Exposition of the Creed" (Article, "And the life everlasting"). So likewise Neander, in his Church History, vol. p. 11, note, says: "Hence the different meanings given by the Gnostics to the word α■■ν, which besides its primitive—signification eternity is used by them to denote sometimes the Eternal, as a distinguishing attribute of the Supreme Essence; sometimes the primary divine powers above described; sometimes the whole emanation-world, πλ■ρωμα, as contradistinguished from the temporal world. In the last-mentioned sense it is employed by Heracleon." The simple Christian may rest assured that the natural meaning to which he is accustomed is the true one. Universalism (or the doctrine that all will be saved in the end) lays God, as it were, under a compulsion, under a law of love, a necessity arising from His nature as love, which not only ignores His being light, but which really is a denial of free and sovereign grace on His part, whilst it utterly denies the incisive and decisive terms of the gospel, and the critical form in which it is presented to us in Scripture by denying the finality of its issues, viz. everlasting life, and everlasting judgment. It implies that God would not be love, and that He would not be just if He punished any eternally, and thus virtually judges God, even though this may be far from being intended.

Again, there are two distinct resurrections, that of life and that of judgment (John 5:29). As regards those raised from the dead in the latter, is it conceivable that they will again die, and again be raised? Yet this must be the case if they are to have glorified bodies. No! these states are fixed and everlasting. There is the second death, the lake of fire, but no third death, and no second resurrection for the same persons. Men may endeavor to force Scripture, so as to suit their own predilections; but the truth remains unalterable in itself, and palpable to those who read it in

honesty and simplicity.

“All men,” says the Apostle, “have not faith.” Faith is indeed the greatest vantage ground that the creature could receive. Wealth, power, intellect,—these fall infinitely short of it; for faith connects one with God, and gives an intelligence which even intellect cannot attain. But the sad thing is that, not only men generally have not faith, but they are opposed to those who have, and to those things which can only be apprehended by faith. When redemption is known, and the love of Christ in saving us, what could be more interesting to us—as at any time what could be more solemn for all men—than the account of our creation, as revealed to us in the word of God! What deliberation “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” Thus Adam is called “the Son of God” (Luke 3:33), and God's loving interest in him is thus expressed, “And my delights were with the sons of men” (Prov. viii. 31).

With the utmost deliberation God forms man, directly and immediately, from the dust of the ground, and, by the direct and personal impartation of His breath, endows man with a rational and imperishable soul. Adam is thus formed in the image of God. True, of all living creatures upon the face of the earth, Adam and Eve were the last formed. This terrestrial creation, of which Adam was to be the head and lord, was first prepared for him, and then, by a distinct and superior creative act, Adam was placed at the head of it. In the face of this plain yet noble statement of divine revelation, what are we to think of the disgusting and atheistical theory of Evolution? That in other ages of the world men have so utterly given up God, and become so debased in their minds and thoughts, as to propound and believe all kinds of irrational theories, is indeed true;—what is so extraordinary and so startling is, that in the light of Christianity, and side by side with the Bible, such atheistical theories can exist and find acceptance. It is infidelity as to the Bible, and as to every truth the Bible contains. In a certain sense and to a certain degree men may persuade themselves to anything; yet we doubt if a man can ever succeed in altogether eliminating from his mind and conscience the conviction that there is a God. We doubt if there is such a being as a genuine atheist. We doubt, too, the possibility of really believing in annihilation. There is that within us all which tells us that the rational soul cannot die, and that to God it is accountable. And why, the gospel being what it is, should men wish it to be otherwise? “Come, for all things are now ready,” is the gracious invitation to us all. It is infatuation, and worse than infatuation, to refuse it. It is to reject Divine mercy, and to retain a responsibility which renders men liable to eternal punishment. Throughout the whole of Scripture we can trace, as it were, two parallel threads, which are never separated, yet never confused. These are righteousness and grace, represented in the Garden of Eden by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (responsibility), and by the tree of life (grace). In Christ alone these have been perfectly reconciled, so that God's love and mercy can now have free course. Out of Christ they are irreconcilable, and judgment consequently ensues.

And it is striking to observe that whilst righteous judgment is so much the subject of the Revelation of John, yet the other thread of Divine grace can be so conspicuously traced throughout it. The very fact that God used the Apostle, who in his other writings dwells so much upon the intrinsic nature of God as Love (though as Light also), to write the book of Revelation, is itself no small indication that even there grace cannot be forgotten. But the awful consequences to the sinner of responsibility without life, i.e. without Christ, are inevitable, and are shown with fearful clearness in

this book.

The theory of evolution puts man as a created being at the greatest possible distance from his Creator, and, denying the directness with which he came from the hands of God, destroys the sense of relationship to, and of immediate dependence on, God; it mocks the solemnity of his creation as described in Scripture, ignores the moral likeness to God in which he was created, and leaves the first origin of life wholly unaccounted for. It admits a sort of climax or goal, towards which the process of evolution is tending, or has tended, and prefers to attribute to it, rather than to diversity in unity, as God's creative plan, the wonderfully complex yet harmonious universe of which we form part, i.e. to blind impulse rather than to a preconceived design on the part of the Almighty. There is in organic life a continuity of design, and a unity in design. Emanating from the same creative center, the Deity, there is progress in the scale of creation, yet with separativeness of origin. Hence, like so many other catch phrases, Lyell's use of the term “independent creation” is, to say the least, extremely ambiguous.

Distinct acts of creation harmonize with creation as a whole, whilst being distinct: as each piece in a dissected map is in itself distinct, yet requisite to the completeness of the map in its entirety. In all God's works, creation as well as revelation, there is a wonderful co-ordination, and mutual adaptation, and in this sense no one specific act of creation is independent. But as to the fact of distinct and separate acts of creation, Scripture is express, and all human investigation and discovery, confirm it. Speaking of the grass, the herb, and the fruit tree, it says of each, “whose seed was in itself after his kind;” and of fishes “after their kind,” also of terrestrial animals that they were created “after their kind:” i.e. God created each kind separately, endowing each with its own seed; as conversely we read in 1 Cor. xx. 38, 39 that to each seed God has given its own body, and that in a similar manner one flesh differs from another. Hence in principle the definition of species is true, viz., “a species consists of individuals having a common resemblance, and reproducing their like by generation.” The records of geology, confirmed by all human experience and observation, establish the fixity within reasonable limits of species as above defined, and are utterly opposed to the theory of transmutation.

Absurd as is the notion of transmigration or metempsychosis, we could more readily believe it than that of evolution, and think the doctrine of Pythagoras just about as reasonable as that of Darwin, both being in fact, and in effect, simply heathenish. All that believe the Bible know very well that there are such beings as angels,—that they were created long before man, and that as an order of creation (we speak not now of what redemption will accomplish in due time, and in this respect) they are superior to man. Yet the pre-existence of a superior class of creatures is antagonistic to the theory of transmutation. In all points, Divine revelation, human experience, and geological records are opposed to it. We readily acknowledge that Mr. Darwin in his work on the “Origin of Species” has brought together many highly interesting facts—facts of importance in truly scientific investigation; but there is an infinite gap between any conclusion or conclusions they really support and justify, and the monstrous conclusion it is simply assumed that they warrant. Interesting natural phenomena are here most artfully intermixed with ingenious but unfounded surmises, whilst not a thing which essentially makes for the Darwinian or Lamarckian theory is proved, nor is one which makes for the Bible account of creation disproved. Whether we go back to the period of Egyptian history, or much farther back to the glacial period, or to any geological period whatever, the necessary links in the chain of evidence are wholly wanting. That every

germinal vesicle in nature has sprung from one primordial spore,—vesicles which, whatever may be their apparent resemblance, are each endowed with its own form of life, and each requiring a principle of life peculiar to itself, in order to fertilize it,—that vesicles thus specially distinct could have sprung from one primordial spore, and this from some inherent power of development, amounts to a moral contradiction, and is even more absurd than to say that all the chemical elements have originated from one pure and simple; for here, at least, it could be no question of opposed organic tendencies leading to separate and independent existence.

The fact that a species consists of individuals bearing a common resemblance and reproducing their like by generation, remains (allowance being made for a certain range in each case within which variation is possible, though unstable) unaltered and unalterable. That the two processes are going on at the same time, viz. propagation by generation, and transmutation, would seem an extraordinary state of things, yet this must be if transmutation is true, for what is there to put a stop to it?—and if stopped, why (for each genus and species) just where it is,—the relative proportions of the various parts of animate nature so beautifully observed. But the gap between even the highest developed ape and the lowest example of humanity is immense;—how is this, and what has become of the missing links? It seems to us, in short, that the Darwinian theory is sufficiently refuted by those cases of evolution which nature does exhibit. For instance, the egg, the larva, the chrysalis, the butterfly, and then the egg again,—yet from the egg to the butterfly but one life, but one act of generation. So again we find the egg, the tadpole, the frog, and again the egg, i.e. the circle of evolution completed in one life and with only one act of generation,—all originating in one germinal vesicle, to which, specifically, it returns. In no other way or sense is evolution possible. The doctrine of development, whether as applied to biology or to theology is really infidel,—an attempt to stamp with the Divine sanction, and thus to justify, thorough and fatal departure from the truth as contained in Divine revelation.

Christ is the truth absolutely—the Scriptures in a written form: there can be no development in these, though there may be in individuals the increasing in the know ledge of the truth, the “growing up to Christ in all things.” But whatever is opposed to Scripture is error, and no development of truth at all. It is true that Scripture does not profess to teach science, and as little to teach, what it does teach or narrate, in a scientific way; its language in this respect is generally phenomenal. As connected with nature, science has its use; Scripture is concerned with an infinitely more momentous object and subject, the glory of God where sin is in question;—still any conclusions of science which contradict Divine revelation are necessarily and at once judged by it. If the upholders of science venture to deny the omnipotence of God, or to assert the eternity of matter, God's word, i.e. Divine authority, judges such conclusions as untrue and dishonoring to God. We think it is to be regretted that a Hebrew scholar of no little weight in this country, himself no doubt a Christian man, should deny that in Gen. 1:1 bara means to create out of nothing. It is true that it does not in all cases mean so, but in the above text it certainly means to create in the most absolute sense, i.e. out of nothing, or an argument is thus unintentionally given for the ungodly notion of the eternity of matter. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This alludes to the very origin of matter, not to formation, but to creation. Is it conceivable that nowhere in the Bible is God spoken of as having in the absolute sense created matter? and where should it be asserted that He did so, but in the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis? He is the absolute Creator of matter as of life, as also the organizer of nature in its different kingdoms, the

mineral, the vegetable, and the animal. These different kingdoms are constituent parts of, so to speak, one imperial whole. The Schoolmen, following Aristotle, state four universal causes of existing things: 1, the Material; 2, the Formal; 3, the Efficient; 4, the Final. The material cause was supposed to be that common substance or nature out of which things are made; the formal, that by which one object is made to differ from others produced out of the same common matter; the efficient, or motive cause, that which originates the motion or change from which the particular thing results; the final, that tendency or end to which the whole process of formation has reference, and in which it is completed. Corresponding with this, there are four words in Hebrew signifying to create, make, or form, and of these Bara refers to the Efficient cause.

Whether as regards Creation, or as regards the entrance of sin and misery into this world, no satisfactory solution exists, but that which is given in Divine Revelation. The wisest and best of the heathen writers of old were utterly baffled in the attempt to solve the problem; nor is it to be wondered at that those who now attempt to solve it apart from Scripture signally fail to do so. Yet confident in their own powers and theories, men reject the only true Light. But even though thought weak and contemptible by the wise of this world, the Christian may with truth say, “By the words of thy lips have I kept me from the paths of the destroyer,” and may rest assured that he is “kept by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed.”

Teulon's Plymouth Brethren: Chapters 1-2

Here are the words with which the author begins his task. “The religious movement with which these pages are concerned has arisen during the present century. From very small beginnings it has in the course of fifty years attained a wide-spread influence, and has enlisted under its banner persons of distinguished rank and of the highest intellectual culture. Nor has its work been by any means confined to the country of its birth. It has found a home in many continental States; it is well known in the colonies, and in America; while in most of the larger towns of Great Britain its representatives have their places of assembly” (p. 5). The next words are not so correct:— “Though it employs evangelistic agencies to make its tenets known, and to gather in its converts, the main instrument of its propagation has been the press rather than the pulpit [an unwitting mistake], and numbers, to whom the society itself is little more than a name, have unconsciously imbibed its principles from a perusal of its periodicals, its pamphlets, and its leaflets.” There might have been added larger works of exposition, as well as hymns, to the sources of indirect influence among such as have never known their oral ministry, and have never seriously considered the responsibility of acknowledging divine truth by a practice corresponding to it. One could not desire the truth to be less owned as of God; but it is deplorable for all who thus trifle with that which is meant to form our hearts in fellowship with Him and to fashion our walk every day. But the truth is that, whilst a call went forth from the earliest days of Brethren to the converted (none so distinctively recalling souls to Christ and the church, in the confession of the present ruin of Christendom), activity in the gospel also characterized them from the first, as the late Mr. J. N. Darby used to say; and none had larger or more correct means of knowing its truth.

To what then must be attributed such impressions as those of Mr. T. and many more? To two causes particularly: the narrowness of those outside, who, because of the earnest pressure of the divine word as a whole on all saints, inferred indifference to perishing sinners; and, again, the still more culpable one-sidedness of individuals within, who really were and are under the error of slighting evangelistic zeal, and of restricting themselves, and all subject to their influence, to the testimony of Christian and ecclesiastical truth. Now it is not and never was possible to hinder such aberrations; and wise men in our midst have not only reproved shallow and mischievous pettiness of this kind, but felt, spoken, written, and labored with all largeness of heart as well in the gospel as in the church. I do not doubt, however, that (whether in the English establishment or in dissent) evangelical pre-occupation with the work of awakening souls is the most fertile source of this reproach; for it is jealous of any advance in scriptural intelligence beyond the barest elements. Even a full gospel is apt to be regarded with suspicion by such as think it the sole worthy aim to arrest the godless and win the careless to Christ. Many years ago I remember hearing of a little meeting in a small town in Wilts, where were about a dozen brothers, all of whom used, after the Lord's supper on each Lord's day, to disperse themselves over the neighboring villages, freely and earnestly preaching the glad tidings; yet even there and then people used to say, Brethren never preach the gospel to the unconverted! Could infatuation be more complete? Is it of any use to reason with minds closed to the force of facts so patent?

The next remarks are better: “It is always instructive, and often most interesting, to trace the rise of an influential school or sect, to note the circumstances which gave it birth, and the different forms which it has assumed in the course of its development. Such movements are not the result of chance; nor do they merely represent the product of individual piety, genius, or self-will. Though in most cases they may be referred to some individual founder, they could never gain wide acceptance unless they were felt in some measure to supply some want of the age; and therefore a careful study of them will often furnish us with a key to the religious history of the day in which they arose. But the interest and instruction are multiplied tenfold when the movement under consideration has arisen in our own age. It then becomes a paramount duty to examine it with care. It throws light upon the period in which we live, and even in its most abnormal developments may remind the church of the day of some portion of her inheritance of truth which has been forgotten for a season, but for the revival of which the circumstances of the time are imperatively calling; while on the other hand the special character of any false teaching which may accompany such movements demands the attentive and dispassionate examination of all who desire to see their way through the perplexities of their time, and to secure the religious interests of their country” (pp. 6, 7).

Note in passing the importance given by our author to “age” and “country": no one intelligent in the true character of the truth on the one hand, and of the church on the other, could so think or speak. Even a divine institution is superior to such considerations, and if possible more evidently as also more absolutely that word of God which liveth and abideth. Christ gave Himself for our sins to deliver us out of this present evil age. We are not of the world, as He is not. But, to proceed, “All these considerations apply in full force to the remarkable movement with which we are now concerned. Its rapid growth, its wide-spread influence, its tenacious hold on those who join it, all go to show that it is felt by many both in this and foreign countries to furnish some kind of supply to the religious necessities of the age. An examination of it then may help us to see what these necessities are, and should lead Churchmen to inquire further whether the Church herself out of the abundant stores committed to her keeping is not fully able to supply them.” (Ib.) Mr. T. may be assured that those he cross-examines hail the fullest and most minute scrutiny of any alleged heterodoxy, knowing that error is as dishonoring to God as damaging to man. God's word will not fail also to show how far the Anglican body answers to His system of the church. For we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth.

Chapter 2: The History Of The Plymouth Brethren

There is this difficulty in speaking of the early facts that those with whom the movement commenced in Dublin are now passed away. If any information from one of the earliest can be relied on, two brethren in Dublin began to take the Lord's Supper together not later than 1826, and a few by degrees joined them. It was not merely for the study of the scriptures, mutual conference and prayer. A great accession of spiritual power came in with Mr. Darby who relinquished his clerical position in 1827, and published his “Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ” in 1828. Later on, Mr. A. N. Groves, so far from suggesting any distinctive truth or practice, only dropt in among them, and always remained, as a sort of “free lance"; he never shared their decided convictions, but retained to the last a link with the ordinary ways of Christendom. Mr. J. G. Bellett also was slow in breaking off his old connections. There may have been others of similar feeling. But these remarks are quite inapplicable even to those who preceded Mr. D., as well as to himself.

The late Dr. C. has named to me his distinct abandonment of his ecclesiastical associations at an earlier date than is here set down, before he saw his liberty to remember Christ in the breaking of bread. Probably the hearty welcome of such as still frequented their churches or chapels might easily lead to the notion that none for a time saw farther. It is, however, a positive error; for those who began to meet together were far from wishing to attend ordinary services. That they originally meant meetings of a subsidiary character is the dream of one—perhaps of more—who always wished something of the sort, and, of course, never could be regarded as going with Brethren intelligently or thoroughly. It is true that Mr. G. remonstrated with Mr. D., and mainly because of his own view of Matt. 13:30, which proves that he never had the least real light on the nature of the church; but who ever heard of a single brother sympathizing with Mr. G.'s mistake, save members of sects outside who naturally and highly approve of it?

There are other flaws in the account. The society at Teignmouth (to which, as I understand, allusion is made) was strictly Baptist; and Mr. B. W. Newton never received English orders. But that he did not adopt in due time and in its full extent the principle of “open ministry” (though it be not a phrase used by wise brethren) is disproved by his paper “On the Apostacy of the present dispensation” (Christian Witness, v. 83-99), as the following extracts bear witness, though the expression be not accurate, as is usual in Mr. N.'s writings. “And accordingly it is not in the rejection of Jesus, nor the rejection of God as God, but in the rejection of God as at present acting on the earth, viz., in the Spirit in the Church, that we find the great present evidence of the apostacy of the dispensation to which we belong. In the 12th chapter of the 1st of Corinthians we find the relation of the Holy Spirit to Christ's body the Church very clearly unfolded. First, He gives it its living power of unity. By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body; and, secondly, He rules in the Church, for He divideth to every man severally as He will.”

“Here then are two things. With respect to the first, the loss of that manifested unity to which the Church is called, and the little concern manifested by believers as to what schism is, and its danger; these and other questions connected with this rejection of the Spirit as the author of union, have been so frequently dwelt upon in this work, that I pass this part of this subject now, and confine myself to the second, viz., the refusal to own the Holy Ghost as the One who alone can and who alone does give order and office in the church of God.”

“Such gifts, then, are given; such persons endowed by the Holy Ghost do exist: the question is, does the professing Church of God bow to the Spirit's appointments? or does it reject them, and substitute others in their stead? I need not refer to the Church of Rome to show how office is supposed to give to carnal and unregenerate men authority to minister to the Church of God, though no spiritual nor even moral qualification be found in them; for these things are equally found, equally defended in the Establishment of our own country. Those whom the Spirit qualifies are set aside, and those whom man qualifies are substituted in their room.

“If not, where is the Church whose only care it is to see to whom among them the Spirit has divided any of His blessed gifts? and to own such and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, whether they be rich or poor, high or low, learned or unlearned? If such be the order of ministerial recognition, it is well; but if not, if things which the world has and handles, things with which the Holy Spirit (whom the world cannot receive) has no communion, regulate the arrangements of the Church of God,—if education or rank, the will of the prince or the landowner,

or purchase-money, control the appointment,—then it is plain that it is the world which rules, and not the Spirit of God."

Again, "the necessary effect of such a principle's operation is so decidedly, to put the voice of the people in the place of the Spirit of God, that we cannot regard the dissenting systems less chargeable with this sin of refusing to acknowledge the Holy Ghost than the Establishment. Indeed in theory the latter is more consistent with the truth, for it does allow that all authority and regulating power descends from God, and cannot have its origin in or sanction from man."

Had Mr. N. abode in the principles here enunciated and applied, none could have asked more; but, as is well known he gave up much here and elsewhere taught by him, and betrayed what was far more serious, fundamental heterodoxy as to the doctrine of Christ. To "presidency" no intelligent brother objects, seeing that it is laid down in Rom. 12:8, and 1 Thess. 5:12, apart from all question of apostolic authority in appointment. Mr. T.'s information was incorrect.

Whatever the difference as to prophecy, the rupture at Plymouth in 1845 was mainly on ecclesiastical grounds (that God was practically displaced in His assembly through a subversion of our confessed principles, and evil not only unjudged, but through the suppression of a weekly meeting for inquiry the remedy for much taken away). It is certain that through corrupting influence at that time in Ebrington St. the church's responsibility to judge evil was denied, as well as the unity of Christ's body on earth. He who in such circumstances could justify going on with the Ebrington Street party seems to me without conscience as to holiness and without faith as to unity, abandoning the rights of Christ in both.

Mr. N.'s heterodoxy as to Christ appeared, as Mr. Teulon says, about two years after; and the exposure was so convincing and complete that all the leaders implicated printed and circulated each an unreserved confession, save Mr. N., who owned but the use of wrong theological terms and a misapplication of Rom. 5, and withdrew his tracts for re-consideration. Not only did no good fruit appear thence, but he subsequently wrote a letter on Christ's Humanity, in which he maintained the principles of his former tracts and sought to defend or explain them, thus annulling any supposed worth in his "Acknowledgment of Error." It is owned, even by one opposed to us, that "the errors without any doubt touch the foundations of our faith, and by this means overthrow not only the unity of the church, but its very existence." It is really anti-Christian doctrine. How could any soul who loved Christ and was jealous for His glory be "satisfied"?

Meanwhile the Baptist brethren at Teignmouth had migrated to Bristol, and, after giving up their peculiar principles, had at length professed to own the great truth of the presence and free action of the Holy Ghost in the assembly; so that a little company of brethren previously separate were induced to be with them on the common ground of saints gathered to Christ's name. In 1848 partisans of Mr. N., now all but universally regarded as anti-Christian, were received at Bethesda, their meeting-room, and this, as Mr. Darby's, circular states (not Mr. T.), "with a positive refusal to investigate the Plymouth errors." (C. W. Doctr., iv., 251.) "A paper was read, signed by Messrs. Craik and Miller and eight others, to the body at Bethesda in which they diligently extenuate and palliate Mr. Newton's doctrine, though refusing investigation of it, and blame as far as they can those who have opposed it." (Ib. 255.) And these avowed partisans, who would have been everywhere rejected among us on the word in 2 John, were deliberately received and kept in so as to drive out a considerable number of godly brethren whose remonstrance was set at naught. "The

Letter of the Ten” is the paper in question, which is far from repudiating those blasphemies, but rather an elaborate excuse for a very flagrant defiance of unity and indifference to fundamental error. Mr. T. seems not aware that Bethesda subsequently was so roused by the remonstrance of their friends as to hold seven meetings in which they did publicly judge the errors to be as blasphemous as Brethren had affirmed. But even so they got rid of the Newtonian partisans privately! so that two of the Ten leaders went out, in avowed dissent from that theoretic judgment, and set up a cause of their own and had Mr. N. to help at the Music Hall. The movement failed however; the other Newtonians left Bristol; and the two leaders (who had thus joined in open support of an anti-Christian teacher on Bethesda's own showing) were allowed to come back on their owning that they should not have left Bethesda, without one reference to the real wickedness of supporting an Antichrist! Those who make much of Mr. Darby's over-sanguine visit to Mr. Muller after the seven meetings, take care to hide this overwhelming proof of treachery to Christ, as well as Mr. Craik's declaration in 1857 that the judgment expressed in the Letter of the Ten had never been repudiated.

It is true that Open Brethren, “the followers of Messrs. Muller and Craik,” as Mr. T. calls them (p. 18), maintain the mutual independence of their different assemblies. They are on congregational ground. Is he not aware that no church principle is so diametrically opposed to those which governed Brethren from the beginning? An invisible unity all Independents allow in heaven; Brethren had no communion save on the ground of Christ's one body on earth, though they freely received godly persons from orthodox societies in His name, but never as recognizing for a moment their associations as of God. And so they do still; whereas, if I am informed aright, Open Brethren at home and abroad rather boast of their care—to me sectarianism—in receiving none without formal reception by their churches, though probably many among them have not slipped into this. Extremes meet; for many of the Park Street party are no less sectarian, and independency is necessary to carry out these innovations.

I do not dwell on what is said in p..19 of “Mr. Darby's followers,” save remarking, (1) that if “they are willing to receive individuals” from among the various religious bodies to the Lord's Table, they are adhering to that original principle; and (2) that Mr. D. himself in his Bethesda circular excepted cases of ignorance of what had passed, whilst refusing to receive from Bethesda and of course all on the “loose ground,” as opening the door to that terrible evil from which at great cost God's mercy had delivered us.

It is incorrect to say there was “a division” in 1866 or at any other time on the score of Mr. Darby's views of Christ's sufferings. He was most ignorantly and unjustly assailed, and a few turned aside; but too inconsiderable a number withdrew to be so designated, sorrowful as it was for any to go, and especially on such an illusive ground. Mr. T. is wholly misinformed as to the views in question and would do well to study the incriminated pamphlet.

Chapter 149

Teulon's Plymouth Brethren: Chapter 3—The church

The doctrine of the church is viewed as essential to a full understanding of Brethren's position. A better proof of this it would be hard to conceive than the fact that a short treatise was once issued under two forms: first, with the title of “One body and One Spirit,” setting forth the Scriptural testimony to the nature, membership, ministry, government, and discipline of the church; next, with the title of “The 'Brethren,'“ and no other change than the addition of a few lines at the beginning to explain its special aim. This excepted, it was the same essay. What was drawn from Scripture as to the essential characteristics of the church exactly suited the “Brethren,” taking into account what no intelligent Christian would deny, the absence of the Apostles &c. on the one hand, and the present ruin-state of Christendom on the other. The author is quite correct in his remark, which goes farther than he contemplated.

But after stating that Brethren assert the church's existence from Pentecost and not before (because it supposes the accomplishment of Christ's sacrifice, and the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth consequent on Christ's ascension to heaven, p. 23), he says, p. 24, that “so far the teaching of the Brethren does not differ from that of the Church herself, and is fully borne out by the most express testimonies of the New Testament,” (See S. Matt. 11:11; S. John 7:39; Heb. 11:40.)

The texts cited are an unfortunate selection, not one of them directly treating of the church, only collaterally. But we need not dwell on this; for the proofs in the New Testament are many and express. But where and what has Anglicanism taught about it? It is hard to say. The notions of its teachers and members are notoriously conflicting. The vast majority seem to hold that the invisible church has gone on from the beginning, and will to the end; and that there has been a visible church, concurrent with the invisible and inclusive of it. The former seems clearly implied in the Collect for All Saints' Day: “Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body” &c. When greater strictness of speech is intended, we hear of “the Christian Church” or something equivalent. Where have the standards of the Church of England committed themselves to any definite teaching on the nature of the church, Christ's body? That they have defined it to be a distinctively New Testament or Pentecostal creation, till our Lord comes again, is more than doubtful. The teaching of Brethren on this head is in general confessed to differ essentially from that of Nationalism or Dissent. “Send to us Thine Holy Ghost,” &c., as in the Collect for the Sunday after Ascension day, is not a petition heard among those who truly believe in His presence as sent, down to abide with us forever. And so prays year by year an Evangelical conglomerate of Anglicans, Methodists, and other Dissenters, for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit.

“But here we are met by the astounding assertion that this sacred society, so divine in its origin, so well provided with all that was necessary to preserve it from age to age, is in a state of hopeless irremediable corruption.... The continuance of God's goodness to her was suspended from the beginning upon the condition of her continuance in His goodness: that continuance, the Brethren

say, has not been fulfilled, therefore her doom is sealed," sp. 24, 25. The assertion is solemn; but why "astounding," if Brethren but believe and declare what Scripture says? This then is the question: how is it written? God has not left the decision to our spiritual perception or intelligence. Humility—of all consequence to the believer—might well shrink from pronouncing sentence on that which normally ought to be an object of such loving service and of profound respect as God's church here below. For this reason as for others He has graciously given ample testimony, so as to cut off hesitation and thus range true humility on the side of faith in His word, a due sense of Christ's glory, and a conscience exercised to discern both good and evil. Not that in the worst times provision is not made for the truly faithful: God fails in nothing. The ruin is owing to the creature only, notwithstanding rich favor, adequate power to sustain, and abundant warning; but even so the ruin is in the public or common answer to the glory of the Lord now, and in no way touches the security of individuals in His grace.

What then saith the Scripture?

Matt. 13:24-30 is plain. The servants thought to correct the mischief done by the enemy; the householder ruled it irreparable till the judgment at the consummation of the age. Only then does the Lord allow the extirpation of the tares sown at the beginning. No wonder a ruined crop is not regarded as peculiar to these latter days: did it not exist in a "measure from the beginning"?

Rom. 11:20-22 is no less decisive. The Gentile grafted into the good olive-tree, which has replaced the broken off Jewish branches, stands "by faith," not by indefeasible right as Rome vainly claims in the face of the very epistle which contradicts it; and it has God's goodness expressly if it continue therein: "otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." —Christendom, no less than the Jew. Now let any believer read as before God the close of Acts 2 and iv., and then let him, judging by that standard, answer whether professing Christians have continued in God's goodness. If not, what is the sentence of His word? Excision, beyond controversy, whatever the patience of God meanwhile.

The Corr. and Gal. are not cited, because they speak for the most part of particular assemblies, and not of a general state as in the two Scriptures reasoned on. But assuredly we have the evidence of no small evils blighting the testimony to Christ in both. Morally as well as doctrinally, leaven of a Sadducean or of a Pharisaic type was already threatening the whole lump. If the light in Ephesus shone brightly, so much the more sad that the Lord is heard by His servant John charging its angel, "Remember therefore whence thou are fallen and repent and do the first works: or else I come to thee and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." Can any sober Christian doubt that the threat was soon executed? To the Philippians the apostle says "All seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ." Was this continuing in God's goodness? "Many walk of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is the belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things." Is this continuing in God's goodness? If not, what then? The epistle to the Colossians supposes a more deadly evil at work there. Philosophy and vain deceit, not without religious forms, which struck at the glory of the Head as well as at all the privileges of the Christian in union with Him. Was this continuance in God's goodness?

But these, grave as they are, are dust of the balance before 2 Thess. 2, where the apostle declares that the mystery of lawlessness already worketh: only there is one that restraineth now,

until he be out of the way, and then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall destroy; &c.: or, as he had intimated earlier, the falling away, the apostacy, shall come first, and the man of sin be revealed. There are thus from apostolic days three predicted and connected stages: the mystery of lawlessness, the apostacy, and the man of sin or lawless one revealed, till the Lord Jesus is revealed for his destruction. Is this continuing in God's goodness? Is it not a breakdown of the Christian society complete enough to satisfy Mr. T. if he believes the inspired apostle? The latter part of the New Testament would only confirm in the strongest way the beginning; but more than enough is cited to show why it is not regarded by Brethren as a matter of surprise.

And who can deny the analogy of the fall in man, of the ruin in Israel, and of the misgovernment of the Gentile powers? At the appearing of Christ shall be, not merely the full judgment of all these, but the glorious substitution in grace and power, and the blessed display, of the divine purpose in all those systems where the creature had so disastrously failed, when taken up by the Second Man to God's praise.

As to the means or evidence of Christendom's ruin, it is certain that the world is in the New Testament ever regarded as wholly antagonistic to the Father, whose children we are, and its friendship is enmity with God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ. We are not of the world, as Christ is not who died for all that they which live should no longer live to themselves but to Him who for their sakes died and rose again. To seek and embrace the world is worthy of Babylon, not of her who is espoused as a pure virgin to Christ. It is the acceptance of evil which is fatal, not the entrance of a hypocrite or an unbeliever who deceives. Now Article 26 quietly seeks to sanction evil having chief authority in the ministration of the word and sacraments, because done in Christ's name! whilst it speaks of a discipline which is as inadequate in practice as it is worldly in principle. Yet in the Homilies the right use of ecclesiastical discipline is laid down as the third mark of a true church; and Commination read in Lent is a sorry substitute for the godly discipline which needs to be restored. Is this then the church sustained through God's faithfulness of grace?

Mr. T. erroneously imputes to Brethren the notion that apostolic appointment “belonged to the Church only while it was among the Jews,” p. 27. On the contrary all admit that the choice of elders is most distinctly made by Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles, not to speak of Titus later still under the apostle's direction in Crete. On the one hand the New Testament discloses a direct supply of gifts from Christ the Head for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building of the body of Christ; and this, till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, Eph. 4. This grace cannot fail, because it rests exclusively on His ever active love to His own. Hence (if we heed Scripture) ordination never was practiced as to apostles or prophets, as to evangelists, or pastors, or teachers: if so, where? when? by whom? or on whom? It is allowed on the other hand that the apostle, or an apostolic delegate, did choose and appoint elders, not the disciples choosing and the apostles appointing, but the apostles for the disciples. But the Scripture which demonstrates this is equally clear that no provision is made in it to perpetuate this ordaining authority. Gifts according to it were to abide, not those local charges. It is vain to reason from that which we think must or ought to be: those who assert are logically bound to prove; and we can readily and certainly do so for the gifts, not those who claim the local

charge of elders. This would imply apostolic succession; as we frankly allow to the Anglican the invalidity of dissenting ordination. But what of their own? It is in general confidently derived from Peter, who is to this end made the first bishop of Rome, and thus would secure the primacy also. But this is to ignore and annul Scripture, which assigns the apostleship of the circumcision to Peter, as of the uncircumcision to Paul, who ought to have been, but was not even imagined to be, the spring of orders in the west by the ecclesiastical fabulists. God has thus poured confusion on the clerical scheme, which is opposed to Scripture even in its theory.

And what is the practical issue? That the apostle Paul could not produce a valid title, and that Bishop Colenso can; that Dr. Pusey was a qualified presbyter, and that Mr. Spurgeon is a quack. If this which Mr. T. must substantially admit (save perhaps a quibbling assumption as to S. Paul) be not what he calls “encroaching on the jurisdiction of the Holy Ghost, and so far as human power can do so, hampering His work among the sons of men,” p. 28, it will at any rate receive no more refutation here. It is the genuine and necessary working of the clerical system in direct opposition to the free action of the Holy Spirit within the assembly of God.

The argument in pp. 30-35 fails to prove that the church was meant, according to God's will, to be an unholy body. We have never denied that it quickly fell from its holy standing, and that He let us know that so it would be, but nowhere to sanction evil in it. It is not Brethren who overlook the parable of the wheat and the tares, but such as falsely apply to church constitution and discipline what the Lord explained to he the mingled crop of righteous and wicked in “the world” under the reign of the heavens till the Lord execute judgment in His day. The popular interpretation is demonstrably unsound, because it sets Matt. 13:30 in irreconcilable antagonism to 1 Cor. 5. For, so misapplied, the Lord in the parable forbids that purging out of the manifestly wicked which the Spirit enjoins peremptorily in the epistle! Rightly understood, the two Scriptures are in perfect harmony, as Brethren see, and Anglicans &c. do not; for the Lord prohibits present extermination of the wicked, whereas the Holy Spirit insists on their excommunication. Till judgment they are to be together in the world; the wicked are not to be together with the righteous in the church, but to be put out.

Again, Matt. 22:10 is no less perverted to justify the evil thought of unholiness in the church; for it speaks solely of those whom the Christian call finds, indiscriminately in the servant's eyes, and not at all what grace does for the guilty when clothed with the marriage garment. A false doctrine always involves misuse of Scripture, as this to sanction “bad and good” within the aasembly. So Matt. 24:12, Acts 20:29, 30, 2 Thess. 2, 1 Tim. 4, 2 Tim. 2; 3, 1 John 2 Peter 2; 3, Jude, prove nothing more surely than “that the dispensation would fail, if every one who names the Lord's name is really responsible to depart from iniquity. Brethren are the last to suppose “that the divine charter of the Church would be canceled, or the Presence of Christ be withdrawn from the work of His hands” (p. 33).

All this is mistake of the question. Brethren hold the terrible growth and development of that evil which has ruined the public testimony of Christendom, but the inalienable responsibility of all that are His to depart from iniquity, according to the abiding charter of the church, and counting on Christ's unfailing presence in the midst of even two or three gathered to His name. And the teaching of the Epistles fully corroborates this; for while grave evil manifestly did enter, holy discipline is made obligatory. Would the apostle Paul, or the church in general, have owned the

assemblies in Corinth, Colosse, or Galatia, if they had rejected his authority and kept the denounced evil within? Would it have been godly to have gone on if the whole lump had been leavened? It is rebellious insubjection to the Lord's commandments that would unchurch. So with the seven Apocalyptic churches: the Lord denounces terrible evils in several; but it is to have the evil judged. If they had not repented, would they have been churches of God all the same? This is the ecclesiastical corruption which Brethren deny; and to lay the ruin or cessation of churches on God's providence rather than on man's sin seems to Brethren more worthy of a professional divine than of a believer.

There is equal confusion and error as to our views of ordination and ministry in pp. 35-52. No brother denies the common application of 1 Cor. 9:1 to Paul and the twelve; and the argued parallel between the miracles, ministry, and methods of S. Paul and S. Peter in no way enfeebles the heavenly character of Paul's apostleship, which is a fact as patent as it is important. In this way only has he been regarded as typical of others since, who in an incomparably humbler way have been given of Christ as gifts for the perfecting of the saints. It is unfounded that Brethren do or ever did expect that all the ministers of Christ would have a miraculous call like his, any more than the apostle expected it. And none more than Brethren have dwelt on his appointing elders with Barnabas, or his directions to Timothy and Titus. Mere elders could not thus appoint; none but an apostle or his delegate with express authority to this end. But that neither had permanent diocesan place 2 Tim. 4:9, 21, Titus 3:12 show, besides total silence as to the continuance of such powers. They had a direct and limited commission defined during his life without a word providing for the time following his death, though he supposes this at hand in one of these very Epistles.

This may suffice to show others, if not Mr. T., how he misunderstands the scriptural truth on which our position is founded. We do not believe there is any “radical change in the church's constitution” (p. 40), but only in exterior means of government, which never were indispensable for the churches, and are recognized before they were appointed. (Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5). Elders therefore were desirable, but not essential. But we do believe, as scripture warrants, that those to whom evangelizing and teaching were committed by Christ will surely continue till the end. These are not elders, but gifts with which “exceptional arrangement” never had to do. It is all wrong therefore to talk of the elders &c. being “succeeded by another system utterly unlike it;” for the supply of gifts was before the local charges, went on with it side by side, and alone can be proved to abide.

Local charges clearly, even when apostolically appointed, are not the gifts which depend on the risen Christ, the ascended Head. Hence these abide now as then being directly raised up by Him, like Judas and Silas, like Apollos, like Epaphras or Epaphroditus, like Trophimus or Tychicus or Archippus or Zenas They were gifts unto the work of ministry, unto edifying of the body of Christ. We insist on Christ's guarantee of continuing such gifts till the church be complete. But local charges cannot be in due scriptural order without an apostolic authority, which those who assert are bound to prove. If Mr. T. own the continuance of these gifts, as he appears to do in pp. 40, 41, we have no controversy on this head; but he assumes without proof that the local charge of elders abides. If he or any other can show us authority competent to appoint presbyters, Brethren would be the last to despise aught that is really of the Lord. Brethren abstain from such appointments, because confessedly none among them lays claim to any such authority. But they are unaware of its existence either in Nationalism or in Dissent, to say nothing of the idolatrous system of Rome. If

authority be asserted, it ought to be unquestionable. Imitation, however close, is unreal. If it does not even resemble the true and divine, what is its worth? The inspired record has living value, as in other ways, so in this of exposing unreal pretension. In a day of ruin it lays bare spurious authority, and it establishes the gracious provision of God for His children even then, that the simplest need not stray nor sit down in the poor consolation of accepting the lesser of two evils. There is always a holy path for the faithful.

Chapter 150

Teulon's Plymouth Brethren: Chapter 4—The Resource of the Faithful Amid the Ruin of the Church

“The first step that they insist on,” says Mr. T., “is entire separation from the Church and all other Christian societies. This is of course a necessary consequence of the view they take of the state of those societies. The arguments against separation, which may be fairly urged in dealing with the members of other sects, have no place here. If universal Christendom is in a state of utter condemnation, if the fires of Divine wrath are destined shortly to consume it, separation becomes not only lawful but necessary. It is worse than useless, it is sinful to remain in a society, which lies under a Divine sentence, and accordingly the very first requisition of the Brethren is ‘Come out from among them, and be ye separate.' It is admitted, indeed, that individuals who abide in 'the ruin' may be saved at last; but by touching the unclean thing they deprive themselves of the fullness of Gospel privileges, and especially of that great blessing of visible unity which Christendom at large has forfeited forever.” (pp. 43, 44.) Does Mr. T. really think we claim to restore “visible unity"? That we are bound, ceasing from the causes and results of disunion, to insist on the true ground of unity and thus walk, is another thing, and true.

Doubtless this is said with upright intention, which indeed characterizes our author favorably, in contrast almost singular with others in their critiques; but every intelligent person among Brethren would demur to the opening phrase, “entire separation from the Church,” &c., and for the simple and sufficient reason that we regard “separation from the Church” as entirely unjustifiable. The church may surely lose its character (as at Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Rome, says Article xix.) not only in life but in faith, by departure from its distinctive principles. If there be acceptance of evil in its confession or its conduct, then separation from evil according to scripture is imperative; because its leavened condition is incompatible with its claim to be considered Christ's witness, and hence with God's aim, nature, will, and authority, as made known in His word, which acts and is meant to act on the conscience of the believer.

Time was when all western Christendom was Romanist: Mr. T., it is to be presumed, holds cheaply their reproach on the Anglican body of “entire separation from the Church"; nor does he want any reason from us for not joining any of “all other Christian societies.” He assumes that the Anglican establishment is “the Church,” which we deny, believing it to be at issue with God's constitution of the Church in its headship, its ministry, and its membership. For (1) the Sovereign's chief government of estates ecclesiastical is inconsistent with Christ's headship; and none can serve two masters. (2) The ministry is doubly unsound; not only in claiming godly order and lawful consecration for its “bishops, priests, and deacons,” without and against scripture, but in rejecting the free action of the Holy Ghost in gift, which is the only true scriptural ground of Christian service, now that we have neither apostle, no apostolic vicar, to validate local charges. And (3) as the rubric insists that every parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year (only excepting an open and notorious evil liver or an impenitent offender in wrong or malice), it is plain that its membership is fundamentally vicious by embracing the decent world as a whole, instead of

contemplating none but those baptized by the one Spirit into the one body, believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, enjoying the like gift of the Holy Ghost as God gave at the beginning. Brethren therefore separate, from the Anglican establishment, not for its state only through abuses of various kinds, but because its constitution, were there no abuses, essentially differs from that of God's church as revealed in scripture; in order to walk together, confessing their weakness and shortcoming, on the imperishable principles of His church. How faithfully carry out the church according to God's word, without separating from what is opposed to its nature? This we seek to do.

Mr. T. allows that “with perfect truth” we point to Christ as the true center, and to the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven as the true power, of unity. Only he adds, that in so saying we but echo “the voice of universal Christendom; for no truths have obtained more general recognition than those just named” (pp. 44, 45). Would to God this were the fact! Though not a young man, nor unacquainted with all that bears the name of the Lord all over the earth, I know of no Christian society which either confesses them as the truth, or even attempts to reduce them to practice, as already shown in Chap. III. It is an amiable but grievous misapprehension: no evidence is even essayed of what really does not exist. But having stated what is manifestly unfounded (though in good faith, as Mr. T. does not quite comprehend the matter), he immediately after shows that, in asserting too much, he in effect says nothing. For, closing one paragraph with the flourish about “the voice of universal Christendom,” he opens the next with the words “But having abandoned the divinely constituted society [by which, I suppose, he means Anglicanism now, and Roman-ism for many centuries before the Reformation!], in which the expression of those truths has ever been found by those who sought it (!), they are obliged to seek for their realization by a method of their own.” But this is as wholly mistaken as inconsistent. For how could there be the disunions of Christendom, or the different denominations which men call “churches,” with their manifold and even discordant tongues, in nothing more notorious than their slight of Christ as the center, and the Holy Spirit as the power, of unity, if they all uttered, and uttered truly, this one voice? And if we listen to the Anglican society alone, nothing is farther from the actual fact, nothing less before the minds of its founders, than such a practical development of these truths as is seen in the church of the Scriptures. They just wished to turn over the people en masse from Popery to Protestantism, and to a Protestantism of their own, different from Luther's on the one hand, and from Calvin's on the other.

So far, too, are Brethren from abandoning the divinely constituted society in which the expression of those foundation-truths of the church of God are found, that it is precisely on this they have fallen back, in ceasing to do this unscriptural thing, or in correcting that unscriptural thought. They clear themselves of every known accretion, sectarian or worldly, in order to abide faithfully in their relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, as members of His body. They own and act on the truth of His body, the church, and nothing else; welcoming all others who give credible witness that they are His, and in the position wherein God has set each of them in the church. This, in its poor measure, is holding fast, not casting aside, the only ecclesiastical association of which God speaks, for it is on the ground of the assembly instituted by Him. Inventions ecclesiastical of man, ancient or modern, are of no account in their eyes; because they are substitutes for, rivals of, and rebels against, that which alone is of God. If we hear the scriptures, we cannot overlook the saints from Pentecost meeting in the power of the Holy Ghost round the person of Christ, and thus

worshipping and holding communion with the Father, as Mr. T. describes the aim of Brethren. Nor can it be denied that, according to the Acts and Epistles, the Holy Ghost did act in the assembly as well as individually, to exalt and endear the Lord unto the glory of God, in the varied need and to the blessing of all concerned.

Thus even the Apostle Paul was but a minister of the assembly (Col. 1): the minister of an assembly is unknown to scripture, and therefore an encroachment on God's revealed will. Disorders might enter, but scripture rebukes and corrects them, were they but an inopportune display of miraculous power. The commandment of the Lord enforces edification and order, but unquestionably on the ground of the presence and free action of the Holy Ghost in the assembly. To abandon this is to abandon the only divine constitution and the sole normal working of a church, as such, which scripture furnishes. The very aberrations at Corinth were the occasion of the fullest instruction on church matters in the New Testament. Christendom in general, and Anglicanism in particular, have not even sought to realize “the assembly” of scripture; but resorted, each sect, to notions and practices of its own. Brethren, whatever their weakness, and it is not small, own the obligation of cleaving to the assembly, while they avoid the assumption and imitation of apostolic authority.

Mr. T. states fairly on the whole (pp. 46, 47) what Brethren hold as to gifts according to the word, save that he does not with it all connect the Lord's place whose glory the Spirit is here to make good. Hence the prominence given to His authority in 1 Cor. 14, where the exercise of gifts in the assembly is regulated. But the practical difficulty is pleaded: “who is to decide whether this or that brother possesses the requisite gift?” To an outside mind, to a theorist, the solution seems difficult, and the more if God be left out; but why doubt His gracious care in that which so nearly concerns Himself and His children? No one would conceal that questions arise here as everywhere; but God watches over those who desire to do His will; and in practice there is perhaps more loss from the backwardness of those who might help but shrink from an overstrained sense of responsibility, than trial of patience through the forwardness of the incompetent. Men of spiritual intelligence in scripture are found generally and everywhere among Brethren; and it is easier to pass before a bishop's examining chaplain than to deceive such, though they assume no authority to interdict, unless error or other evil should draw out open rebuke or even more. It is a delusion to suppose (as in p. 48) that there is in any instance for the assembly an approach to electing its own ministers for the time being. The Lord is counted on, and the Holy Spirit knows how to guide. But along with this outside the assembly we have always maintained individual responsibility in the exercise of gift; each servant being responsible to trade with the goods entrusted to him for this purpose by the Master. (Matt. 25, Luke 19) In No. 3 of “Lectures on the Church of God” there seems absolutely no ground for the imputation. The page, if not the words, should have been cited. To worship with its central institution, the Lord's Supper on the Lord's day, Brethren have recalled the attention of Christians. Mr. T. notices this in pp. 48-50, with the discipline in 50-52 scripture—enjoins to guard all; but his comment is slight. It is Matt. 18:20, rather than xvi. 18, (p. 53) that we point to for the Lord's guaranteed presence to two or three gathered to His name—the highest sanction and highest favor the church enjoyed even at Pentecost. Christendom as a whole has become like “the camp” of Israel; an earthly religion for man in the flesh, which suits the world and seeks its glory, instead of boasting only in the cross, walking and worshipping in the faith of the heavenly glory of Him who was here put only to shame and death. Mr. T. (p. 54) repeats to us

the old popish cavil against the Reformers: if Brethren are right as to the assembly, where are we to find a true expression of it from the apostolic age till now? He forgets that this is part of the evidence as to the ruin-state of Christendom. Had we seen any saints manifesting, in ever such feebleness but truly, God's assembly, we should have found ourselves there, instead of beginning afresh on that ground in separation from all the systems which ignored it. The argument in p. 55 drawn from ecclesiastical history is therefore quite worthless. So the scriptural argument in p. 56, founded on “elders.” &c., does not even touch the question of the assembly; as any Christian ought to see from the undeniable fact that churches are fully recognized before those charges were appointed in them; no elders as yet being referred to in Rome or in Corinth, but the strongest presumption of their absence. It is the old error of confounding the church with the officials, where there were officials, and of denying the church to be where they were not; a probably Ignatian invention at issue with scriptural truth.

But pp. 57-59 are worse, and illustrate how tradition ever tends to unbelieving views and ways. For it is boldly laid down that the regulations in 1 Cor. 14 have reference to a state of things which no longer exists. Why then should Anglicans or others habitually quote, for practical guidance, words out of this chapter from ver. 1 to ver. 40? It is granted at once that Mr. T.'s unbelief is logically more consistent with the routine of his system, as of the rest of Christendom. But one's heart prefers the well-meant but blundering application of these precious words of the Lord, however little they suit arrangements which essentially differ from the order and decency demanded by holy writ. Does Mr. T. question that the “order” of the assembly laid down in 1 Cor. 14 was then invariable “in all churches of the saints"? So little is that “order” founded on the miraculous endowments of tongues or miracles, as his argument assumes, that one of the objects of chaps. 12-14. is to lower the overweening value set on those displays by the ostentatious brethren in Corinth, and to claim the superiority of such a gift as “prophesying,” because it builds up the assembly. Power is inferior to spiritual intelligence, and the higher gifts which the Corinthians slighted in their folly abide to this day for comfort, edification, and exhortation.

The real ground of the regulations, then, is the presence of the Spirit sent down to remain in and with us forever. Undoubtedly (and there we have no controversy with Mr. T., but with. Irvingites or mere fanatics) tongues and other miracles ceased; and when they did, the references to them would no longer apply. But therefore to infer that the always and immeasurably more important “state of things,” which turned on the presence of the Spirit and His free action in the assembly, no longer exists, is as unfounded as it is ruinous. Sign-gifts formed but part; and, however momentous for the time, being vouchers of the Holy Ghost's presence as a new and stupendous fact, are not to be compared in value with those gifts which laid the foundation and were to carry on the building of God's habitations by the Spirit. The regulations of 1 Cor. 14 implied of course the very small part of the Spirit's power which wrought in a tongue or its interpretation; but they contain the general course of the assembly, and from first to last they subordinate extraordinary powers (even when in action) to the spiritual and ordinary ways of the Holy Ghost in building up the faithful. It is the traditional school of Christendom which assumes the transitory character of 1 Cor. 14 because in it are some regulations of sign-gifts passed away. But this chapter regulates also speaking to edification, exhortation, and comfort, which believers need at least as much now as ever; and it refers to prayer, and singing, to blessing and thanksgiving, which are surely not “a state of things passed away,” any more than the assembly itself, and its responsibility to be

energized of the Spirit in subjection to the commandment of the Lord.

It is Mr. T. and his friends who are therefore plainly opposed to all sound reasoning on this head; but, what is worse, they practically treat 1 Cor. 12; 14 as a state of things dead and gone, because the extraordinary or sign gifts no longer exist. And what can be less sound than to claim that they truly heed the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, because they imitate the apostle or his vicar, without the commission they enjoyed, as compared with Brethren who refuse to go beyond their province, and can too easily use these very Epistles to refute traditional pretensions? If Mr. T. could show us with the least appearance of solidity persons with such true apostolic title to appoint elders or deacons, we should gladly bow; for we have not the most distant aversion to the exercise of just authority. But our faith in the word and our value for apostolic order arm us strongly against mere imitation or assumption, even if it could boast of the hoary old age of fifteen centuries, instead of the rather green one of three or four.

What is erroneously branded as our “entirely modern system” (p. 59) is the very same in substance as that in which all assemblies at the first found themselves which had not the added privilege of an apostle or apostolic delegate to choose elders for them. We frankly own the deficiency in this respect, as they no doubt did; but we refuse unscriptural methods of appointing these charges, such as Christendom has long adopted, as different from one another as from God's word. To use such methods would be a loss, not a gain.

Mr. T. admits “the undoubted truths” Brethren have enshrined in that early churchism which we find in Holy Writ, and which he unintelligently libels as a novel system. But his verbal admission that “far more discipline is needed” in Anglicanism, according to the desire of the Commination Service, does not rebut the fact of its shameless absence, especially when one of its own standards confesses the right use of ecclesiastical discipline to be one of the three marks of a true church. And the prayer in the second collect for Good Friday, or any little development of what they call lay agency (p. 90), cannot atone for their absolute annulling of the only principle and practice of the assembly known to God's word, to which Brethren, if alone, by grace adhere; though it be equally binding on all the members of Christ's body. “What I came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?” To separate from an unscriptural system is not to separate from the church (p. 60) but from that which never was the church. Neither in Anglicanism nor in Dissent was Christ ever in any real sense the one center, nor the Holy Ghost the one power, of gathering. Separation, if we find ourselves in what is false, is a necessary first step toward carrying out the true. But we need to be guided only by, the word and the Spirit of God, with Christ before our eyes; for error is easy and manifold, and truth is one. All real Christians are members of the one body. Oh that they were content, judging before God themselves and all that hinders others justly, to let go the petty differences that scatter, and to hold fast Him who died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad!

Teulon's Plymouth Brethren: Chapter 5—Justification

It is confessed (I.) that the truth of justification, including pardon and acceptance, is asserted by Brethren “with an emphasis and an earnestness which leaves nothing to be desired; their frank and unreserved recognition of them accounts for much of their influence on the religious life of the present day, and if in the details of their teaching on this wide subject, we find some things which we are compelled to criticize severely, their main points of agreement must never be forgotten” (pp. 62, 63). The grounds for Mr. T.'s criticism of details will perhaps appear to be his own want of light; the soundness of the doctrine on that which is of all importance for the individual soul is allowed in general by their censor, as well it might be, if it but echo scripture. In Anglicanism is any approach to this true? Are they not, like others, obscure and shallow as to God's righteousness, where they are not in error? never corresponding in their measure with the depth and accuracy of God's word? Art. 11 (of the Thirty-nine Articles) says: “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own merits or deservings; wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.” This does not say much, if anything, for our present question; yet it were well if most Anglican preachers taught accordingly. Very different is the Tridentine statement: “Que enim iustitia nostra dicitur, quia per eam nobis inhaerentem iustificamur: illa eadem Dei est, quia a Deo nobis infunditur per Christi meritum.” This at least is Egyptian darkness: the bold identification of man's righteousness with God's; and the profane effort to consecrate this virtual denial of our justification on the one side, and of God's righteousness on the other, by making Christ's merit its source. It is the gospel of God's grace ignored,—yea, apostate rejection of Christ's salvation for every one that believes, in order to set up mere naturalism under the forgery of Christ's name.

II. “But further,” (says Mr. T.) “they have done good service in bringing out into a clear, strong light, one aspect of the doctrine of justification which some previous systems had lost sight of, viz. the close connection of this great gift with the resurrection of our Lord On this point they have been misunderstood by some of their opponents, who speak of the prominence given by them to the doctrine of the resurrection as though it involved a depreciation of the work that was done upon the Cross. The following quotations will prove that they are in little danger of falling into error on this head; whilst at the same time they show the exact place assigned by them to the resurrection in the economy of Redemption” (pp. 63, 64). More than one writer is cited, with the comment, “in all this there is nothing which detracts from the value or the dignity of the sacrifice offered upon the Cross. On the contrary, it is but an echo of the teaching of St. Paul,” &c. (p. 65). The fact seems to be, that Mr. T. has learned a little through reading various tracts, though not enough to form or warrant a solid and ripe judgment.

How little there is a just claim to discernment is evident from his speaking of a “remarkable resemblance” between the treatises of the Brethren on this particular point and some of the writings of the Tractarian school; though he doubts the ridiculous fable of the British Quarterly Review (p. 409 of the No. for Oct. 1873) that Brethren derived their doctrine of justification from Dr.

Newman! (p. 67). That Irvingism as well as Tractarianism protested against Evangelicalism on this head is true; and so did Brethren: but their ground was as different as the aim and the result. For the Irvingite used to get rid of all just thoughts of Christ's work, on which justification depends, by the statement that it is atonement which was the true want and real blessing, not atonement in the sense of sin-bearing on the cross. And very similarly the late Bishop of Oxford used to say, that the essential difference between the Puseyite system and his father's Evangelicalism lay in the Tractarians giving to the Incarnation the value which the Evangelicals assigned to the cross. Thus these two new parties (Irvingites and Tractarians) wholly departed from the truth; for they laid the stress, not on the infinite work of redemption, where evil was divinely judged and borne away for faith, but on the Word made flesh—the blessed manifestation of the person of the Savior. This is a grand truth, no doubt; but rather a means to the end of vindicating God in His mercy to sinners, which in no way gives effect to His grace in saving us from our sins, so as to range His righteousness on the side of justifying the believer. Incarnation was the display of living grace in Christ; but His blood-shedding made it a just thing for God to justify the believer. His law, and much more than His law, had been perfectly illustrated in His life here below; but in His vicarious and sacrificial death God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him risen and glorified.

Hence Irvingism and Tractarianism alike keep the soul on this side of the cross, where sin was not yet dealt with; and remission of sins is a hope, rather than a possessed privilege, according to the efficacy of Christ's blood in the sight of God, and the believer knowing himself in Christ risen from the dead. Wherever that is so, there is no deliverance from law, any more than from flesh and the world; but those so beguiled are kept still under the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto they desire to be in bondage. Every one is, at least all the, baptized are, viewed as in a salvable state; and none can be regarded as truly and forever saved—this being the vain confidence of heretics! So, on their own showing, no papist was farther from the truth than Drs. Newman and Pusey when insisting on their Tractarianism Faith was made by them the sum of Christian virtues! Hence justification by faith meant justification by the fruits of the Spirit!! Thus they coalesced with the old Pelagians and modern Quakers, with mystic and self-righteous schools of all ages; which may differ in form, but agree in making an amelioration within the real resting-place, with God's mercy in Christ a sort of make-weight for all shortcomings.

Indeed, nothing serves to put in stronger contrast their absolutely opposed doctrine, than the way in which such a case is handled as the believing robber on the cross in Luke 23 Dr. N. is, of course, obliged there to admit salvation without priest, sacrament, or works; but then he essays to guard his system by attributing the saving virtue to the faith as implicitly containing all, and having extraordinary merit in these exceptional circumstances! The truth, on the contrary, is that grace gave his awakened conscience to rest without hesitation on the Savior, the first-fruits of His suffering for sins, and the striking witness of immediate, everlasting, and complete cleansing by the blood of Christ for the paradise of God. In none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other Name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved. There is real contrast where Mr. T. fancies a “remarkable resemblance;” and the Tractarian idea is as dark, as Brethren have been given to present “in a clear strong light” not one aspect only, but the entire field of this truth as revealed in scripture. The Evangelical view is not false, like that of the Tractarians and Irvingites, but rather meager and shallow, being sometimes clouded by bringing in

the law without warrant of God's word, to supplement the true way of justification in virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ.

This brings us to III., where we are told (p. 69), that “Brethren have certainly not assigned its proper position, viz. His obedience to the law of God during His earthly life"; and that their statements are a recoil from the Puritanism of the seventeenth century, the active and passive righteousness of Christ imputed to us, as taught then and since chiefly by nonconformists. Strange to say, Mr. T., though he does not apparently adopt this system, is not unwilling to draw a shaft or two from its quiver. We certainly do not deny the fact, or the importance, of the Son of God born of woman, born under law; but the connection of these facts in scripture is, not with His obeying the law to acquire righteousness for Himself or for us, but “that He might redeem them which were under the law [Jewish believers] that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye [Galatian believers] are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” Jew or Gentile, all who believe have now, in virtue of redemption, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost given to us. Not only does scripture never divide Christ's work in Puritan fashion, but it never makes our Savior's fulfillment of the law “an essential qualification” for His work on the cross; His perfection as man, on the contrary, went far beyond the law, which was the measure imposed of God on fallen and sinful man. In all His life, and in every act, there was not only the perfection of man toward God, but of God in man and toward man. No believer doubts, therefore, that there never was a flaw, inwardly or outwardly; but even the mildest form in this legal school of presenting Christ's life does unwitting dishonor to Him, who, though He came under law, glorified His Father immeasurably beyond it throughout life up to death—the death of the cross.

To make of Christ's death a fulfilling of the law for us, His legal obedience, is a perversion of scripture, and most offensive to all right feeling. It was by the grace of God He tasted death for every man. He came to do God's will, taking away the first—what the law required—that He might establish the second; by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Hence, instead of making law of none effect through faith, we establish law; for law never had such a vindication as when the Lord Jesus died, a victim under its curse, and the answer to all its sacrificial types. Certainly, the humblest among Brethren believe this at least as fully as the vice-principal of Chichester College, without denying the boundless grace of Christ's death, as if it were but a part of the moral law, i.e. a human duty, to the slight of the divine judgment of sin.

“It is perfectly clear” that the language in Rom. 3:21, and in Gal. 2:21, goes farther than is here and generally allowed. We are not at liberty to curtail an absolute statement, more especially when we have to do with inspired words. Men may plead their lack of foresight, or infirmity of expression: God's word needs no such apology. It is untrue that the apostle excludes “simply” our own legal obedience from the work of justification: in the widest way, he glories in God's righteousness apart from law, and expresses it in terms altogether unrestricted in Rom. 3

So in Gal. 2, the apostle declares that, if righteousness came through law, then Christ died in vain. It is not giving full scope to scripture, if we limit this to our obeying the law. The apostle puts it absolutely; no interpreter is entitled to make it relative. Witness how strange and lame the plan is: first, our righteousness or justification by Christ's obeying the law for us; and then His death, to extricate us from wrath, because of our sins! Is there not an inversion of divine order in this

imaginary scheme? How it stands in contrast with the beauty of scriptural truth! For however Christ glorified His Father (and He did so perfectly) in His life on earth, He was truly the grain of wheat which abode by itself; alone, till dying, it bore much fruit. So He suffered for our sins, and rising from the dead, gave us a place in Him, to live evermore of His life in resurrection, set free from all condemnation (Rom. 8:1-4).

Thus, not only were we justified in the power of His blood, but we have “justification of life"; a truth unheard in the pulpit, and unknown to divinity schools. They try to drag the mind back to the days before redemption, when God had not yet condemned sin in the flesh in His own Son; not only a man in the likeness of flesh of sin, but a sacrifice for it, a sin-offering: whereas scripture brings into prominence first His death, and then His resurrection; that the believer may know himself set free from the law of sin and death by a wholly different law—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. For indeed we died with Christ and were raised together with Him; not only He dying for us, but we dead with Him, as our very baptism attests. Those greatly err, therefore, who would send us back with the Puritans to the legal estate before the cross, or the peace made through its blood, instead of going forward, according to the unquestionable doctrine of Paul, into the estate of Christ's risen life, and the liberty of the Spirit which is characteristic of Christianity.

Be it noticed that the establishment of law in Rom. 3:31 has not the least connection with Christ's obeying it, as the Puritans say, to give us active righteousness. For the entire context is decisive in speaking only of Christ set forth as a propitiatory or mercy-seat through faith in His blood, and thus displaying, apart from law, God's righteousness, both in vindication of His past forbearance and in the present time; so that He might be just and might justify him that has faith in Jesus. This is a law of faith which excludes Jewish boasting or Puritan theology; for the sole establishing of law, which is here set forth to our faith, is Christ's death, without the least reference to His making out righteousness for us by obeying the law in His life. Never was law so solemnly and gloriously established, as when the divine Savior bore its curse on the cross; its authority was upheld by that which delivered from its penalty.

The use of the law made by the apostle in Rom. 5:20 is to point out that it came in beside or by the bye; that the offense, or trespass under law, might abound. It is an added matter and subordinate aim, quite distinct from the direct teaching, just before, of that one act of righteousness, or obedience of One, which alone could constitute any righteous; and, in fact, does so for the many. This incidental allusion, however, in no way warrants the modern dogma of the active righteousness, but rather pointedly omits any such idea as intended of God, turning us at once away from the special and secondary object, to dwell on the grand general triumph of grace abounding over sin; “that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Rom. 8; 4, refers, not to Christ obeying the law for us, but to the righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. It is practical righteousness in such as live of Christ's life, to produce the fruit of righteousness which is by Him to God's glory and praise, loving God and their neighbor. But this is Pauline truth, not Puritanism. Those under grace (not law) are led to bear fruits of the Spirit: against such there is no law. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law but under grace.” Is it possible to conceive contradiction more direct to the Catecism on the

Westminster Confession?

IV. It is objected, also, that the gift of justification is held to be abiding. This is to predicate the safety not of all the baptized, but of all born of God. Every simple Christian, believes that a professor may draw back to perdition. It is not said, that “whatever sin or failure there may be in our course, our salvation is secure": individuals may thus speak among Brethren, as elsewhere. But the warning is, that a man who does not buffet the body and lead it captive may have preached to others and be himself rejected (or a castaway). It is clear that the objector, like the mass in his own system and others, does not hold the eternal life of the believer in any just and uninterrupted sense. Yet Scripture is plain on this momentous truth. it is natural that those who think that life—one cannot properly call it eternal life—may be lost and regained, should regard justifying grace as equally defectible ideas not only unknown but opposed to scripture. The Colossian Christians were not singular; yet the apostle could thank the Father who made them meet to be partakers of the saints in light, as he could tell the Hebrews that we have been sanctified through the offering of Jesus Christ once for all; yea, that by one offering He has perfected forever in perpetuity, or for uninterrupted continuance—those that are sanctified, as all real Christians are.

No one doubts that, in case of sin into which anyone may fall, true self-judgment and confession, which is a virtual seeking forgiveness of his God and Father, are needful to restore the communion which has been interrupted. We reject the false thought, so destructive of “grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ,” that the relationship is thereby lost; we repudiate the unbelieving way which would merge converted and unconverted in a promiscuous fashion. “Forgive us our trespasses” is a question between the children and their Father; to bring in the unconverted ruins it; and this is what Mr. T.'s system does. Thus every sense of relationship vanishes; and daily government is confounded with forgiveness for eternity.

It is inexact that Heb. 10:2, any more than 10, 14, speaks of the offering apart from its application to the saints. The doctrine on the contrary is, that as Christ is now seated in unbroken continuance at God's right hand, so we Christians have been and are perpetually perfected by His infinitely efficacious work according to God's will. It is unbelief as dishonoring to God and detrimental to man to deny the application as it is to deny the virtue of Christ's sacrifice. The Anglican may, like the Romanist, deny the present application to the believer; as the Socinian, like other infidels, denies the atoning value of His death. But to withhold a needed treasure comes to the same result as if there were no treasure to withhold. It is not Brethren, as some Methodist preacher said, who confound in any way the offering with its application, but dealers in tradition, who fear to trust and teach the full abiding blessedness, resulting from Christ's work to every believer.

With Christ's work the apostle sedulously binds up its application to us by faith: “And the Holy Ghost also beareth witness to us: for after He hath said.... and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” The application is just the point in Heb. 10, as the sacrifice itself rather in Heb. 9; and he judaizes who teaches repeated purging by Christ's blood. Under the law there were repeated sacrifices, and repeated cleansings thereby; under the gospel, as there is one everlasting efficacious offering, so also one complete and enduring purgation. There is, along with this, the constant need of cleansing by the Spirit's moral use of the word “the washing of water by the word” (John 13:10); but the blood abides for the believer in unchanging virtue before God. 1

John 1:9 is the simple fact, and no question of time; else one perverts it to contradict Heb. 10, Rev. 1:5, and the scriptures in general which treat of redemption by Christ's blood.

V. The last point attacked here is Brethren's view of baptism. Mr. T. goes too far in assuming divergence from scripture. We insist on baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2); we call on those awakened, like Saul of Tarsus, to be baptized and wash away their sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22) We regard it as baptism to Christ's death (Rom. 6:12; Col. 2), burial with Him by baptism to death; as a putting on of Christ (Gal. 3); as that which, in a figure or in answering fashion, saves (1 Peter 3) The washing of “regeneration” is quite distinct from new birth (see Matt. 19), and in Titus 3 distinguished from the “renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

Now we affirm by the scriptural test the Anglican doctrine is unsound. For there, as in Romanism, baptism is made the means of the new birth; whereas we are told that it is burial into Christ's death, and not a channel for the communication of life. Let Mr. T. weigh his own examples: had not the sin-convicted Jews life at Pentecost? had not Saul life before baptism? No doubt “the gift of the Spirit” was subsequent: but it is a total fallacy to confound, as they do, birth of the Spirit with the Spirit given to believers, a power and privilege beyond life. Calvin was right in denying John 3 to teach Christian or any other baptism; but this error lies at the root of all the Services, Catechism, &c. New birth is nowhere attributed to baptism in scripture. “As many as are baptized unto Jesus Christ are baptized unto his death.” Baptism is therefore a sign of salvation by Christ's death, and in no way a means of quickening. Still less does baptism give union with Christ. “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” —a baptism never in scripture mixed up with water-baptism. And can one fail to see that the apostle Paul could never say he was not sent to baptize but to preach, if their system of quickening ordinances were true? All is confusion in these traditional schemes and their advocates. Alas! faith and the word and preaching are nowhere, in order to exalt ordinances as life-giving, and the sacerdotal class supposed to be invested with their administration on our Lord's part. The apostles James (i. 18) and John (1 Ep. v. 1), Paul (1 Cor. 4:15) and Peter, (1 Ep. i. 23), all expressly and exclusively connect being born again with the word of God, never with baptism; which represents not life given, but the believer's dying with Christ to sin; so that he is thenceforth (and it is initiatory) to reckon himself dead to sin. The Book of Common Prayer ignores all this; as one versed in scripture will gather from its confounding things that differ.

Chapter 152

Teulon's Plymouth Brethren: Chapter 6—Sanctification

It is entirely allowed to our, critic that the doctrine of sanctification is vital. If wrong there, people are wrong fundamentally, if not fatally. We do not shrink from the closest scrutiny, having only scripture to form our faith, without the bias of human formularies to the judgment. Here again it is conceded that Brethren's general doctrine as to the source and agent of sanctification “is that of the Church in all ages.” (Pages 90, 91.) “But when we proceed to inquire into their views as to the nature and working of this gift, their peculiarities begin to show themselves.” Whose view is really defective and unsound will soon appear.

Thus Mr. T. wholly misunderstands the question in thinking that, according to Brethren, sanctification in any Christian application means “the mere setting apart and consecrating to God's service” (p. 92); as in sanctifying the sabbath (Gen. 2), the firstborn of Israel (Ex. 13), or the temple of Solomon (1 Chron. 7:16). No book, tract, teaching, or brother, of the least consideration, ever so reduced “sanctification” as bearing on the separation of a sinner to God. Methinks such a sense could be found by every Anglican (though not there only) much nearer home; but the notion is absolutely unknown among Brethren. Indeed, Mr. T. himself is radically in error; for in this connection he can see only “a prolonged process by which evil dispositions are cured, evil habits are broken off, and the man more and more renewed in the spirit of his mind after the image of Him that created him.”

Now any intelligent reader of our writings ought to know without a shadow of doubt that we hold, as unequivocally and fully at least as himself, the practical sense of sanctification, as in 1 Thess. 4 and v., and Heb. 12:14. Accordingly Mr. T. is compelled to own that Brethren admit the importance of sanctification in the practical and of course progressive sense, as taught in these texts; but he alleges that they “direct attention mainly to the former meaning [i.e., the absolute setting apart of the person to God], which they declare to be that most frequently employed in scripture” (p. 94); and three writers are cited in confirmation of it.

Now the fact is that Mr. T. overlooks the nature of the sanctification in principle, or absolute setting apart, of the believer to God, which all Brethren hold as that first sense, contradistinguished from practical holiness in the second place. Far from those that regard it as a form or even “an empty form,” they believe “sanctification of the Spirit,” to take the phrase in 1 Peter 1:2, to be inseparable from the quickening grace of Christ, by which the soul has new and everlasting life imparted which it never possessed before. Is not this if true its most momentous sense? For, unless this be realized as a groundwork, practical holiness has no place and is an impossibility; whereas if the person is thus set apart to God by the life-giving operation of the Spirit, begotten by the word of truth, practical holiness becomes an immediate and felt responsibility of every day, as scripture declares and experience shows abundantly. Yet it is in this primary sense that the word is for the most part, if not altogether, unknown in the language of theology. Hence Brethren are the more bound to urge it, in zeal for God's truth all but universally ignored, and therefore in love and bounden duty for the best interests of God's church.

When Old Testament usage is referred to, it is merely for the general idea of setting apart to God. But no brother conceives that in the New Testament it is an outward form, as so often in the Old. On the contrary, “sanctification of the Spirit” is by the apostle of the circumcision contrasted with the separative ordinance of a fleshly kind familiar to every Jew. Ours is inward and real, as being of the Holy Spirit; who thereby constitutes the person thus severed from the world a saint, not in name or profession only but in deed and truth having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God which liveth and abideth.

Now this is the fuller meaning generally attached to the term sanctification in the New Testament, which is put by Mr. T. and his Anglican friends, and Roman Catholics, and Protestants in general, “quite in the background,” to say the least; whereas Brethren only, as far as I am aware, are witnesses of this great truth, having recovered it from the rubbish of ages into its just and commanding place as set out in Scripture. So unaccustomed is our censor to the truth and depth of sanctification in its primary New Testament sense that he never realizes his own misconception of the matter in dispute. But he is inexcusable in supposing that, if any sober mind contended for a mere consecration as generally used in the Old Testament, the same person could say that such a consecration involves and secures everlasting salvation. This is the inconsistency of the reasoning in pp. 95, 96, not in the least degree of those he criticizes. Brethren affirm that the New Testament speaks of a primary sanctification which is complete, as in 1 Cor. 6:11, where it is no more a progressive thing than the washing or the justification mentioned before and after. Will he or any Pelagian even argue that this means our old nature getting better? Is he not compelled to own that the apostle here beyond cavil treats the Corinthian believers, not as gradually advancing in holiness, but as already sanctified in fact? Others like Dean Alford may lower it down to mere Old Testament consecration, in direct antagonism to Brethren's teaching that it is a real and everlasting separation to God.

We all heartily agree that every Christian is called to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and that this is sanctification in the secondary sense of practical separation from evil to a fuller enjoyment of God. But we agree with Mr. T. that “the difference between their teaching and that of the rest of Christendom” in the primary sense lies far deeper than phraseology; and as he does not face the scriptures we cite, let some one else essay the task. 1 Peter 1:2 demands full consideration on this head. The ordinary view, which maintains for the New Testament only or chiefly sanctification in the sense of progressive holiness, makes this scripture unintelligible or worse. For with such a view practical holiness would precede the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ or justification, which might suit a Romanist perhaps, but is flat contrary to all Reformed doctrine. Again, practical holiness would precede obedience, and thus expose souls either to fall into the substitutional notion of Christ's obedience, which is assuredly not taught here, or to mere nonsense, for obedience is a large part of practical holiness instead of being its result or aim.

And Mr. T. ought to have learned, from one of the papers he cites, the hopeless difficulties into which the prevalent ignoring of sanctification in its primary New Testament sense brings even able and pious men. Take for instance Beza's version “ad sanctificationem spiritus, per obedientiam et aspersionem sanguinis I. C.” To what was such a perversion due? Certainly not to lack of scholarship, for none of the early Protestants was a better Greek and Latin scholar than the successor to Calvin. It was owing solely to the same mischievous tradition which blots out the

fundamental and primary New Testament sense of sanctification, seeing scarce anything more than the secondary progressive sense which nobody combats. It is worse even than the unmeaning Vulgate version, which makes ■ν and ε■ς equivalent; for Beza renders ■ν ad and ε■ς per! If he had known the truth to which Brethren have recalled attention, the difficulty would have vanished.

Peter tells the believing remnant of the dispersion in Asia Minor that they were elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in (or by) sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. They would at once feel the allusion to Ex. 24, where the mediator Moses sprinkles with blood the book and the people, pledged to obey the law under the sanction of the death attested in that blood. Now it was a personal election, not a national one according to the call of Jehovah, but of God revealing Himself by the blessed name of Father, in the separative power of the Holy Spirit, that it might be living reality and not an external and fleshly form; to obey as the Lord Jesus obeyed and to be sprinkled with His blood which speaks of peace made through His cross, instead of that which threatened death as the penalty of disobedience.

As Mr. T. evades the truth, though plainly set before his eyes, so he is wrong on all the doctrinal issues he specifies as involved in the primary sense of the word.

I. Rom. 6 vii., and Gal. 2; 5, with other scriptures, exclude the law as a rule of life from sanctification in every sense. “We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?” “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law but under grace.” “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that ye should be to another who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God.” Thus through Christ's efficacious death are we delivered, not merely by His life communicated to us, nor by His death for our sins only, but also by our death with Him who is risen, and we in Him. It is not that the law is dead, as the Authorized Version says (Rom. 6:6), following the unfounded and dangerous misreading of the Received Text; but we, if we had been Jews even, are, as believers, discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held. The law lives to condemn the guilty, and the awakened soul submits to its killing power. “For I through the law am dead to the law (the clean opposite of a rule of life), that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, yet I live; no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life] which I now live in the flesh I live in faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” This is the true rule of life for the Christian. The power of sin, on the contrary, is the law, says the apostle in 1 Cor. 15:56: not because the commandment is not holy and righteous and good, but because the material on which it acts—the flesh—is only evil continually. Life is not in the law, but in the Son of God; and 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 [as an offering] for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteous import of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Those under the law, or that desire to be, break it by biting and devouring one another. Those who walk [in or by] the Spirit do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. “But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” Can words more definitely negative the notion that it is our rule of life? This is Christ held up in the word brought home by the Holy Ghost. Against the fruit of the Spirit there is no law; but grace alone produces it. And bear in mind that the point discussed in this place is not justification, but practical holiness and the power that forms it.

It is wholly false that the truth of our primary sanctification hinders, for it immensely promotes, the pressure of growth on our souls. The converse is true, and the real danger of Christendom's ignorance is that millions are full of words, thoughts, feelings, efforts after practical holiness, who have never been sanctified personally, but are still dead in trespasses in sins. We must have life in Christ, and stand in our true relationship to God, before the question of a holy walk or growth in grace begins.

The truth of our primary sanctification by the Spirit in not the least degree renders void the solemn warnings of scripture (1 & 2 Corinthians Heb. 5). Indeed these warnings pre-suppose the Christian's privilege, and we are admonished to “hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end"; “to hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” “Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward.” “We are not of them that draw back unto perdition.” Doubtless these exhortations or warnings act only on the faithful. Formalists may shudder for a moment, but pay no obedient heed; and, not being sanctified by the Spirit, their endeavors after practical holiness are only a fair show in the flesh. Godly Anglicans know this but too well.

IV. The last objection is simply a denial of what every intelligent Christian holds: the coexistence of the two natures, the old man and the new, in the believer. It agrees indeed with the low views set forth on original sin by the Council of Trent and Popish theology in general. But the Articles ix., xv., xvi., should have taught better; not to speak of the perfect apostolic doctrine, the best of all. Ignorance of life in Christ, as well as of redemption, lies at the bottom of this, in which all Arminians would join. May we say, if it be needed by any one that has read our writings, that we seriously object to the error expressed in the Authorized Version of Gal. 5:17, last clause? It is untrue and unholy. We are responsible never to sin, and the Spirit is in us to give adequate power to prevent it. Verse 16 contradicts the rendering of 17: the Revised Version is right. The Authorized Version here naturally means an excuse for sinning, one of the consequences of non-deliverance from law, the other on the opposite side being the presumptuous thought of perfection attainable here below, into one or other of which all are apt to fall who know not the gospel by faith. From Tyndale the English versions were bad. The more do I regret that Mr. Green and the Bishop of Durham differ from Bishop Ellicott and Dean-Alford in saying that &a here seems to denote simply, the result. Any sense here but purpose is as opposed to the context as to truth and holiness.

Teulon's Plymouth Brethren: Chapter 7 – The Christian’s Rule of Life

I am sure that those who, like our author (p. 119), say that our statements on this subject recall the vagaries of Antinomian heresy, can have no direct or full acquaintance with them, any more than understanding of those he criticizes now. The fatal defect in all those misguided visionaries, singular to say, is the same defect which appears no less in their legal adversaries. Neither side knew life in Christ risen from the dead as the real present life of the Christian. Both A. Burgess and R. Towne, to take those clashing combatants of the Commonwealth period as an instance, were on the same superficial ground where most pious people in and out of the National Establishment are found to-day; unless some are yet lower, putting their trust in saving ordinances But most look for evidence of fruits of the Spirit to satisfy themselves that they are indeed born of Him, leading to so much internal examination as may give a hope, and often plunging the godly in fear. How different this from the blessed grace and truth in Christ, the object of faith before our souls, which by the Spirit are brought into living association with Him! Thus there is a real life imparted, and the believer is united to Christ, and looks to share the bright inheritance of glory along with Him. Even now, in virtue of this wondrous grace, God has not only forgiven us all trespasses, but quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, and seated us in (not yet with) Him in heavenly places.

Now neither the Antinomians nor the Legalists understood these fundamental privileges of the Christian's standing in Christ, and I see no trace that they are one whit better known even by real Christians generally in our day. Hence the inability to appreciate truth on most subjects, particularly on such a question as the one before us, where Mr. T. admits “the evident desire of many of their writers to enforce a high standard of practical holiness” —a thing never true of real Antinomians. We may here again see shortly whose doctrine and logic are most at fault.

Now it is an unguarded statement of Brethren's assertion of scriptural truth, that “by the law, they explain themselves to mean, not the whole Mosaic system, but the moral as distinguished from the ceremonial portions of it” (p. 116). Mr. T. ought to know that, in the tenth vol. of the Collected Writings of one most esteemed among them, there occur on this very point the following words, with which every brother would concur:— “If I speak of moral law (which scripture does not) I make it by the very expression a fatal thing to be delivered from it. Yet Paul says, the Christian is delivered from the law. If I make of the law a moral law (including therein the principles of the New Testament) and all morality in heart and life), to say a Christian is delivered from it is nonsense, or utterly monstrous wickedness; certainly it is not Christianity. Conformity to the divine will, and that as obedience to commandments, is alike the joy and the duty of the renewed mind. I say, obedience to commandments. Some are afraid of the word, as if it would weaken love, and the idea of a new creation; scripture is not. Obedience, and keeping the commandments of one we love, is the proof of that love, and the delight of the new nature. Did I do all right, and not do it in obedience, I should do nothing right, because my true relationship and heart-reference to God would be left out. This is love, that we keep His commandments, We are sanctified to the obedience of Christ. Christ Himself says, 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 hath given me commandment, even so I do. His highest act of love is His highest act of obedience. But this it is that just makes it so mischievous to put the Christian under the law, and change the scripture phraseology to another, and speak of the moral law being gone as a rule of life; and having no passage in which moral law is used, quoting Paul's statements as to ‘law,' from which he says, and insists on it as one of the chief topics of his teaching, we are delivered. Not merely that we are not justified by its works (yet we should be if the moral law were kept, and so he declares, the doer of the law shall be justified); but that we are delivered from it. A Christian is delivered from it, because it is ruinous in its effect to every fallen son of Adam. Is it morality that is ruinous, or obedience to Christ's precepts? That were a blasphemy to say, and shocking to every Christian mind. But it is of law the apostle declares, what was ordained to life he found to be to death. (Rom. 7) It is a ministration of death, and ministration of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:7-9). As many as are of its works—on the principle of it—its works are not bad ones—are under a curse (Gal. 3:10). That is, law means, in the apostle's use of it, something else than a rule or measure of conduct. It is a principle of dealing with men which necessarily destroys and condemns them. This is the way the Spirit of God uses law in contrast with Christ; and never, in Christian teaching, puts men under it, but carefully skews how they are delivered from it—are no longer under it. Nor does Scripture ever think of saying, You are not under the law in one way, but you are in another; you are not for justification, but you are as a rule of life. It declares you are not under law but under grace; and if you are under law, you are condemned and under a curse. It must have its own proper force and effect. Remark, it puts it as a principle contrasted with grace. But will a man say, You wrong us in saying we hold that a Christian is under law? I ask, How is that obligatory which a man is not under?—from which he is delivered? No; the apostle carefully insists that the law is good, that it is not the fault of the law that we are condemned, if we have to say to it (but he as carefully declares we are if we have); and that in fact we are delivered from it; that if led by the Spirit, we are not under law. He uses it to express a principle, a manner of dealing on the part of God, contrasted with grace. That is the way he speaks of law. I repeat it, scripture speaks elaborately of being delivered from the law as ministering death and a curse, declaring that we are not under it. Use the ‘term moral law,' and say so, and see where you bring us.” (Doctrinal iii. 4-7.)

One might have written to the same effect, but I considered that the words of an essay written solely to expound the truth, not to contradict another, would be more to the purpose, and therefore I add this extract more, to save needless argumentation:— “I declare according to scripture that law must have its effect, as declared in the word of God, always necessarily upon whatever is under it; but that that effect is always, according to scripture, condemnation and death, and nothing else, upon a being who has in him a lust or a fault; that it knows no mercy, but that it pronounces a curse upon every one who does not continue in all things written in it; and that whosoever is of the works of the law is under the curse. Now in fact the Christian has sin in him as a human being, and alas! fails; and if the law applies to him, he is under the curse; for it brings a curse on every one who sins. Do I enfeeble its authority? I maintain and establish it in the fullest way. I ask, Have you to say to the law? Then you are under the curse; no escaping, no exemption. Its authority and claims must be maintained, its righteous exactions made good. Have you failed? Yes, you have. Then you are under the curse. No, you say; but I am a Christian: the law is still binding upon me, but I am not under a curse. Has not the law pronounced a curse on one who fails? Yes, you are under it; you have failed; and are not cursed after all! Its authority is not

maintained; for you are under it: it has cursed you, and you are not cursed! If you had said, I was under it, and failed, and Christ died and bore its curse! and now, as redeemed, I am on another footing and not under law but under grace, its authority is maintained. But if you are put back again under law after Christ has died and risen again, and you are in Christ, and you fail and come under no curse, its authority is destroyed; for it pronounces a curse, and you are not cursed at all. The man who puts a Christian under law destroys the authority of the law, or puts a Christian under the curse; for in many things we all offend. He fancies he establishes law but destroys its authority. He only establishes the full immutable authority of law, who declares that a Christian is not under it at all, and therefore cannot be cursed by its just and holy curse." (Ibid, 10, 11.)

Is it not strange that Mr. T. had this very paper under his eye, as appears from his quotation in p. 117, and yet labored under the impression he states as to the moral law?

I. First then, how comes it that we do not find Anglicans, any more than Puritans, dilating (as the apostle does) on the death of the Christian from law, and on his deliverance so as to be under grace, not law? Brethren dwell on it, as believing in its reality and all-importance through redemption; if others do not, it is because, not understanding it, they feel not its comfort.

But it is sought to neutralize the Christian's death to law by reducing it to the relations of law to man unrenewed. Of course this is common ground: all agree (1) that the law cannot justify a sinner; (2) that it cannot give life or power; and (3) that, far from quickening, it provokes by its prohibitions the evils in the flesh it condemns. But it is wholly false that these cases exhaust or explain the apostle's teaching. Gal. 3:10 is said evidently to mean as many as depend on their works of justification, also Gal. 5:18, and ii. 19. Here we fairly join issue. Our censor maintains that in these passages the apostle is not treating of the law as a rule of life, but, of those unrenewed men who looked to the law for justification; we maintain that Scripture embraces both and sets aside all such misuse of the law. In his unconverted state Paul was once alive apart from law; when renewed he through law died to law that he might live to God. So far from being in this last state, a man seeking justification by law, he is showing the great Christian privilege of death with Christ as the one door of deliverance, after realizing death in his conscience as the inevitable consequence of being under law. He only when converted owned all its force in death that he might be cleared, not only from sin but from law, and live to God; he could say, I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live I, but Christ liveth in me.

This evidently goes farther than resting on Christ's blood for the remission of sins. It is a person dead with Christ and alive in Him to God, dead to law as well as to sin, but Christ living in him. Paul is explaining the principle of the life of faith right through the course, on the pound of the grace of God in deliverance from law. In Gal. 3 the apostle is avowedly correcting the Galatian error of seeking perfection in flesh by law after receiving the Spirit by the report of faith; which is enough to refute the defective view of Mr. Teulon. This he follows by citing Deut. 27 to show that law has no blessing, nothing but curse for as many as take the principle of works of law. This is not merely justification, but life; and both are by faith, not law. Even as God blessed Abraham before the law, and has now made good the promise to us, faith having come, and ourselves (even if we had been Jews) no longer under the tutelage of law (Gal. 3:23): a passage which strikes even a prejudiced mind. As to Gal. 5 it is extraordinary how any one could apply the latter half otherwise than to the exclusion of law from being our rule of life. After freedom by and in Christ the Galatian

saints were to beware of being again in a yoke of bondage. he whole thing is excluded, not only justification by law, but having it as a rule of life, to which he opposes walking in and by the Spirit as truth and power against fulfilling flesh's lust. The latter verses treat exclusively of life and walk, not under law, but under grace, as opposed to Catholicism as to evangelicalism. No one denies that one so walking can and ought to derive divine guidance from every part of the Old Testament as well as from the New Testament.

With this agrees of course all that the Epistle to the Romans says on the matter, and it is remarkably full as well as precise. Not so Mr. Teulon (p. 127), who from 1 John 3:4 says that as ■νομ■α means disregard of law, walking in newness of life must involve the keeping of the law—as wrong in philology as in doctrine. “Sin is lawlessness,” say the Revisers correctly. Mr. Toulon reasons from transgression or disregard of the law, the old error of the Authorized Version so fertile in mischief on this head. Lawlessness is that self-will which sets God's will at naught for one's own, if one never had heard of the Ten Commandments, the open contrast with Christ who came to do, and ever, the will of God His Father, which went immeasurably beyond the law, even as the Christian's obedience should also. But necessarily the greater includes the less: and if one walks according to the Spirit as we ought, a fortiori is the righteous import, the δικα■ωμα, of the law fulfilled in such a conversation. Our walk as Christians ought to be by the Spirit the suitable expression of the life we have in Christ, governed by the whole word of God.

The query in Rom. 6 is the usual objection of the flesh, that sovereign grace seems to allow living in sin. This the apostle answers, not by asserting the law as the Christian rule as if we were Jews, but by declaring that in our very baptism we died with Christ to sin, and therefore buried with Him have now to walk in newness of life. He argues, not from a motive, but from the blessed fact of Christ's death and resurrection in which the baptized profess to have part. But he goes on to declare that by His death we have done not only with sin, but with law and are under grace, and that sin shall not have dominion over us because we are: a solemn consideration for those whose teaching keeps them under law.

Even Mr. Teulon confesses that ch. 7 certainly seems at first sight against his view. If he understood it duly, he would feel that the truth of Christ's death and of ours who believe with Him closes the question of law which has dominion over a man only as long as he lives. But the Christian as such has died, or become dead, to the law by the body of Christ, to be to another, to Him who was raised from the dead that we should bring forth fruit to God. To be under the law, when we have thus Christ risen, is in the apostolic doctrine spiritual adultery and exactly the system here commended to us, but rejected by us.

II. The reasoning (p. 131-137) on man's position with God between the fall and the law of Sinai is in the usual style of hypothesis, without and against Scripture, to the total loss of the understanding of God's ways when man was without law, and when put, as Israel alone was, under law; but wholly distinct from the gospel going out as now. And some of us know enough of the Fathers to say that they knew the truth even less than an evangelical: so that all of what is called the ancient church teaching weighs less with us than one shred of Scripture. III. It is unfounded that Christ is by the apostle opposed to the law only as the ground of justification and as the source of life. Christ is the pattern Man whose example is set before us, and whose words by the Holy Spirit transform us as we behold Him on high. It is false that, because the Lord came

under law, we ought to be; for even those under it (the Jewish believers) He came to redeem that they might receive sonship, as Gal. 4 carefully shows. Whereas the Galatians became sons through faith, without any such previous subjection to law, and had the Spirit of His Son sent into their hearts accordingly. The mischief for them was coming under law in any shape, ceremonial or moral, after Christ was known, the very thing which is so unintelligently urged on us. And it is an exceeding though of course unintentional derogation from the depth and height, length and breadth, of Christ's doing the will of God to lower it down to its least part, the obedience of the law. No one doubts that this is true in every Christian walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit; but we are called far beyond law every day to imitate God as dear children, to walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us; to endure a great fight of afflictions; and when we do well and suffer, to take it patiently. This is not law (though we do love God and our neighbor, as no doubt all believers ever did), but it is grace with God, and the path of those who follow Christ's steps.

Teulon's Plymouth Brethren: Chapter 8 – The Relations of the Christian to the World

It is not correct to imply (p. 142) that the ancient separatists, and not the church, separated themselves as far as possible from the world. It is no less an error, that Brethren, even the strictest, denounce secular life generally, as though it were a service of Satan, and only allow those they can influence to practice medicine and a few handicraft trades. In their ranks have we not seen men of every degree, barristers, solicitors, bankers, manufacturers, merchants, landlords, land-agents, farmers, authors, artists, musicians, accountants, actuaries, chiefs and subordinates in the civil service, or in trade and commerce, as well as in educational work of all grades and varieties? In fact it would be hard to say where they are not found, save in the coveted places of worldly legislation, religion, and power, which must now be shared with notorious profligates, papists, revolutionaries, and infidels.

As to military and naval service, Brethren leave the question (as scripture does) to the conscience, intelligence, and devotedness of the individuals concerned. Even among Anglicans, one has rarely heard of a godly youth seeking a commission. But many an officer, naval and military, has been afterward brought to God. Now while we deprecate all pressure, we cannot but value the grace which leads some to sacrifice their earthly interests by abandoning what true-hearted believers must feel to be unsuitable to Christ and the Christian. “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight,” &c. One can understand a man in a high position of this sort hesitating as he thought of his large family, perhaps with no other provision; but it is a sorrowful fact that professional teachers of religion, established or dissenting, are generally the most forward in lulling consciences asleep, and encouraging Christians to oppose the evident spirit, as well as the plain words, of scripture. Is it not ominous of coming and speedy judgment on Christendom? of that long-suspended sentence, “Now is the judgment of this world"?

Really Mr. T. is not acquainted with the facts on the one hand, nor does he know the principle on the other. He appears to think that Brethren will have no “intercourse with the unconverted"; which is absurdly and notoriously untrue, (as it would be in distinct opposition to the ruling of the apostle in 1 Cor. 5:10); and he evidently treats it as extreme error “that they refuse to associate themselves with others, even for religious purposes, unless they are assured that those with whom they join are, in their view, 'converted men,'“ &c. p. 143. “Even for religious purposes!” why, this is just what is so serious. We have no peculiar “view” about conversion, but are quite content to abide by the adequate testimony of Christians, whether churchmen or dissenters. To be associated for religious purposes with men who are not credibly regarded as reconciled to God is as monstrous in our eyes, as that Christian work should be done by Christian men seems to our friend's mind. The truth is, that we know and desire no society for such purposes save the one and only one that God has formed—His church; and even in the present scattering of its members, we would meet on no other principle than that one, which is equally open to, and, binding on all, the

faithful, the one body of Christ. Yet Mr. T. in the next paragraph (pp. 143, 144) admits, as he must, that separateness from the world is involved in the very idea of a Christian; and that nothing should be undertaken which prejudices our position as members of God's household, or impairs in the least degree our loyalty to Him. But he instantly shrinks from the consequences, and demurs to the loss of secular office, and pleads for a mixed society for Christian objects; he talks of “theories,” but in truth it is the practical result which repels and tries him, like others.

We have seen how wrong the common notion of “the flesh” is: along with it goes no less lack of understanding as to “the world.” And it is of painful interest, however instructive, to note how want of divine light as to both corresponds with ignorance of the Spirit's power and workings on the one hand, and of “the Fathers” love and glory on the other; and this practically, quite as much as doctrinally. But this by the way, as being too large a theme for a passing discussion.

It is evident that Mr. T. does not believe that man as he is in his best estate, fallen man, is altogether vanity; and worse, dead in trespasses and sins. He does not believe that baptized man, at least, needs to be born of God; and he argues (pp. 145-147) as if Christendom were not swayed, like China or Japan, by the gratifications of sense, the attractions of wealth and grandeur, or the aspirations of intellect. Can he really mean that society in London, or even Chichester, has not the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, as its ruling principle? Human society in itself is estranged from God. Christian profession does not alter this—nothing but life in Christ by the power of the Spirit, faith working by love, which every saint is responsible to display, dead to sin and to the law, as well as crucified to the world and the world to him.

So little is our author acquainted with revealed truth, that he strives to find a plea for the world in the paradisiacal state (p. 148); whereas it is plain from scripture that the distinction of nations and tongues was due to the divine judgment on mankind which would unite in self-will and independence of God, to make itself a name, and therefore was by His sentence and power broken up into nations by separating languages. And it is a dogmatic fact of the deepest import that Adam only became a father after he was fallen, and an outcast from God. Subjection to the powers that be, and prayer for the sovereign and all in authority, in no way furnish the shadow of a proof that a Christian ought to exercise worldly authority. The reasoning, in pp. 149, 152, is beside the mark: no Christians now on earth so strongly urge submission to every such institution as Brethren, as Mr. T. seems to know, with readiness to suffer where they must obey God rather than man. And this it is which has ever and chiefly provoked the enmity and scorn of the political nonconformists; and where, one grieves to ask, are they not political? Alas! are churchmen, so called, better in this respect? or are they not both running a race of rivalry for the things of the world, its influence, honors, and emoluments—the one to keep, the other to gain, indirectly if not directly? One may point to p. 169 in proof of the low naturalism into which Mr. T., like most, is fallen. “We are therefore (I) justified in regarding Him [the world-rejected and crucified Christ!] as being in the fullest and highest sense the Founder of modern philanthropy! as He is also the Author and Giver of that advanced scientific knowledge (!!) which has made philanthropic effort so much more efficient than it used to be in supplying the needs, and in alleviating the sufferings and sorrows of mankind.” Is it not an awful delusion to misrepresent the Lord of glory as if He were the Author and Giver of that scientific knowledge in modern times, of which some of the most impious infidels have been among the chief discoverers and promoters? Men who dare to say such things should have at least the wit to refrain from perverting Scripture to support their unholy assertions.

Nor is it true that the Christians of the apostolic age were so exclusively of the lower orders as to yield no possible cases of declining rank and political office; or that there is anything to exclude the most unworldly brother from being in an imperial household or the treasurer (or steward) of a city (p. 153). The reasoning that follows to the end of the chapter (pp. 154-170) is even weaker than this, or founded on mere misconception of the facts. The worst of all, however, is the darkness it betrays to Christ's will and glory. To the Christian, the governing consideration ought to be that which, being His pleasure, bears witness to His grace and truth, and so magnifies His name in a world which cast Him out, even to the death of the cross. It is in vain to cry up the refining and elevating influence on the world of a course which sacrifices His glory; what grief of the Holy Ghost who is here to promote it according to the will of God the Father! The philanthropy of God, according to scripture, is the last thing Brethren disparage; it is blotted out and falsified by admixture with the world, which can have no real fellowship with the cross any more than with the heavenly exaltation of Christ; as the church ought to have none with the world whose “friendship is enmity with God.” To tax the Christians who value high positions in the world with instinctive “selfishness or covetousness,” albeit in that “flesh” which is in all, might have some semblance of truth, even if it sounded uncharitable; to attribute it to the “theory” of Brethren, if this be the truth of God, as we are sure is a libel as bold as it is ignorant.

An extract from the fifteenth chapter (omitting the notes) of the “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” will afford a striking comment on this point; as it shows that what a clergyman now censures in Brethren, the skeptical historian ridicules, whilst he mingles praise, in the early church: “It is a very honorable circumstance for the morals of the early Christians, that even their faults, or rather errors, were derived from the excess of virtue. The bishops and doctors of the church, whose evidence attests, and whose authority might influence, the professions, the principles, and even the practice of their contemporaries, had studied the scriptures with less skill than devotion; and they often received in the most literal sense those rigid precepts of Christ and the apostles, to which the prudence of succeeding commentators have applied a looser and more figurative mode of interpretation. Ambitious to exalt the perfection of the gospel above the wisdom of philosophy, the zealous fathers have carried the duties of self-mortification, of purity, and of patience, to a height which it is scarcely possible to attain, and much less to preserve, in our present state of weakness and corruption. A doctrine so extraordinary and so sublime must inevitably command the veneration of the people; but it was ill calculated to obtain the suffrage of those worldly philosophers, who, in the conduct of this transitory life, consult only the feelings of nature and the interests of society.

“There are two very natural propensities which we may distinguish in the most virtuous and liberal dispositions—the love of pleasure and the love of action. If the former be refined by art and learning, improved by the charms of social intercourse, and corrected by a just regard to economy, to health, and to reputation, it is productive of the greatest part of the happiness of private life. The love of action is a principle of a much stronger and more doubtful nature. It often leads to anger, to ambition, and to revenge; but when it is guided by the sense of propriety and benevolence, it becomes the parent of every virtue; and if those virtues are accompanied with equal ability, a family, a state, or an empire may be indebted for their safety and prosperity to the undaunted courage of a single man. To the love of pleasure we may therefore ascribe most of the agreeable, to the love of action we may attribute most of the useful and respectable qualifications. The

character in which both the one and the other should be united and harmonized would seem to constitute the most perfect idea of human nature. The insensible and inactive disposition, which should be supposed alike destitute of both, would be rejected by the common consent of mankind as utterly incapable of producing any happiness to the individual or any public benefit to the world. But it was not in this world that the primitive Christians were desirous of making themselves either agreeable or useful.

“The acquisition of knowledge, the exercise of our reason and fancy, and the cheerful flow of unguarded conversation, may employ the leisure of a liberal mind. Such amusements however were rejected with abhorrence, or admitted with the utmost caution, by the society of the fathers, who despised all knowledge that was not useful to salvation, and who considered all levity of speech as a criminal abuse of the gift of speech. In our present state of existence the body is so inseparably connected with the soul, that it seems to be our interest to taste with innocence and moderation the enjoyments of which that faithful companion is susceptible. Very different was the reasoning of our devout predecessors; vainly aspiring to imitate the perfection of angels, they disdained, or affected to disdain, every earthly or corporeal delight. Some of our senses indeed are necessary for our preservation, others for our subsistence, and others again for our information, and thus far it was impossible to reject the use of them. The first sensation of pleasure was marked as the first moment of their abuse. The unfeeling candidate for heaven was instructed, not only to resist the grosser allurements of the taste or smell, but even to shut his ears against the profane harmony of sounds, and to view with indifference the most finished productions of human art. Gay apparel, magnificent houses, and elegant furniture, were supposed to unite the double guilt of pride and of sensuality: a simple and mortified appearance was more suitable to the Christian, &c.

“The Christians were not less averse to the business than to the pleasures of this world. The defense of our persons and property they knew not how to reconcile with the patient doctrine which enjoined an unlimited forgiveness of past injuries, and commanded them to invite the repetition of fresh insults. Their simplicity was offended by the use of oaths, by the pomp of magistracy, and by the active contention of public life; nor could their humane ignorance be convinced that it was lawful on any occasion to shed the blood of our fellow-creatures, either by the sword of justice or by that of war; even though their criminal or hostile attempts should threaten the peace and safety of the whole community. It was acknowledged that under a less perfect law the power of the Jewish constitution had been exercised, with the sanction of heaven, by inspired prophets and by anointed kings. The Christians felt and confessed that such institutions might be necessary for the present system of the world, and they cheerfully submitted to the authority of their pagan governors. But while they inculcated the maxims of passive obedience, they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defense of the empire. Some indulgence might perhaps be allowed to those persons who, before their conversion, were already engaged in such violent and sanguinary occupations; but it was impossible that the Christians, without renouncing a more sacred duty, could assume the character of soldiers, of magistrates, or of princes. This indolent or even criminal disregard to the public welfare exposed them to the contempt and reproaches of the pagans, who very frequently asked, what must be the fate of the empire, attacked on every side by the barbarians, if all mankind should adopt the pusillanimous sentiments of the new sect? To this insulting question the Christian apologists returned obscure

and ambiguous answers; as they were unwilling to reveal the secret cause of their security: the expectation, that before the conversion of mankind was accomplished, war, government, the Roman Empire, and the world itself, would be no more. It may be observed, that in this instance, the situation of the first Christians coincided very happily with their religious scruples, and that their aversion to an active life contributed rather to excuse them from the service than to exclude them from the honors of the state and army.

“But the human character, however it may be exalted or depressed by a temporary enthusiasm, will return by degrees to its proper and natural level, and will resume those passions that seem most adapted to its present conditions. The primitive Christians were dead to the business and pleasures of the world; but their love of action, which could never be entirely extinguished, soon revived, and found a new occupation in the government of the church. A separate society, which attacked the established religion of the empire, was obliged to adopt some form of internal policy, and to appoint a sufficient number of ministers, entrusted not only with the spiritual functions, but even with the temporal direction of the Christian commonwealth. The safety of that society, its honor, its aggrandizement, even in the most pious minds, were productive of a spirit of patriotism, such as the first of the Romans had felt for the Republic; and sometimes of a similar indifference in the use of whatever means might probably conduce to so desirable an end. The ambition of raising themselves or their friends to the honors and offices of the church was disguised by the laudable intention of devoting to the public benefit the power and consideration which, for that purpose only, it became their duty to solicit. In the exercise of their functions,” &c.

“The Christian religion, which addresses itself to the whole human race, must consequently collect a far greater number of proselytes from the lower than from the superior ranks of life. This innocent and natural circumstance has been improved into a very odious imputation, which seems to be less strenuously denied by the apologists than it is urged by the adversaries of the faith; that the new sect of Christians was almost entirely composed of the dregs of the populace, of peasants and slaves, the last of whom might sometimes introduce the missionaries into the rich and noble families to which they belonged. These obscure teachers (such was the charge of malice and infidelity) are as mute in public as they are loquacious and dogmatical in private.... As the humble faith of Christ diffused itself through the world, it was embraced by several persons who derived some consequence from the advantages of nature or fortune. And yet these exceptions are either too few in number, or too recent in time, entirely to remove the imputation of ignorance and obscurity which has been so arrogantly cast on the first proselytes of Christianity. Instead of employing in our defense the fiction of later ages, it will be more prudent to convert the occasion of scandal into a subject of edification. Our serious thoughts will suggest to us, that the apostles themselves were chosen by providence among the fishermen of Galilee, and that the lower we depress the temporal condition of the first Christians, the more reason we shall find to admire their merit and success.”

To fair minds the parallel will appear sufficiently evident between skeptical attacks on the early church and modern criticism of Brethren. They are both due to a similar unbelief, which slights Christ and the things unseen, and seeks at any rate to enjoy the present. When Christendom becomes infidel, judgment is at hand.

The world then is that social system which binds men together here below for pleasure or profit, ambition or utility, in real independence of God, whatever its professed religion or irreligion, It is characterized in scripture by rejecting the Son of God and ignoring the Holy Spirit. The death of Christ, instead of delivering it from Satan's thralldom, was rather that unspeakably solemn fact whereby he became its prince and the god of this age—the present evil age. The outward recognition of Christianity has not made the world cease to be the world, but rather given occasion for its greater guilt; first, by the unbelief that corrupts the truth, and, secondly, by the more daring infidelity which is rapidly casting the truth off and apostatizing from it. And what will the end be? The divine judgment of Babylon, and of the two beasts—the world-power and the religious power: Rome is apostate and Jerusalem is apostate, in their last unholy affiance against the King of kings and the Lord of lords, when He shines forth from heaven for the sudden and irremediable destruction of themselves and their adherents. God has graciously disclosed this supreme catastrophe, in order to warn and guard His own from every current of error (more especially from all the novel expedients and experiments of the age, where man is sought, and his wisdom is trusted without God's word or Spirit), that they may the more diligently cleave to the only Lord and Savior with full purpose of heart, cheered by the blessed promise that He is coming quickly to receive them unto Himself; that they may be in the Father's house where He is, and accompany Him when He appears to judgment.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the world, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

Teulon's Plymouth Brethren: Chapter 9—Prophecy

Although the last chapter of our critic is the longest, there is less to notice than in most. And no wonder: for the true difference of others from Brethren lies in the dearth of light, or even of exercised judgment, on the prophetic Scriptures found among the denominations of Christendom. One must except a section of the godly in Anglicanism who have learned substantially to agree. The rest are like dissenters without anything of careful research, and hence holding little more than traditional notions of one kind or another. Brethren certainly differ in this, that without a formula most have definite and harmonious convictions with clear Scriptural proof.

Their distinctive contributions are here (p. 188) said to be, first, the rapture of the saints before the appearing of Christ; secondly, the character and work of the Jewish remnant; thirdly, and in close connection with both, their peculiar opinions as to the day of judgment. If no more than these were true, they are of the highest interest and value; for without giving them full weight the prophetic scheme is wholly incomplete and even unsound, and the practical profit is almost nothing for the Christian.

(1) Mr. T.'s reasoning is simply the confusion of things that differ, the common mistake of all who, with imperfect knowledge of God's word, venture to discuss things too high for them. Nor is he happy in arguing from another possible rendering, as when in p. 190 he essays to nullify the unforced deduction from Col. 3:4. What difference for the point in hand does it make whether we say “shall be,” or “shall have been,” “manifested"? The teaching of the word is that when the Christ is manifested, then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory. Our life now is hidden with Christ in God, the manifestation of both Him and us in glory will be at the same moment. If the manifestation of Christ in glory be assumed to be before the rapture of the saints to heaven, the hypothesis is refuted by this Scripture. Christ does not appear alone in glory and then translate the saints, as many unscripturally conceive. If they shall be manifested together at the same time in glory, it needs no arguing to prove that the risen saints must have been caught up to Him before. People may argue against this from tradition or philology; but it is vain: Scripture is too plain.

Hence our Lord not only comes for the saints, as in John 14:3; These. iv. 15-17, referred to by Mr. T., and in so many more Scriptures, but He is said to come with them, He glorified in them, they manifested in the same glory with Him, as in 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:10; Col. 3:5; Jude 14; Rev. 17:14; 19:14. In order to come with Him they must beyond doubt have been previously removed to Him; and this all Scripture binds up with His coming. The distinction therefore between His coming and His appearing, revelation, manifestation or day, is certainly and positively made in terms which ought to leave no question, if one compare 2 Thess. 2:1 with ver. 8 of the same chapter; for where would be the propriety of speaking, first of His coming or presence, and then of its epiphany or manifestation, if His coming simply be His appearing or manifesting? If His coming and the gathering of the saints to Him be intimately associated, we can understand that there is a further and later step when He displays His coming or presence in the destruction of the man of sin. And the mere reading of the texts cited suffices to prove to any intelligent soul that the evasion sought

in the same page, (“the saints or holy ones, who will accompany our Lord from heaven, will not be the redeemed from among men, but the holy angels,'“) is untrue; for angels are not “called,” and never designated as “faithful” though “chosen,” but redeemed men alone are; and in one of these passages they are described as arrayed in β. bright, pure, which in the contest is said to be the righteousness of the saints, not of angels who are expressly arrayed otherwise. Angels do attend the Lord in that day; but the saints here described are distinct and in more intimate relationship.

Further, Mr. T. has to learn that the παρουσ■α or coming of Christ is in no way denied to be so modified as to coalesce with His day or appearing; as for instance when combined with “the Son of man,” for this is His title judicially as He lets us know in John 5:27. Hence it is in vain to cite Matt. 24 xxv., or Luke 17; for no one denies that “the coming of the Son of man” in these and kindred Scriptures implies manifestation, any more than one denies that it is still His π. when He appears or manifests Himself in that day. But it is illogical as well as unscriptural thence to infer that there may not be the π. or coming before these terms of display can apply. Hence all the reasoning, if so it is to be called, in 192, 193 is null; and the only approach to it, as to 1 Thess. 4, 5, has so strong a contrast drawn that it is inexcusable to identify the chaps. How overlook what the apostle in chapter 4 says to them “by the word of the Lord,” and what themselves knew perfectly before that new revelation? It is clear therefore (p. 194), that in the very passage, or rather passages, drawn to oppose, there is no ambiguous testimony to the distinction Brethren affirm to be revealed in Scripture. Mr. T. is equally superficial as to 2 Thess i. where the apostle is relieving the Thessalonians from their uneasiness about “the day,” which, far from being already there for their terror, will see affliction awarded to those that afflict them, and to the afflicted saints rest with those who taught them the truth. Brethren hold that this righteous recompence will not be till the revelation of the Lord from heaven. Nor could any man expose his ignorance (p. 195) more than by identifying Christ's “coming” in 2 Thess. 2, 1 with “the day” in 2; for the apostle uses the comfort of the one against the disquieting false use made of the other. And we have already seen that, in verse 1 it is “the coming” of the Lord, in verse 8 the manifestation or epiphany of His coming, the phrases as strikingly different as their connections and consequences. He is no less in error (p. 196) as to 2 Peter 3 where that great apostle uses the threat of “the day of the Lord” to warn those who mocked at “the promise of His coming.” Is this express identification? It shows how little the Scriptures are understood.

The parable of the tares, so often presented to deny ecclesiastical discipline, has no less violence done to it here (p. 196). Brethren do not dispute that the mixed profession goes on till the harvest, or end of the age, and that the gathering of the wheat will be in that season of varied operation occupying some time. But that Christ's appearing is what gathers them is not taught here; and it is contradicted by Col. 3:3. We all admit that the blessed hope and appearing of the glory are closely joined parts of His π. or coming; but this does not identify His coming and appearing, which last is the time of public award in His kingdom, and therefore is fittingly urged as in 1 Tim. 6, and elsewhere, where responsibility is in question. It is erroneous theory and evil practice which fail to discriminate Scriptural truth intended to keep one waiting devotedly and intelligently for Christ's coming. “Signs” are predicted and “times” announced for others, who must pass through the great tribulation. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.”

(2) As a great deal of what Brethren urge as to “the remnant” is allowed, it is only necessary to refute the denial of any grave distinction in our privileges as members of Christ's body now, as

compared with those to be saved for earthly blessings and the new covenant under the Messiah in the latter day. Here again the same fatal confusion meets us. The olive tree is not the body of Christ, wherein Jets and Gentile are one (p. 209); any more than the everlasting gospel, or good news of the woman's seed to bruise the Serpent, divulged from Eden across all the ages, is the same as the immensely developed message of grace preached by the apostle Paul, though no doubt about the one Anointed Lord and Savior. But these matters have been so often and fully discussed that we may safely leave the matter; and the reader, if he cares not to search, may be asked just to weigh the question for a proper answer.

(3) One might point out a single word in John 5:24. The believer cometh NOT into judgment, saith the Lord. And as to Matt. 25:31-46, it is a question of the nations, not of men dead or risen; as in Rev. 20:11-15 we see (from the context and itself) the wicked dead only. All this entirely falls in with 2 Cor. 5, where manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ is the point, with the unbelievers coming into judgment; just as in Heb. 9 we are told, “as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment, so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation.”

That the believer will give an account of all, bad or good, done in or through the body, and that he will receive accordingly, is certain; that the unbeliever will be no less manifested before Christ is as certain as that in his case, rejecting Christ and all else given of God for his soul, it will be judgment. But Scripture carefully distinguishes for Christ's glory and the believer's blessing what tradition here again confuses to its own loss and God's dishonor. In the white throne judgment, erroneously supposed to be universal, we only hear of those whose names are not found written in the book of life, those cast (for what was written in the other books) into the lake of fire. No wonder that, knowing thus the terror of the Lord, we would persuade men. It is a poor inference that we are terrified for ourselves: if delivered by grace, how simple and right that the heart should go out earnestly and freely after others

The fact is that the early Christians soon slipped from the full gospel, and the mystery of Christ and distinctive Christian privilege and truth generally: and the English Establishment, being now as ever a compromise, though it rejected the Pope, has recovered little of what had been so long lost.

Chapter 156

On Reception: Correction

Being Correspondence in 1876.

Q. I shall be glad to have your judgment and help upon the following points. A few Christians are meeting here apart from system. They invited me to take my place with them, but I could not, because they allow Christians who are in system to break bread before seeing their way clear to leave it. Mr. M., who has recently arrived from England, thinks me too exclusive, and tells me it would be allowed by brethren there, providing such Christians were known to be walking consistently.

I may add that those meeting here are not agreed as to whether those already breaking bread should be allowed to attend meetings in system. Is not the first point necessary? and would it not preserve from going back to system, discipline being carried out upon any persisting in what is unscriptural?

A. The primary point to be decided as to the Christians you name, who are breaking bread apart from sects, &c., is:—Whether they are just emerging out of the darkness of the unscriptural position as to so called church ground, desiring to act according to the light received? If gathered intelligently in, or unto, the name of Jesus, owning Him as the true and only center of gathering, are they allowing anything contrary to, or subversive of that name, or are they seeking to maintain the unity of the Spirit, as members of the one body of Christ formed by the Holy Ghost who works in the assembly?

Should this be the case, as I judge it is if Mr. M. is identified with them, they as others are simply acting on the only Scriptural ground open to believers in a day of failure and confusion like the present. It is surely our privilege through grace to be found with such, counting on the grace of Christ and the Spirit's guidance to meet anything that may rise up, whether as to the conduct of those gathered on that divine ground, or as to their fellow believers mixed up with and sanctioning what Christendom has adopted contrary to Christ and the truth of God.

It is important to keep before us the fallen state of the church in contrast with what she once was weakness, failure, and division, instead of power, faithfulness, and oneness. We with all saints were verily guilty of helping it on. We are conscious too that grace alone led any of us to look it fairly in the face and judge ourselves in the Lord's presence; and it is on Him we can count for wisdom and grace to act for Him in the path He marks out for days of difficulty and weakness If the church has failed as a witness for Him, He abides faithful and remains the same. The truth of God is unchanged, and the Holy Spirit continues ever true to each, and He is here to act in the saints for the glory of Christ, and the maintenance of the truth. When the professing church has so decayed, that not only the truth as to what the church of God is has been lost, but almost what is fundamental for the soul's salvation, we do well to remember, that the Spirit leads the soul to Christ, setting Him forth to sinner and saint, the object of testimony for salvation and the sole center of gathering, as well as the rest for departing from iniquity. It is not to the measure of truth

received by any, but to Christ Himself, the One in whom truth in all its fullness dwells, that the Spirit gathers. It is needful therefore to be jealous lest the measure of truth received should become a standard rather than Christ Himself. This would make a circle outside the many existing already in the shape of sects, and so miss God's provided object in upholding and cleaving to Christ and the unchanging truth of God.

As to your points of reception as well as action towards those received, it is needful to be as large in heart as Christ, so as to take in all that are His, and on the other hand to carefully shut out those who hold anything contrary to the truth, and dishonoring to His name, bearing no less in mind how He, in times of weakness and confusion, stoops in grace to help the weak, and lead on the least, that are desiring to please Him. Those too more advanced than others have to take care not to use their measure of light and experience as a rule of judgment for others. Rather let them lay themselves out to help the ignorant to a fuller knowledge of truth, but in no way compromise truth, or lower the glory of the Lord Jesus.

It is well to know the Lord's mind as to receiving Christians to break bread who may not as yet see their way clear to come out of the varied systems.

Suppose a believer, not seeing the place he is in as identified with system to be unscriptural, yet through circumstances desirous of remembering the Lord with those intelligently meeting on scriptural ground: is it imperative that such should be intelligent as to what the church of God is, and the Scriptural ground of gathering?

If souls are known to be believers walking consistently, though surrounded by much that would defile brethren of greater light, yet (Christ being the alone ground of reception, and the membership and fellowship at the Lord's Table being that of the whole body of Christ) I see no Scripture for refusing such.

The responsibility would be theirs in returning to the place and things opposed to it. Such depart from you and the practical unity of the Spirit; but you do not, by their individual act, identify the divine ground with them or their unscriptural system. Christ, and not light about Him and truth, is the test; so that whilst intelligence is blessed and needful to carry out the mind of the Lord, it is not the standard of reception. It may ever be well to press on souls what is due to Christ, making known the place taken in relation to Him. Moreover it is never advisable to bring souls in hastily or by pressure, but rather through their own exercise or desire. Doubtless there will and must be the call for grace and wisdom on the part of those better acquainted with the true or the false position. Through the lack of intelligence and the measure of cleaving to former associations and teaching, the soul may not be sufficiently established to get clear at once of the things previously sanctioned. Patience with pastoral care is needed; but to bring in a standard of intelligence or rule would be to displace the Lord Himself as the true center of gathering and thereby shut out many of the Lord's little ones, whom He may be graciously leading on to act in faithfulness to Himself Where weakness, failure, and ruin are contemplated, provision is made for even two or three. Matt. 18:20 declares “Where two or three are gathered in [or to] my name,” to such Jesus vouchsafes His presence though little may be known, yet counting that light and understanding will follow. If Christ be the gathering center and governing object, it must be so; moreover, the Holy Ghost having liberty to act in relation to Christ, it becomes the true place for growth and blessing.

I hardly think it needful to contemplate evil in the shape of souls going back to the thing they have left. Our safety, whether ignorant or intelligent, weak or strong, ever is and must be the Lord Himself. Away from Him, the most accurate position must sooner or later manifest declension; as the church in her responsibility is a sad sample, from Ephesus' departure from first love (where there was intelligence and testing as to what was false) down to Laodicea with her boasted riches to the exclusion of Christ who is outside. We need to keep Christ and His claims before us together with the Scriptures, seeking to pick up those whose hearts are toward Himself but guarding with jealousy the compromising of His holy and worthy name. Alas many have done this who formerly were ostensibly on the common ground of the church of God, gathered to the name of Jesus in the Spirit's unity; yet did they allow or gloss over teachings, which, if accepted or sanctioned, destroy Christ as the center, and leaven those gathered to His name. I allude (as you may know) to so called Open Brethren, who, if not holding blasphemous doctrines as to Christ, did in a real way refuse to judge. Saints of God in the systems know nothing of this, nor of the Scriptural way of meeting, though many may willingly be ignorant and satisfied to go on in an unscriptural position. Whilst therefore those who separated to Christ, and thereby judge what is false, are called to keep clear of all evil, they should carefully keep the door as wide open as possible for godly or exercised souls to follow. To avoid stumbling-blocks is obligatory; but with it let us exhibit the grace and faithfulness of Christ and so draw others out of the meshes of Christendom into the blessed liberty of Christ. For this the eye must be upon Him who in times of declension reveals Himself to the church of Philadelphia first as “holy and true,” then as power, setting an open door for the faithful to enter, though they realize little strength, but are keeping His word and not denying His name, whilst awaiting the answer to His own word “I come quickly.”

May each be kept true to the claims of Christ, loving and owning all saints, consistently with holiness and truth, and giving heed to the exhortation “Wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also received us [or you] to the glory of God.” G. G.

Chapter 157

The Redemption of the Inheritance

We have four scriptures, in distant parts of the Word, which find connection with this subject, “The Redemption of the Inheritance.” I mean Lev. 25:25; Deut. 25:5-10; Ruth 4:1-10; Jer. 32:6-15.

The ordinance in Lev. 25 teaches us, that an Israelite might redeem or buy the inheritance of an impoverished kinsman, out of the hands of him, whoever he were, to whom it had been sold; and then he might hold it till the year of Jubilee, when, as we further learn, it was to return to the original owner.

The ordinance in Deut. 25 teaches us, that an Israelite was bound to marry the widow of his brother, if that brother had died childless, and raise up seed to his brother; so that his name and his inheritance might be secured in the firstborn of that marriage. If he refused to do this service to his deceased brother, he was put to public shame, a mark of degradation being affixed to him.

These ordinances are illustrated in Ruth and Jeremiah. In the beautiful history of Ruth, we find Boaz doing this part of a brother or a kinsman in Israel according to the ordinance in Deut. 25, in a very special and admirable way. The inheritance of Mahlon, an Israelite of Bethlehem-judah, had been sold, and his wife, by birth a Moabitess, had been left of him, a childless and penniless widow. She had nothing but her virtue, the unstained excellence of her character and reputation. She was a stranger, who at the cost of her own diligence and labor, supported her mother-in-law, her late husband's mother, for whose sake, in the spirit of a true or adopted daughter of Abraham, she had left home and country and father's house.

Boaz redeems her inheritance, and marries her. He does not fear the marring of his own inheritance, but devotes himself to the interests of his deceased kinsman, and the childless and penniless widow he had left behind him. And by this marriage, and this redemption of the inheritance which accompanied it, the house of Mahlon is revived, and led up to royal honors, the very first and highest estate of wealth and dignity in the land. For David who sat on the throne of Israel was the fruit of it in the third generation.

This was a great and magnificent illustration of kinsman-virtue.

In the course of the Book of Jeremiah, or in the history of that prophet, we find him (though not in the same way with Boaz in the Book of Ruth) doing a kinsman's part. While he is in prison, (as he was in King Zedekiah's reign, for the truth's sake,) and while the Chaldean army is seated before Jerusalem, threatening its doom and the captivity of its people, Hananeel, his uncle's son, comes to him, and tells him, as his kinsman, to buy his field that was in Anathoth, the city of their fathers. This was a strange appeal to make at such a time to such a man. But Jeremiah does not hesitate. He knew it was the Lord's will, and he pays down his money, and buys or redeems the field of Hananeel, his uncle's son; though he knew that it might prove, if loft at the mercy of circumstances, a fruitless bargain; or at least, that very distant time must be reached, ere he could acquire actual possession of his purchase. This was a great acting of faith, and another fine and noble illustration of kinsman-virtue.

The ordinances, I may therefore say, in Leviticus and Deuteronomy prescribe these kinsman-duties; and then, the histories of Boaz and of Jeremiah, in these beautiful and admirable ways, illustrate these duties.

But we have more than this—for these doings of Boaz and of Jeremiah anticipate, as in types and figures, the ways of our Lord Jesus, who, having made Himself our kinsman, has in ways that outshine all analogies, done a kinsman's part. Yes, indeed—and I need not say it—these illustrations of kinsman-virtues in the persons of Boaz and Jeremiah are outdone and outshone in the bright and wondrous and perfect ways of the Son of Man For He, surely, like a more self-sacrificing Boaz, at a price that cost Him everything, has relieved not only a childless, penniless kinsman, but one guilty and ruined and sold into dishonorable captivity; and, like a better Jeremiah, has waited now for a long season and through an age of sore rejection for the inheritance which He purchased with His own blood in the day of Calvary.

But this I would still further look at. The Lord Jesus is a Redeemer in two respects, a Redeemer by purchase and by power. He is a Redeemer by the price of His blood, purchasing us and our inheritance thereby from the righteous claims of God, so that God is just while justifying and blessing us. He is a Redeemer by the strength of His arm, rescuing us and our inheritance from the hand of the great enemy. So that in “the world to come,” where “the redemption of the purchased possession” will be displayed, we shall be able thankfully to look at the blessed God and know Him to be satisfied by our Redeemer, and boldly look at our great adversary and see him conquered by our Redeemer. And this will be a high condition indeed. “Purchased” and “rescued,” the subjects of a twofold redemption, will be our condition in “the world to come"; and the like of that has never yet been in the creation of God. Neither angels in their dignity, nor Adam in his innocency, ever illustrated it.

One verse, I may just observe, in the Epistle to the Colossians, gives us to learn redemption by blood—one verse in the Epistle to the Philippians gives us to learn redemption by power—and one verse in the Epistle to the Ephesians combines the two. (Col. 1:20; Phil. 3:21; Eph. 1:14:)

The story of the purchase which our Redeemer has made is given to us in the Gospels—the story of the rescue which our Redeemer will make, is given to us in the Apocalypse. Accordingly it is simply as “the Lamb,” we see Christ in the Gospels—it is as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” as well as “the Lamb,” we see Him in the Apocalypse. (John 1:29, 36; Rev. 5:5, 6.) For it is by His blood or sacrifice the Lord Jesus purchases us, or answers for us the claims of God upon us; it will be by His arm stretched out in judgments, that He is to rescue our inheritance from the grasp and captivity of the usurper, who now rules, as its god and prince, the course of this present evil world.

But I may say a little more as to this twofold character of redemption of which we are now speaking. It is intimated in the very first promise. (Gen. 3:15.) There was an exhibition of it in the day of the Exodus; for Israel was then a purchased people, ransomed from the claims of God by the blood on the lintels, and also a rescued people, delivered from the enmity and strength of Pharoah by the overthrow of Egypt in the Red Sea. (Ex. 12; 14) Then, we have, here and there, along the current of the Old Testament, types, prophecies, and rehearsals of this great blessing, the creation of God in a purchased or rescued condition, or in the enjoyment of this twofold redemption. After all this, the Lord Jesus is introduced to the world and to His own work and commission in it, in this character of a twofold Redeemer, as the prophecies which went before

Him tell us. (See Luke 1-ii.) And then, His ministry in life illustrated redemption by power, because He was blotting out the traces of the strength of the enemy in the healings and quickenings He wrought; and His ministry in death accomplished redemption by blood, because it paid the ransom for our deliverance from all the claims of God and of righteousness, which were against us.

But even had one grace and light to do it, time would fail to tell out all the glories of the great Redemption. It is gaining its victories still, and will be gaining them till the day of the Resurrection of the saints, and of the Kingdom that follows—and when all its victories have been wrought, its honors will be celebrated forever.

Chapter 158

Archdeacon Lee on the Revelation

The Archdeacon of Dublin has contributed a more painstaking, full, and elaborate portion than any other to this modern repository of Biblical learning. There is the usual sort of introduction, in which are discussed the authorship of the Revelation, the external evidence east and west, the canon of the New Testament, the date and place of its writing, wilt the doubt as to the apostolic authorship externally and internally, including language and style, then the text, the modern conception of “Apocalyptik,” ideal symbol, symbolic numbers with the interpretation of the book—prteterist, historical, futurist and spiritual. In the last class he places Auberlen, Ebrard, Hengstenberg, Hofmann, and there the author appears himself to stand. Thus speaking of ch. vii. he says, “The result then seems clearly to be that by the sealing of the servants of God no one definite act, to be performed at some one definite point of time, is intended; but that this entire vision represents a continual, process of preservation under the trials and persecutions of all times down to the end” (p. 585).

The readers will therefore gather that the so-called “spiritual,” or allegorizing school should more properly be styled “the indefinite.” The visions on this principle apply to events of similar character ever so often recurring; they are ethical rather than prophetic. The same chapter affords further proof of its utter vagueness. “In fact, the definite number 144,000—representing 'the sealed' on earth throughout all time—is again represented indefinitely in verse 9, by the 'great multitude which no man could number,' in other words by the Church of the Redeemed in heaven (compare ch. v.6 withch. xiv. i, 3: to this effect Origen, Mede, Vitr., Ewald, De Wette, Dollinger, Hengst, Words., Alf:, &c. see on ch. ix. 4,” (p. 588). Now the Venerable author admits, as do most of the learned men enumerated, that the elders (verse 11) “are the representatives of the universal church of God” (pp. 551, 554). Is it a reasonable interpretation, then, that in the same scene we should have two (not to say three) wholly different representatives of the same object? Is it credible that a numbered company out of all the tribes of Israel means the innumerable crowd out of every nation, &e.? And where is the congruity of one of the elders “by whom the Church is symbolized,” explaining to the prophet what the white-robed ones are, if they are after all only themselves? and how, if they too are the Church, designate them as coming “out of the tribulation the great one “? especially as the Archdeacon here abjures the glosses both of Bengel and of Alford, and rightly limits that tribulation “to the last great trial under the seventh seal as well as to the preparatory tokens of that trial under the sixth seal, ch. vi. 12-17.”

The truth is, that the crowned and enthroned elders do show us the glorified saints both of the Old Testament and of the New, around the throne of God on high—a company complete from the vision in chaps. iv., v., and never added to throughout the book till they appear for the last time in ch. xis., when that symbol gives place to the Bride of the Lamb, which again is replaced by the hosts that issue thence (saintly, not angelic, compare verses 8, 14 with xv. 5) and lastly by the sitters on thrones in ch. xx. 4. On the other hand the symbolical 144,000 are the numbered remnant of Israel, as the countless crowd consists of Gentiles contradistinguished from those sealed Israelites, yet objects of divine grace, and both wholly distinct from the 144,000 of Judah

who are associated with the Lamb on mount Zion. The Archdeacon, like most, confounds things that differ, and does not leave sufficient scope for the various ways of the God of all grace. For He saves not only for heaven as now, but will for the earth also in due time, whether from Israel or from the nations, in view of the end of the age and the terrific judgments which close it but precede or accompany “the day,” when the world-kingdom of the Lord and His Anointed is come.

Thus the immense change intimated by chap. iv. is, as commonly, slurred over; and in fact the value of the vision of the elders &c. is not seen, especially as the church condition is no more spoken of on earth during the strictly prophetic part of the book. Is it possible in such circumstances to have a just or comprehensive view of the prophecy? The vision supposes the translation of the saints, risen or changed, to have taken place: though the book lets us know in subsequent chapters that grace will call afresh some to suffer by persecution, others to survive and be the nucleus here below under the reign of Christ in power and glory, when the long promised blessedness of the heavens and earth comes in one united and righteously ordered system to the glory of God. The vision of chapter iv. cannot apply now; for the church wherein the Holy Spirit dwells is still on earth; and the saints of course are not yet glorified in heaven, though those departed are no doubt with Christ waiting. Nor does this chapter contemplate the day of Christ's reign and manifested glory as already come; for lightnings, voices, and thunders issue out of the throne of God, instead of the pure river of water of life as in that day (Rev. 22:1.) It is a vision inaugurative of the solemn prophetic interval after the heavenly saints are caught up, and before the day when Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones on high and the kings of the earth on the earth. 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.

For this reason details also are misapprehended; as for instance the “sea of glass” in ch. iv. and especially as distinguished from this sea mingled with fire as in ch. xv. “Glassy” is a mistranslation. The structure of the Greek word points to the material in contrast with water. It was symbolic of fixed purity, not of purifying as now by the word (John 15, Eph. 5). The saints in both cases, though otherwise distinct in relationship, time, place and circumstances, were beyond the need of the process. It was done and their course on earth closed. So the force of the critical correction in ch. v. 9, 10 escapes his vision. After the translation of the Christian saints to heaven with those of the Old Testament a new work ensues by grace and others are called whose prayers rise from the earth. For God will have fresh witnesses if the old are gone.

For this reason details also are not infrequently misapprehended; all is vague in the eyes of the learned Archdeacon, who blots out the second advent, where Scripture reveals it (Rev. 19:11-21; 17:14 2 Thess. 2:8, &c.) before the thousand years of Rev. 20, and inserts it after the thousand years, where Scripture proves it cannot be. For the great white throne is not a vision of Christ's coming to judge the quick, but of the dead small and great standing before the throne, after heaven and earth are fled away and no place was found for them. His coming means coming to the earth in glory to judge, where He was rejected in humiliation. Where is the earth to come to,—unless He comes before the great white throne is set. For then the first creation is all gone; then takes place judgment outside all; and the new heaven and earth of eternity follow, with the lake of fire for the condemned. Now all Christians own that the Lord will come to judge the quick no less than the dead. But according to this scheme, which denies the literal truth of the first resurrection and the reign of the blessed ones with Christ for a thousand years, no space of time is

left for the judgment of the living, whereas Scripture shows it going on in one form or another for the thousand years, the judgment at the end being of the dead exclusively, and these the wicked dead.

Similarly the author is in error when he treats the marriage of the Lamb in Rev. 19 as prophetic. The entire context demonstrates that the consummation of the church's joy then takes place as an actual fact in heaven, after the providential judgments typified by the seals, trumpets and vials, and before the Lord appears in person to sit on His own throne, as He is now on the Father's. Rev. 21:2. creates no difficulty as to this, but brings out the further truth, that, after the glorified Church has reigned with Christ for a thousand years over the earth that now is (though in the conditions of the kingdom), when a new heaven and a new earth come in for eternity the church reappears, in the new final and everlasting change for all else, in her bridal beauty as fresh as ever. Still less is there a difficulty in Rev. 21:9, xxii 5, which is a retrogressive vision to show the relation of the Bride (the Holy and heavenly Jerusalem) to the Lamb, the kings, and the nations, during the kingdom, as Rev. 17 went back to show the relations of the harlot Babylon the Great to the Beast, the kings and the nations.

But candidly the confusion is extreme; for in p. 781 the Archdeacon tells us that the Bride had already been referred to as under the figure of a great number which no man could number (chap. vii. 9),—as the 'woman' with the Crown of Stars, (chap. xii. 1)! as the 144,000 on ‘the Mount Zion.' She is the Church of the last days!—the Elect of Israel and of the heathen. She has been 'made ready' in the wilderness (ch. xii. 6); and having remained faithful in the time of tribulation, the recompense described in ver. 8 awaits her.” It would be endless to dwell at length on these errors which are not mere details, but involve the gravest principles of truth. We have already seen as to the countless multitude out of every nation, as well as the sealed out of Israel, expressly and doubly distinct from the Elders who do represent the Church of the firstborn. Again the star-crowned woman in ch. xii. typifies Israel the mother, not the Church the Bride, of Christ, both again distinct from the godly Jews attached to the Lamb on Zion and refusing the corruption of Babylon. There is no such thing as the Church of the last days as here said. There is the body of Christ, where is neither Jew nor Greek, but a new creation in union with the glorified Head, as decidedly above Israel as above the Heathen. She will make herself ready in heaven as expressly as Israel will by and by have a place prepared of God in the wilderness during the 1260 days of Satan's efforts through the apostate empire at the end of the age. The church is to be preserved from the hour of trial which is to come on all the habitable world, as she will certainly have full fruition of joy in heaven at this time, and not merely when the millennial reign closes.

In the remarks on this reign the mistakes bristle yet more. “We are to understand a long, though finite, duration beginning from the First Advent of Christ (1 Cor. 15:24, 25)” (p. 792). From the first Advent of Christ! And to add to the perplexity, think of referring to the apostle's words which describe the giving up of the kingdom at the close of the millennium when Christ has put all enemies under His feet as a fact! Again what real connection has Luke 11:21, 22, with Satan's deceiving the nations no more? And should the words be omitted “till the thousand years be fulfilled"? They ought to refute so meager an interpretation. And how strange to put John 12:31 over against Rev. 20:3, and to say “Now?—from the date, that is, of the Incarnation” (p. 793)! or again to range 2 Thess. 3-9 with the end of the thousand years when Satan deceives again. In the same p: 794 Dr. Lee says, “and they sat upon them” that “the subject of the verb is not specified

(ch. x. 11; xii. 6), but the meaning naturally is the 'souls.'" But this is exactly wrong; for the souls follow as a new object on all sound principles of exegesis. He seems indeed lower down to suspect a distinction which neither grammar nor context permits the reader to deny. "If a distinction is to be made between those who sat upon the thrones here and those who 'reigned with Christ' at the end of the verse, the natural subject of the verb would be the representatives of the universal Church—the 'twenty-four Elders.'" This is substantially true, though not very correctly put. The apostle saw thrones, and these filled by sitters on them—the already glorified saints who lied followed Christ out of heaven to the judgment of His foes; then he saw the souls of those that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God (see ch. vi. 9); and, thirdly, such as worshipped not the beast nor his image and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand (see vi. 11, where the two last classes of sufferers are distinguished as here). Therefore the last clause properly applies to these two, "and they lived" &c. It was needless so to say of those already changed who came with the Lord from heaven. It is, not of these, but of martyrs only that the souls are expressly said to have been now seen. But that "they lived" means their resurrection. What is said of Christ no less applies to them. It is inexcusably false to speak of spiritual life given to the disembodied souls of saints that had died for Christ, for they were spiritually quickened in becoming saints before their martyrdom; and therefore their living now, in order to reigning with Christ a thousand years, can point only to their rising from the dead. And how erroneous to say that John distinguishes two classes here,—(1) The noble army of martyrs; (2) The holy Church throughout all the world! For this last had long been taken, changed, to heaven, and the two classes of slain saints follow who now lived to reign like the first with Christ.

It may be well also to notice how this allegorizing system, in avoiding the plain language of the Holy Spirit, verges on heterodoxy. In handling ver. 4, Dr. Lee, through dislike of taking "the judgment" given to those seated on thrones as descriptive of their judging the world (compare 1 Cor. 6:2) in the days of the kingdom, actually identifies it with "that moral judgment of humanity spoken of by Christ in John 5:24-27, the execution of which is here delegated by Him to His saints as promised in ch. iii. 21:—see in ver. 12." It is utterly false that the saints were promised, or will have, a part in judging the dead for eternity. The denial of the millennial reign in its true and literal import exposes to this gross departure from divine truth. Matt. 19:28, 1 Cor. 6:2, Rev. 20:4 open a wondrous vista of millennial glory; but no Scripture teaches that the saints are to sit in judgment on the dead. This is the Son of Man's place exclusively.

There are other doctrinal errors of capital moment involved. (1) The "universal" judgment is untrue. For the Lord expressly declares in John 5:24 that the believer, as possessing eternal life in Him, comes not into judgment; which is really to vindicate His honor on those who, not hearing His word or believing Him that sent the Son, must honor the Son of Man by being judged. Compare Heb. 9:27, 28, for an analogous contrast of "men's" portion with that of saints. It is strange in the face of these and like Scriptures of the surest import to cite Matt. 25:31-46, which is expressly the Lord's dealing with "all nations," and of course living men, when He shall come in His glory, which we have seen to be necessarily distinct from the great white throne judgment of the dead. (2) The "general" resurrection is really a general error, in flat contradiction of Scripture which never so speaks but always intimates two special resurrections, as distinct in character as in time; a resurrection of dead both just and unjust (Acts 24:15); a resurrection of life, and a resurrection of judgment (John 5:29). And hence, in full accord with other Scriptures, Rev. 20 sets before us the

first resurrection of the blessed and holy who reign with Christ a thousand years and more, before “the rest of the dead” then, as well as those who, having died during the reign or afterward, were caused to stand before the throne, judged each one according to their works, and cast into the lake of fire. “And if any one was not found written in the book of life,” he was cast there: not a hint of one who was found so written.

Is it not then singular to hear of “the judgment of condemnation” (p. 805), since judgment of the dead has only this effect? Yet we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God, and we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). But neither one nor other is judgment; for this the Lord absolutely denies as we have seen. Everything done in the body, whether good or bad, will appear and have its consequences. For the believer Christ bore the judgment, the infinite blessing of which grace gives to faith. The unbeliever, rejecting Christ and His atoning work, must bear the judgment himself in all its unspeakable and unending horror. Hence life is in Scripture contrasted, not merely with “condemnation” or “damnation” as in the Authorized Version of John 5, but with “judgment,” as in the Revised Version; which could have no proper force if believers come into judgment no less than unbelievers. But the Lord distinctly assures us that the believer does not come there. Hence there is a resurrection “of judgment” for the unbeliever, as “of life” for the believer, the very reverse of a general resurrection and of a common judgment, ancient and popular as these errors may be. The word of the Lord endures forever. Salvation too is contrasted with “judgment,” which could not be if all had to pass through judgment, whether saved or not. Faith by grace secures life and salvation, with exemption from the judgment which is for all else; who, despising Christ and living as they like, must thus awfully learn the ruinous evil of unrepentant rebellion against God and trampling on His grace. It could easily be shown how the error tends to weaken justification by faith and to shake peace with God; so that doctrine and experience, and of course walk and worship, are all lowered thereby.

The real wonder, if we did not know the darkening effect of tradition, is that pious men could overlook the broad and deep elements of the case. Babylon, the world-church, is judged: the apostate world-power, or revived Roman empire, summed up in its last head, is consigned to the lake of fire with the false prophet or Antichrist his ally (a destruction distinctly bound up in 2 Thess. 2 with the manifestation of the Lord's presence), the kings of the earth and their armies slain by the word that proceeds out of His mouth. It is His public dealing with men on earth—for He is King of kings and Lord of lords. But He is also Head of all principalities and powers, and so by the medium of an angel He removes from the earth, and restrains from deceiving, the unseen power of evil, Satan, for a thousand years. All this demonstrates a total change for the earth, in contrast with all that appears now, and yet quite distinct from the eternal state. It is not this present evil age,” nor is it “a new heaven and a new earth” after the judgment of the dead before the great white throne. It is “the age to come,” or “that age” of which none are accounted worthy to have part (at least on its heavenly side) who are not sons of God, being sons of the resurrection; for (as the Lord intimates) “that age” is inseparable from the resurrection from among the dead, and they can die no more (Luke 20:35, 36). It is “the first resurrection,” an age after the present and before eternity, characterized by the rising of (not all but) those that are Christ's at His coming (1 Cor. 15:23), followed by the reign (not on but) over the earth for the same thousand years during which Satan is shut up. “The end” is only when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God even the Father. Between His appearing, then, and “the end” we have here in Rev. 20 the kingdom which He

appointed to His own, as His Father to Him. It is the reward promised to those who suffer, not exactly for Him as some do, but with Him, as all do that are His. It is a great error to deny this by making it a reign of “principles.” The risen saints that suffered with Christ are to reign with Him over the scene of His suffering, priests of God and of Christ, which “principles” could hardly be. It is not the dream for Papists and Protestants, for Anglicans, Presbyterians, Independents, Methodists, and Mormons, of the church reigning now without Christ, where Satan reigns too; but Christ executing judgment, and His risen saints reigning with Him over the earth freed from the power of evil, before the judgment of the dead when “the end” comes, and God (Father, Son and Holy Ghost) is all in all.

Revised New Testament: American Corrections: Matthew—John

There need be little hesitation in allowing (I) that. “S.” for saint is a remnant of tradition, at issue with the general sense of the term, which is ill applied for special honor to the inspired writers of the Gospels. II. But it is less easy to see why “the apostle” should be struck out from the title of the Pauline Epistles, or of “Paul the apostle” from the title of the epistle to the Hebrews. “General” is most unsuitable to the title of the Epistles of James and Peter. John and Jude have a “general” character, whether it be so said or not in the titles. The older MSS. say “The Revelation of John,” which may be regarded as a compendium of Rev. 1:1.-III. Holy “Spirit” might well supersede Holy “Ghost.'

If “worship” be retained uniformly for προσκ., a note explaining its general sense is requisite.

“ Through” rather than “by” = δι■ with the genitive, in general, as well as when it relates to prophecy.-VI. Are not all, or almost all the instances referred to causes of enticement to what is wrong, when therefore “tempt” is right enough? Such a verse as Rev. 3:10 would seem more appropriate for “try” and “trial,” like 1 Peter 1:6.-VII. The archaic “which” might well yield to “who” or “that,” “be” to “are” in the pr. ind.; “wot” and “wist” to “know” and “knew,” “hale” to “drag."-VIII. “Demon” should displace “devil” for δα■μων or δαιμ■νιον, and so possessed with a “demon” or “demons."-IX. “With” should hardly move to the margin to let “in” there after “baptize."-X. But “covenant” should everywhere take the place of “testament” except in Heb. 9:15-17. -XI. It is not merely in Luke 8:15, 2 Cor. 1:6, Heb. 12:1, and James 5:11, that “steadfastness” would not suit as an alternate in the margin for “patience"; “patient endurance” seems better. -XII. The approximate rendering of ■σσ■ριον as a penny, and δην■ριον as a shilling is preferable to the more distant “farthing” and “penny."-XIII. “God and the Father” is the revived marginal rendering of the Five Clergymen, and worse rather than better than the Authorized Version, “God even the Father,” as in the Revised Version of 1 Cor. 15:24, the real sense being “to Him that is God and Father.” In this way “our” or “His” may not necessarily go beyond “Father."-XIV. To confine “fulfill” to “accomplish,” and the like, might be well.

Matthew

1:7, the marginal “for baptism” is fair; 10 (Luke 3:9) “lieth at” hardly gives the moral force. -6:11 (Luke 11:3) is neither “daily” nor “coming day,” but “sufficient “; 27, “a cubit to the measure of his life” would be strange phraseology. “Stature” is the clear sense of. Luke 14:3, and so here, and in Luke 12:29.-viii. 4, and elsewhere, “go” might suffice without “thy” or “your” way.-9:6, the truth is that the usage does imply “power” (8) as Well as “authority.” It is a nice point, sometimes, to say which predominates. Compare Rev. ix. 3, 10, 19; 11:6, 20:6, -10:39, and often in the Gospels else where, “life” is right, not “soul."-12:23 seems a needless, even if lawful, change; though the Revisers expose themselves to it in John iv. 29; 31, slender indeed is the authority for the awkward marginal “unto you men."-19:14 seems no less uncalled for.-20:1, that was “or” is “is alike uncalled for. Are we to say in Luke 2:15 “the men the shepherds “? In chap. 13:23, 45 52, 18:23, it is simply an enemy, a merchant, a householder, the shepherds. In fact, it was not

emphatically a man that was hostile, but the devil, and a King who in truth was not a mere man. So in 21:33, which may have led the Trans-Atlantics to “that was.” 22:23, they are right in correcting the oversight of the Revisers; for it is a question between divided authorities, and not of mere Greek rendering; some deprecating “which say,” others “saying” only.—23:9, “he who is in the heavens,” if we adopt the more generally adopted reading; 23 is not “justice” but “judgment,” as in the Authorized and Revised Versions. So Luke xi. 42, xxvi. 29. (Matt. 14:25, Luke 22:16, 18) is “will,” not “shall."-.-27:7, the pretorium, or governor's palace: so elsewhere.

Mark

2:4, 9, 11, 12, no doubt a “pallet bed” or “couch,” as elsewhere.-7:4, “dip” is more literal than “bathe” or “wash.” —In 10:13 if we say “were bringing” we should also say “were rebuking,” a cumbrous form indeed, were it uniformly carried out. 32 is a question of reading, and the marg. uncalled for. In 45 “also” suffices.-11:24, “have received” scarcely accords with the aorist, and is not idiomatic. -14 is so obscure that “pure,” “liquid,” “spike,” —may be contended for with nearly equal force.

Luke

1:35 recurs substantially to the Authorized Version, save “is begotten” for “shall be born"; “of thee” being generally given up here. The Revised Version is awkward and improbable. 70 “of old” is weak.

37, as there is an article in the Greek, cannot claim it in idiomatic English for one more than the other. 37, “for” or “unto” is a slender question. Important points, as in 2, 14, 22, 38, are passed by in silence.-3:14 seems as little happy in the American suggestion as in the Revised Version. “Harass none, nor accuse falsely” leaves the sense less restrained than either. In 20 the question of “to” or “above” is not much. But it seems strange that both the English Committee and the Americans have failed to observe that the true arrangement in 23 is to treat not as Wieseler ■ς ■ν. τ. I, but the two preceding words ■υ ■■σ also, as parenthetical and not part of the genealogy but a collateral remark before it begins. In the proper genealogical line “son” is not expressed; here it is, with the qualification in the strictest accordance with truth. The Lord was legally Joseph's son, and only so; He was really of Mary, whom even the Talmud attests as daughter of Heli. Luke therefore gives the natural line, which exactly suits his general scope, but would not prove Jesus to be the Messiah; whereas Matthew traces down from Absalom and David to Joseph, which was the Solomon branch with full legal title to Messiahship for the Jews, and this equally in its true place. The words would thus sun: “And Jesus himself was at his outset about thirty years old (being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph), of Heli, of Matthat, of Levi,” &c. It is not Joseph, who is here traced from Heli, but our Lord—of course through His mother. Matthew had already explicitly declared that Jacob, not Heli, begat Joseph; Heli not being of Solomon but of Nathan, and therefore unable to give the true succession to the throne of David according to Jehovah's oath. The Lord's title was complete legally, because Mary was espoused to Joseph, who was in the true Solomonic line. Jesus was the Son of God supremely, Mary's son really, and Joseph's legally; all of which must unite in the true Messiah exclusively. For according to scripture He must be God and Son of God, He must be man born of a virgin as none other ever was, and Son of David not merely from Nathan but from Solomon; and this text, rightly divided and understood, helps to clear the truth in an important way.-4:1 is not “in” simply, but “by” from connection with

“led.”

6:1 shows strange indifference to the omitted “second-first” of the Revision. In 16 “became a” is literal, as in Mr. Green's Twofold New Testament. But here again no notice of the Revisers' text and margin of ver. 35, while they strain out “Chuza,” instead of the more proper “Chuzas” (see Smith's Dictionary), and “commanded” for “was commanding” or “charging” (see Green). In 33 they prefer the more figurative “drowned” to the more literal “choked.” So in 9 they like “provisions” (12) rather than “victuals,” “apart” (18) rather than “alone,” and “was” for “should be” in 46: small points verily, even if correct, which may well be doubted. In 11 the only point is “bathed himself” for “washed” in 38, as in Mark 7:6. In 12:49 the suggested text is strange, still more the margin. —13:32, margin, is substantially Green's rendering.

In 15:16 can one doubt that the reading of ■ B D L R, some cursives and very ancient versions, is a softening of the phrase which is certainly not found in the Authorized Version or its American revival?

In 17:6 the authority is preponderant for “have” rather than “had"; as “would have” is also right. In 11 Dean Alford pointed out that the phrase may mean on the frontiers of both. In 18:5 the suggestion for the margin is at least not so odd as Meyer's rendering, offered in all gravity, “lest at last she—in desperation—should come and strike me in the face"! But the Authorized and Revised Versions seem more accurate in construing ε■ς. with ■ρχ “continually coming.” The query “and is he slow” &c., seems untenable, no less than “and yet.” It may be well to read uniformly “Olivet” as in Acts 1:12, rather than “the mount of Olives,” as in 19:9, 21:37. In 42 I should be disposed to go farther, and keep “thy” day and “thy” peace in the text. The Americans may well speak of “some ancient authorities” reading the pronoun twice, for the omission of which one may easily account, not so for its insertion.—20:20 “ruling power” says Green. In 22:24 perhaps “should be,” or is more idiomatic here than “is” or “was.” 70, Mr. Green again. 23:2 right; 15 right again. The Revisers were not entitled to ignore so many and good ancient authorities for “I remitted you to him.” In 23, “urgent” is less ambiguous than “instant.” In 48 the remark is well-founded.-:-In xxiv. 30 perhaps the imperfect at the close should be marked. In 38 “thoughts” might suffice, rather than “debatings” or “questionings.”

John

1. The Americans prefer “through” to “by” in 3, 10, 17; and perhaps it might be well thus to discriminate δι■ from ■ν which is often better rendered “by” than “in."-2:7 as in Green.—3:20 (as in 5:29) “evil” for “ill” is not much; nor “made full” for “fulfilled.” In 5:27 “a” son of man would be wrong, especially in the text. Read not “the,” but simply “Son” of man. 7:8 right; 21, 22, questionable; 23 right, but trivial; 38 strongly euphemistic, in contrast with their preference in Luke 15:16- 8:24, 25 right. 25 is rather a timid dealing with the wild misrendering of the Revisers, both text and margin. What the Americans would substitute for the present margin should go into the text; and those who demand positive connection of τ■ν ■ρχ■ν, instead of one merely negative as commonly, can consult Dio Cass. Fragm. Peiresc, ci. ■τι μα■ τ■ν ■ρχ■ν ■πικαλ■σαι τι α■το■ς ■τ■λμησαν, κ.τ.λ. (Sturz' ed. i. 96; also ii. 342; iii. 688; iv. 52). This may satisfy the most imperious that the only rendering otherwise grammatical and suitable to the context is to give τ■ν ■ρχ■ν its idiomatic sense of “absolutely” or “altogether.” 26 needs no ridiculous margin of Gr. into. Every one knows that the word means “to” or “unto,” just as well as “into.” The Revisers' margin

implies that “into” is alone correct, which is itself incorrect. 44. I agree that “stood” is untenable, and to give the margin is unintelligible, as it is a question of rendering, not of reading according to these or those authorities. -52, 53: so Green, Sic. -58 “was born” is fuller and more precise, but lacks the dignity of the Authorized Version “was.” —10:8 shows the remarkable omission of “before me” in many eminent authorities. Tischendorf, in his 8th edition, has the unenviable singularity of forming his text accordingly: it might be worth mentioning in the margin.-12:43 gives no just ground for “that is” before “of men” and “of God,” nor is “from” needed for “of.” Nor is there sufficient reason to prefer the Revisers' marginal to their text, if the margin is at all justifiable. 14 right, as against “we” in the Revision, notwithstanding many old authorities, which might be stated in the margin.-16:25, 29: if “dark sayings,” so also in 10:7.-17:24 right.-18:37; so McClellan.-21:7 needs explanation rather than a marginal note.

Chapter 160

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—Acts and Romans

Acts of the Apostles

2:47 is better in the Authorized Version than in the Revision, whether of British or of Americans; but of the two latter the American version, “those that were saved,” is not strictly grammatical. The British amendment, “those that were being saved,” might be correct but for other considerations. Every scholar knows that the present tense, including its participle, need not be temporal, but may be what is called ethical. Hence the general truth and the particular context must often come in to decide the real force intended. In itself the words το■ς σωζομ■νους might quite well mean “those that were being saved” if the present participle were only used relatively. But there is an absolute usage which drops all thought of actual time, and simply expresses a person (as ■ ■ρχ■μενος he that should come), or a class (as ο■ ■γιαζ■μενοι) characterized according to the word employed. And so the Revisers correctly take it in Luke 13— “Are they few that be saved?” Are those to be saved few? “The saved” is true; but is not quite the thought. Compare 1 Cor. 1:18, 2 Cor. 2:15 (Rev. 21:24 being no genuine occurrence). In Eph. 2:5 is quite a different form, which does mean “ye are,” or have been “saved.” It seems impossible to admit the strict relative present with Peter's σ■θητε just before in verse 40; for the aorist and the relative present cannot apply together. It must be therefore the absolute present, with no definite notion of time, which it is difficult in English to express justly. If the Americans meant this, they were right in their aim. But a full view of the Scripture use of the various forms appears to exclude the Revisers' version of the phrase. A Christian could not be said to be σωθε■ς or σεσωσμ■νος, if he is only in process of being saved. If σωζ■μενος be applied, as it is, to such an one, it must be apart from time, referring to no particular moment when the action takes place. In 3:21 as in 15:18 “from of old” is well enough. But it is hard to see why we should go back to “it” in Acts 8:16 from the “he” of both Authorized and Revised Versions. They are, however, in. my opinion quite right in adopting the critical reading ■ττοφ., instead of the received ■τροπ. which seems a mere though early blunder of ■ B and most others, but not of A Cp.m. some good cursives and all the ancient versions save the Vulgate. It is pleasant therefore to find Alford, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Wordsworth, supporting Griesbach, Mill, &c. Bengel in his Gnomon labors elaborately to show that, though the orthography differs, the notion is the same. It is painful to see the error, which Deut. 1 refutes, perpetuated in the Revision. This was due probably to Drs. W. and H. The marginal of 14:8 had better be omitted. In 15:23 the weight of testimony is against the insertion of κα■ ο■ before ■δ., but the American rendering is harsh indeed, however well meant, as compared with the more natural one in the Received Text. In 17:2 “very religious” seems nearer the mark than “rather superstitious.” In 19:31, “Asiarchs” with a marginal explanation is suggested; but if so, should there not be “Praetors” or Duumvirs in 16:20, 38, and “Politarchs” in 27:6? With 20:38 we cannot agree. It is a question of Scripture and spiritual judgment amidst the collision of witnesses. For “many,” in 21:10 and 24:17 they would give in the text the Revisers' marginal “some.” “More” than might have been expected is the source of the phrase. The question raised in 23:30 is between ■ξαυτ■ς which the Revisers prefer on the excellent authority of B H L P, most cursives, Syr. Pesh., Sah., Memph., Theb., &c., and A E, a few

cursives and Versions. Alford, Green, Westcott and fort adopt the former, as Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles the latter. The Revisers are, I doubt not, right; though it might be well, with the Americans, to add the other in the margin. In 25:3, if we will be exact, it is rather laying “an ambush” than “a plot” or “wait.” I doubt that either Revisers or Americans have hit the mark in 26:28, 29. “In a little thou art persuading” &c. “Both in a little and in a great” [degree] &c. In 27:37 the omission of 200 in the Vatican MS., and the Sahidic version is not, as is suggested, worth notice in the Revisers' margin.

Romans

1:17 “from” faith is here objectionable, as leading the reader naturally to the error of conceiving from one degree of faith to another, from less to more. This is not at all the thought any more than “by” in the Revised Version, which makes no just sense with “is being revealed.” Hence the Revisers separated it from ■π., its true connection, to “righteousness,” which alters the truth and mars it. In the gospel God's righteousness is revealed by faith unto faith in the gospel. Still worse in 18 is the rendering of the Revisers “hold down,” or of the Americans “hinder.” Either is to lose the point, which is to mark God's wrath against not only every sort of ungodliness, but unrighteousness of men that hold the truth in unrighteousness. Firm orthodoxy may go with practical disregard of righteousness. Holding truth down is scarcely sense; hindering it adds no worthy idea to the phrase. Holding the truth is a solemn caution for professing Christians now, as once for Jews.

2:12 is a curious instance of the Revisers' neglect of their own claim laid to superior accuracy in the aorist. Why should not the “have” be omitted twice in the text without any marginal Greek? In 13 the Americans are as wrong in saying “the” law twice, as the Revisers with their “a” twice. It means the law-hearers, the law-doers. Bishop Middleton was mistaken in laying down absolutely, that, if the governing noun has the article, the governed must also. But this does not justify Dean Alford in overlooking the proper force of the anarthrous construction, which gives law a general character instead of specifying only that of Moses. In 14 they are quite wrong in mistranslating μ■ ν. after the Revisers had corrected the similar error of the Authorized Version. So “having no” is correct, instead of “not having the.” Again it is not 14, 15 only but 13 also which constitute the parenthesis. The connection of “in a day when,” &c., is with “shall be judged,” at the end of verse 12. In 15 they seem right, and also 18, and 22.

In 3:9 it is pleasant to say we are agreed; and 21. As to 23, compare ii. 12. In 25 right; “get forth a mercy-seat (or; propitiatory) through faith in his blood,” omitting marginal 9; 10 and 11. To make a paragraph of 31 seems needless. It well closes the verses from 21.

4:1 it appears to me, according to the best testimony (■ AC D E F G, some cursives, and ancient versions, &c.) connects “our forefathers (or fathers) according to flesh,” not “hath found according to the flesh” (K & P), most cursives, &c.) as the Americans would prefer for the text, relegating the former to the margin. Westcott and Hort follow B, 47p.m. and Chrysostom's comment in cutting the knot by the omission of “hath found” altogether. In v. 1, 2, 3 they are quite right in preferring “we” to “let us” as the Revisers say. The change of ο to ω is one of the most frequent errors in the oldest copies; and this accounts for the subjunctive displacing the indicative to the grievous detriment of the sense, whatever ingenious pleaders may argue to the contrary. As to 7 agreed.

In 6:5 is it not a marvel that a considerable number of sensible men should not have been struck by the oddity of “united with him by the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection"? It is really identified with the likeness in each case respectively. One would not impute a dogmatic aim or effect; but united with Christ by the likeness of His death or of His resurrection is strange doctrine, if indeed it have any proper sense. And why change “serve sin” in 6 into “be in bondage to sin,” which is sadly ambiguous at best? Yet worse is the rendering of 10 on which the Americans are still silent; the Authorized Version gives the only true sense. In 7 we may of course explain in the margin δεδ. as released, cleared, discharged, “hath his quittance,” &c. But it is of moment to hold “is justified” in the text, though it is singular to see the Revisers departing from their own canons of exactness as to the aorist and the perfect in this short verse. “Freed” as in the Authorized Version is equivocal, and might be confounded with that “liberty” which the Spirit of the Lord produces. From the structure of the word we see that the justification here meant is expressed not as an act but as a state. It is hard to see what is gained by the suggestion on 7:25, which is not very smooth English, without being closer to the Greek.

In 8:3 it is simply for the text a return to the Authorized Version with the R. V. rendering in the margin. I believe it should be “Spirit” (not “spirit,” as if it was ours only) in 4, as well as 5, 6, and in 10 as well as 9, 13. The anarthrous construction does not deny the Holy Spirit to be in question, but presents it as character, rather than as the person objectively viewed; which might be no less true of Father and Son: only it is, from the nature of the case, more frequently so predicated of the Spirit. This is a great blemish in the Revised Version, as it was even worse in the Authorized Version, being uniformly a small “s “; which Dr. Scrivener throughout has rectified in the excellent Cambridge Paragraph Bible of 1873. As to 13, agreed; though it is a small question; and so 24, if not 26 (as before). In 34 it is a question of an accent, and so of a tense present or future. The future I presume to be due to Drs. Westcott and Hort after Lachmann (Tyndale, the Geneva, and the Rhemish giving it of old); and perhaps one may add the Hebrew of Isa. 1 In the Septuagint also we find the future, but quite another phrase. It seems to us with Dean Alford that ■ δικαι■ν naturally leads to the present ■ κατακρ■νων, and that the balance and the emphasis might be preserved better throughout by a colon before “who,” not only between verses 34 and 35, but also between 35 and 36.

The marginal alternatives presented as to 9:5 are unworthy efforts of unbelief to enfeeble the plain testimony of the text to the Divine glory of the Lord Jesus, and the American note sins against the usus loquendi like others.—22 is a marginal that weakens the sense.

They are right in preferring to begin the paragraph of chapter 11 with verse 11 rather than 13. How strange that the Americans fail to notice the error in the misrendering of 31? For it really opposes and upsets the very doctrine the apostle is teaching in the chapter, insinuating a notion flattering to Gentile conceit, and at issue with all the prophetic word?

But “spiritual,” if strange in the Revisers' margin is worse for the text of chapter xii. 1 as the rendering of λογικ■ς, which may mean of the mind, intelligent, or again according to the word, but should not be confounded with πν., however truly they may coalesce. In verse 6 the question is whether “faith” is not better than “the” or “our” faith. Abstraction gives the article in Greek in contrast with English; which the Revisers have often overlooked, as e. g., in verses 2, 3, where “our” is erroneously introduced from inattention to the principle. The Americans seem even less at

home if possible here, as we may see by their suggestion on verse 19 and other places.

There is an important error to notice in the Authorized Version at xvi. 26 perpetuated by the Revisers which the Americans have overlooked. “The scriptures of the prophets” is a misleading sense. The apostle uses quite a different phrase for what is promised through God's prophets in holy scriptures. Here he carefully defines the mystery or secret kept in silence in times of old, but now manifested and by prophetic scriptures (such as he and the other inspired men of the New Testament were writing) according to command of the everlasting God made known for obedience of faith unto all the nations. Prophetic scriptures here mean emphatically and distinctively the New Testament epistles in which God was pleased to reveal the mystery of Christ and the church, in pointed contrast with the law and the prophets when the mystery was hid and He had covenant dealings with His ancient people separated from all the nations.

Chapter 161

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—1 and 2 Corinthians

1:18. The reader is referred to the remarks on Acts 2:47 for a solution of the difficulty in the right construing of the absolute usage of the present participle here and elsewhere. The Revisers by keeping to its temporal force introduce confusion into the truth by setting one scripture against another; the Americans do not sufficiently guard themselves against confusion of the tenses, though their version may be justified and explained. But what is already said may suffice. Those who affect greater precision than the Authorized Version here have slipped into error through narrow views of the Greek, in aid of unsound doctrine. I do not see why “discernment” (19) &c., should displace “prudence” or “understanding.” “There are” (26) has been suggested as a simpler alternative in the margin than “have part therein,” which is cumbrous.

2:6. It is hard to see how the Revised Version could have done better than to give “perfect” in their text, and “full-grown” in the margin.—8, “knoweth” say the Revisers, and the Americans “hath known:” “hath come to know” is more the idea, I suppose. “Of” seems to have a delicacy in 12, rather than “from” God, though this of course is true also; but “were” is better than “are.” As to the end of 13 the note on the Revision applies no less to the American suggestion. “Comparing” or “combining,” though possible renderings of the word in itself like “expounding” also, are unsuited to and excluded by the scope of the verse and clause, which bears on the communication of what was revealed, or spiritual things, in spiritual [words]. It is a description of the intermediate process between God's revelation, and the believer's reception, of the truth, in all three the Holy Spirit having His own blessed part. He is the power of all, as the chapter teaches. “ Natural” means “soulish,” not necessarily “sensual,” as wrongly given in James and Jude. It is man as he is without the teaching of the Spirit through the word revealing Christ. Nor is there need to say “the” but “a” natural man. Neither the Revisers nor the Americans show adequate care as to the presence or absence of the article, though it was well known that the Authorized Version needed much overhauling.

4:8. Why not “reigned"? No doubt, “have” reigned reflects the perfect rather than the aorist. Nor is any notice taken of the Revisers' “hath” set forth in 9, any more than I “have” transferred in 6, or “hadst” in 7.-They seem right in 9, but questionable in 21.

5:9, 11. Having already commented on the Revised Version here, I need not repeat what was then advanced. The suggestion only makes bad worse, both here and in 10.

7:6. “Concession.” may be less equivocal than “permission,” which might mean on the Lord's part. I think the Americans beyond just doubt wrong in their preference of the margin to the text of both Authorized and Revised Versions. “ Faithful” is the right word in 25, and “present” in 26 as always. And what is gained by “that is upon us?” Is it not then “present"? As to 31 we agree. But they pass by greater mistakes, as pointed out in November, 1881.

8:3, may be, though “of” idiomatically means the same thing in this connection.—8 might be well.

10 7 π. in the New Test. means “altogether,” “quite,” not “assuredly.” In 27 there is no more reason to bring into the margin “have been a herald” than the analogous form in 1:23 and elsewhere. 11:10 seems trivial. 19 “heresies” is a word that misleads; the sense is “factions” or “sects.” In 27 “unworthily” means “in an unworthy manner,” and is less prolix.

12:31 seems to me better in the Authorized and Revised Versions than in the American suggestion as in Alford and others.

13:10, last clause, is in the American preference as in Dr. S. Davidson, &c. In 13 it is the greater “of,” not “than,” these; and hence our “greatest.”

14:3. Perhaps “encouragement” is the true derivative sense here. 33, 34 the order of, the Authorized and Revised Versions seems far better than in Lachmann, Tischendorf, Meyer, &c., whom the Americans follow.

15:2 right.—8 seems awkward, though the article should be expressed. —19 is better in the Authorized and Revised Versions than in the proposal of the Americans. —33 in both the Revised Version and the American correction is inferior to the Authorized Version. —34 is more faithfully given in the Revised Version. —44, 46 should be compared with 2:14-51, as in the American suggestion after Meyer, would interpret the apostle as saying what is untrue, i.e., that no Christian should die. The Authorized and Revised Versions are right Alford, Green, Davidson, the Five Clergymen, all reject the change.

2 Corinthians

1:9 is a reasonable suggestion—15 is slight enough.—24 Authorized and Revised Versions right, the margin of the latter. is not the thought.

2:14 would be weakened by the separation from the preceding verses.—15 may be compared with 1 Cor. 18 and Acts 2:47.

3:9 affords probably an instance of an early correction in the dative for the nominative; but the older copies have it, Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles adopt it, and the Americans translate accordingly, putting the ordinary text and version in the margin. —18, κ. does not here mean “reflecting” but “beholding,” as in Philo's Legis Alleg. 3:33, ed. Richter p. 154. The etymological notion of a mirror is merged and only hinders the sense in this derived application. The Americans are partially right; as they are quite in discharging the strange marg.'

4:3 may be compared with 1 Cor. 1:18 and in particular Acts 2:47.

7:8, 9 is Rinck's, Lachmann's, Tischendorf's, and Green's punctuation, which the Americans prefer. It seems even harsher in the Greek than in English, as I cannot but agree with Alford.

12:7 is certainly of doubtful acceptance as it stands in the Revised Version and their Greek text where δι■ seems an unmeaning appendage. Lachmann makes some sense by closing with τ■ν ■πoκ. and beginning afresh with δι■ ■να μ■ ■π. and so Westcott and Hort. Tregelles punctuates in the wildest way, sticking to his oldest copies right or wrong. No wonder that the Americans cannot approve of the text and suggest as they do.

Chapter 162

Revised New Testament: American Corrections—Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians

1:7. The Americans would like Winer's view in the margin. It seems poor. —10 has nothing about “seeking” in the first clause, nor “striving” in the second. Acts 12:20 illustrates. which means in this connection “to gain over” or “make a friend of.”

3:1 seems too vague in margin 4. It was after that lapse of time. —16. The margin (2) is better than the text or the softer American view. —20 stands cumbrously if even correctly in the Revised Version. It would be better if only a comma displaced; “and yet;” which applies to the Americans as well.—22 is one of the very many cases where the Revisers forsake their judgment as to the aorist without reason. In 23 is an instance that they forgot that personification gives the article in Greek, but not in English. The Americans have noticed the inconsistency; but correct γ■γονεν in 24 from “hath been” to “is become.” It is clearly more than the simple fact, ■γ■νετο Americans do not notice the strange punctuation of 26, due, I presume, less or more to the Bishop of Durham's influence. I do not admit that the context points to any such severance between “faith” and “Christ Jesus.”

4:12 “Become” is well for “be” and “am become,” for “am"; but the great oversight in the Revised Version is in the last word; for, if we are to supply, it should be “were,” not “are.” They had been Gentiles without law and Paul maintains freedom from law by Christ dead and risen as the nor mal condition of the Christian, not getting under law after faith in Christ like the Galatians actually. No supply might be best. —16 is well enough. In 18, 19, a dash would be better after “you,” and before “my children;". for the Revisers have put, not a comma, but a period between the verses,

5:1 is a perplexing question of text. If be read, the Authorized Version is substantially right`; if omitted by the Revisers, and the ο■ν read after στ,, their version is (I think) correct, rather than marginal 4. The suggestion on 12 is too vague for the text, even if the sense.—20 should be compared with 1 Cor. 11:29.

6:1 does not mean surprised “by,” but taken or detected “in.” Nor does” since” suit 10 like “as.” In 11 it is the epistolary aorist, which in our idiom Means “I write.” The Revisers are right in saying “with how large letters,” γρ■μμασιν. Had Paul meant to say “how long, or large, a letter,” as in the Authorized Version, &c. the proper Greek would be γρ■μματα. And π. well expresses the length of the letters, not of the letter, which is by no means long.

Ephesians

1:16 See the note in the “Bible Treasury” for December, 1881, page 378. The suggestion is right.

2:2. It is really “authority” rather than “power"; and “power"; would appear to be erroneous.

3:13. The American suggestion, which we find in the Syriac and elsewhere, seems as unworthy of the truth and general context as unsupported by the surrounding words.

6:9 is literally “the Master of both them and you.” To warrant the suggestion, the Greek might have been ■ κα■ α■τ. κα■ ■μ. κ.

Philippians

116, 17. The suggestions seem uncalled for, as already implied in the text.—22 seems to me as ill-rendered by the Americans as by the Revisers. Living and dying were before the apostle—to live, Christ; and to die, gain. But if to live in the flesh [were his], this, he says, is to me worth while, or fruit of work to reap; and what I shall choose, I know not [or cannot tell, for γν. may mean either]. The “if” of the Revisers and correctors seems quite out of place from not separating the last clause, whether we omit marginal 5 or not. To regard κα■ as introducing the apodosis appears only to embarrass. The Bishop of Durham confesses how doubtful that construction is here, and how awkwardly the sentence runs even if admissible.

2:1 is a questionable change, though on the surface “exhortation” may seem close. 6. Is not “subsisting” a more suitable word than the suggested “existing"? The verse runs better in the Revised Version, “a thing to be grasped” not fitting in well.

14 διολ.. is used for “questionings” as well as “reasonings,” and “disputes,” and may be so used here. 15 “become,” instead of “be,” is suggested (I presume) the better to mark γ■νησθς rather than ■τε (A D E F G &c.) which Lachmann preferred.

3:8. “Refuse,” as in the margin, is a wider and well supported sense rather than “dung,” though this too the word σκ■βαλα meant. 9 “of” God to my mind keeps up the idea of intrinsic and immediate source rather than an external removal, and at any rate a more remote starting-point like “from.” 12, “lay” and “laid” hold on are all well for apprehend and apprehended; but the better point in the margin of the Revisers over their text is in taking ■φ'■ in the usual sense of the condition, or occasion, which gives character to what is spoken of, “for that,” “seeing that.” —13 is the same thing.

4:4. Assuredly “farewell” does not deserve a place in the margin here. Indeed the Americans should have objected to it in the margin of iii. 1. Here it is monstrous: for what is the meaning of “Farewell in the Lord alway?” and why not, if it be so, say in 1 Thess. 5:16, Farewell “alway"? There indeed they omit their marginal note properly; but they should not have given it here. In 19 “fulfill” is one of the singular aberrations of the Revision Committee, without even a marginal alternative. The sense is “supply” as in the Authorized Version.

Colossians

1:36 is their first suggestion, and the very strange one of ■π■ “for,” rather than “from,” as of course it means. Perhaps Alford misled them w'o says it is “temporal,” and not “hidden from,” which is exactly what it says and is. What do the Americans mean by “for the ages and for the generations"? It is hard to see why the Revisers were not content with the Authorized Version. “All” seems a loose way of representing the doubled preposition and article. No notice is taken of the real mistakes in the Revision of 16 and 19, and of the unhappy severance of 24, &c. from the previous verses; by which the double ministry of Paul is cut through, whereas the connection adds much to the force. Also the word “fulfill” in 25 should be “complete.” There was a blank page of revelation which Pau was called to fill up. “Fulfill” is another and her erroneous idea.

2:15. The Americans are right in preferring in substance the Authorized Version to the Revised Version, though they would put their text in the margin.

3:5. “Put to death” is best, and marginal 12 uncalled for. In 16, not improbably the Americans are right in thus following Alford, Bengel, &c.

1 Thessalonians

2:6, “burdensome” fails to express the claims of weight, charge, or authority here meant.

4:12 is more “honorably” or “reputably” than “honestly,” or “becomingly,” as suggested.

5:22 is “form,” not “appearance.”

2 Thessalonians

2.:2 The Americans are here thoroughly wrong in all Greek, profane as well as sacred; for ■ν■στ. means “is present,” and not “is just at hand” or “impending.” 10. See Acts 2:47, &c.

3:2 agreed.

Revised New Testament: Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Chapter 1:1, we have “Christ Jesus” rightly: verse 2, a proper omission of “and Lord Jesus Christ” and in verse 8 of “and” — “God the Father,” &c. But the Revisers are capricious in their treatment of ο■ ο■ρ., giving sometimes “heaven,” sometimes “the heavens.” The inspired writers use the two phrases with distinctness of purpose. Thus it is always in Matthew “the kingdom of the heavens,” but in the Revised Version, as in the Authorized Version, “of heaven;” and so with” your,” “our,” or “My Father which is in heaven,” whereas really it is “in the heavens.” Yet the evangelist uses the singular form in chapter 5:18, 34; 6:10, 20, 26; 8:20; 11:23, 25; 13:32; 14:19; 16:1, 2, 3 (if 2, 3 be genuine); 18:18 twice (19:21 being doubtful perhaps); 21:25 twice; 22:30; 23:22; 24:29, 30 twice, 35; 26:64; 28:2, 18. On the other hand, the Revisers rightly say “the heavens” in chapter 3:16, 17, but not (in addition to the phrases already referred to) in chapter 5:12; 16:19 twice, while again they give “the heavens” in chapter 24:29, yet the singular form wrongly in verses 31, 36. Similar caprice might be shown in Mark and Luke where both forms occur (for John's Gospel has only the singular), save that the Revisers in the Acts give the plural correctly in its two occurrences. In Ephesians they give the plural twice rightly, and twice as singular wrongly, as also in Phil. 3:20, the only occurrence there. In our Epistle, chapter 1, they give the plural three times accurately in verses 5, 16, 20 (in chap. 4:1 they adopt the singular variant), but not in 1 Thess. 1:10. In Hebrews they are right save in chapter xii. 23, 25, in both like the Authorized Version. In 1 Peter 1:4 they are wrong, in 2 Peter 3:5, 7, 10, 12, 13 right, in both again following the Authorized Version. In the Revelation there is but one plural occurrence, and the Authorized Version and Revised Version agree in reflecting it rightly. In verse 6 the Revisers follow the good authorities in giving “and increasing,” or “growing” which the Text. Rec. omits, and in dropping the expletive “also” in verse 7, where they adopt the absurd reading of many ancient and modern authorities, ■μ■ν, “our,” instead of ■μ■ν, their marginal alternative. Here however Westcott and Hort had not only Alford, Lachmann, Tregelles, to keep them in countenance, but the Elzevirian Text. Rec. of 1633. This however may have been a mere printer's error, like that of the copyists; for the first (1624) and the latter editions of the Elzevirs adhere to the reading of Erasmus, of the Complutensian, of Colinaeus, of Stephens, and of Beza; as it holds its ground rightly to this day. The ancient versions are unanimous in rejecting ■μ■ν; and no wonder: for the sense which would result from this reading is untrue, as it would seem that Epaphras, valued and faithful as he may have been, was in no sense “vice apostoli,” as says a Latin commentator contrary to all others, Greek or Latin, who allude to it. In verse 10 “increasing in” seems a questionable rendering. Is not “growing by” better, as the margin suggests for the last word? There is no doubt that “through his blood” should vanish from verse 14. It stands rightly in Eph. 1:7, whence probably it was introduced here. The person is the point here, not yet the work, which comes afterward in verses 20-22.— “In him” in verse 16 appears a bald or mystic expression. It was in His power or in virtue of Him that all things were created. To be in Christ, to walk or dwell in Him, is for believers as intelligible as it is blessed; but for the universe to be created in Him, what is the meaning? It is assumption to say that we are shut up to any such rendering. No doubt iv is more than But (the expression of the means or instrument) and supposes intrinsic ability. The next

matter of weight for consideration is in verse 19, where the old fault of the Authorized Version reappears. There the excellent Tyndale led the way in error, Wiclif before and the Rhemish since being nearer the truth. The doctrine is as bad as the version, and derogatory to the Son as well as the Spirit in our epistle, and the very part where the prime object is to assert the glory of Christ in every way. For in Him all the fullness was well pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things unto itself, having made peace through the blood of His cross. The margin offers a less offensive rendering than the Revised text; but chapter 2:9 goes far to commend a version which needs no words to be supplied and wonderfully falls in with the grand aim of exalting Christ's person. In verse 25 the context suggests “complete” rather than “fulfill.” There was a blank left in the revelations of God; and the apostle, as minister not only of the gospel but of the assembly, was given to complete the word of God, who would now manifest to His saints the mystery hidden from the ages and from the generations. Such was the dispensation or stewardship of God given him toward the Gentiles. Compare Eph. 3— “Perfect” in verse 28, as in Phil. 3:15, means “full-grown,” as the Revisers, following the Authorized Version “of full age,” give in Heb. 5:14.

Chapter 2:3 does not exhibit a satisfactory text, though there are added and indefensible words in the text which the Authorized Version followed. It is very doubtful whether “and of Christ” should stand any more than “and of the Father,” the importance of which omission would be that the version would run “in which.” That is, all these treasures are in the mystery. Nor is there need for “so” in verse 6.” Of the sins” is an error in the common Greek text which the Revisers, with the critics, properly omit in verse 11. But are they not adventurous in following the few uncials and cursives, though supported by Greek and Latin ecclesiastics, which drop ■ν and give the force “through” in verse 13? In verse 15, dropping the interpolated copulative, they adhere to the literal or ordinary force of ■πεκδυσ■μενος, “having put off from himself,” with Alford and Ellicott, which results in an apparently fanciful meaning, which it is hard to believe intended by the Spirit of God. Every scholar knows that later usage employed middle forms where a middle sense cannot be recognized, though there is a distinction from the active voice. Hence even Winer does not accept the strict middle sense here, any more than Meyer or others, inclining to some such force as in the Authorized Version. If God be the subject throughout, the Latin application to the Lord's divesting Himself of the flesh or body is out of the question; and certainly the word is rarely if ever used absolutely or with such an ellipsis. Theodoret and Chrysostom are vague, but regard Christ as the subject. In verse 18 they drop the negative with several of our bolder modern critics, which would thus express the pretension of the mystics whom the apostle is exposing. Their version of the last clause in verse 28 is no less bold, though no doubt it suits the context if it were tenable. But does the preposition πρς ever convey the idea of counteraction or adverse aim save from the context, as from any word of fighting or the like, of which there is no trace here? If “against” therefore be improper in this connection, the force would be a warning against ascetic treatment, without a certain honor due to the vessel of the Holy Spirit, which is really for satisfaction of the flesh.

In chapter 3 there is happily but little to remark. The stronger and more accurate force we saw in Gal. 3 reappears in verse 11. But it is very questionable whether “Christ” is not changed for the worse in verse 13 into “Lord” as in A B Dp.m. F G, &c., Vulgate, &c. The Sinaitic reads “God;” the ordinary reading has ancient and extensive support, especially in versions and citations. But the Revisers, with all critics, on the best authority have the peace “of Christ” in verse 15. In the end of verse 16 they rightly give to “God,” and omit “and” in verse 17, as well as “own” in verse 18. In

verse 22 it is rightly “the Lord,” not “God” as in the Authorized Version following the Received Text; and the copulative is dropt at the beginning of verse 23, and the causal conjunction before the final clause of verse 24. Of course the first verse of chapter iv. is properly connected with chapter 3 as its true close.

In the last chapter there is yet less to notice. Verse 8 is a plain instance where the influence of most of the oldest copies has misled editors and the Revisers. The Paris rescript and the mass of uncials and cursives and versions are confirmed in their reading as right by the end of verse 9 as well as the beginning of verse 7. In verse 10 it is properly “cousin.” In verse 12 they rightly supply “Jesus” omitted in Text. Rec. In verse 13 it is as in the best copies “labor,” not “zeal,” the manuscripts, differing singularly. The main question of verse 15 lies between “their” (■ A C P, eight cursives, &c.) and “his” (D E F G K L and the mass with some ancient versions, &c.), “her” (though adopted by Lachmann who reads Ν■μφαν, after the Vatican and very little more) being given in the Revisers' margin, and not “his,” which seems strange.

Revised New Testament: Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians

In this Epistle the critical changes are few.

In chapter 1:1 “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Origen expressly noted the words as not read in his day, though they are supported by the Sinaitic, Alexandrian, and many other good MSS and versions, &c. B F G and the best versions reject the words. There are slight corrections in verses 8 and 10.

In chapter 2:2 an expletive κα■ is expunged, as also γ■ρ in verse 9. There is an omission of κα■ supplied at the beginning of verse 13, as of ■δ■ους in verse 15 and of “Christ” in verse 19. As to translation, is not verse 13 awkwardly rendered? Translate rather, “When ye received God's word of message (or report)—God's word heard—from us, ye accepted not men's word, but as it is truly God's word,” &c.

Chapter 3:2 brings before us a text variously found in the MSS. But if συνεργ■ν το■ θεο■ be read, as in the margin, “fellow-worker with God” will not do, for reasons already stated in discussing 1 Cor. 3, &c. It is not the thought at all, however pleasing to man's nature. God employs laborers as work-fellows; but He is no work-fellow of theirs. It is irreverent. In the text they read δι■κονον “minister,” as the Vatican copy omits το■ θεο■, and thus either way the difficulty is avoided. But there is really none when the word is rendered, not as by mere scholarship, but in the knowledge of God. A few lesser points might be spoken of, but the chief is the exclusion of “Christ” which Text. Rec. introduced on insufficient grounds.

In chapter 4:1 there is a short clause omitted in Text. Rec. and Authorized Version which is here rightly given, “even as ye do walk.” The Revisers, I think, aptly render verse 4 “to possess himself of,” as also of course verse 6. In verse 8 it is “you,” not “us.” In verse 13 it is “we,” not “I” as in Text Rec. In verse 14 the margin is right, “through Jesus.” The peculiarity of the “shout” is left out in verse 16.

In chapter v. 3 the particle “for” disappears properly, as it should appear in verse 5. There is little else to note but the omission of ■γ■οις. “holy” in verse 27, where if we take MSS, versions and citations into account, external authority is rather evenly balanced. If it were a solitary expression

in the Pauline epistles, this would not really weigh against its occurrence in his earliest, and in so solemn a connection. I doubt the wisdom or certainty of casting it out here. It occurs also in Heb. 3:1.

2 Thessalonians

The rendering of chapter 1:8 is correct, not that of the Authorized Version which overlooks the two articles in the Greek, expressive of two distinct classes of men with whom the day of the Lord is to deal: those that know not God (the nations or heathen); and those that, if they know Him after a sort, obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus (unbelieving Jews). The addition of “Christ” here is questionable; B D E G K L P, some thirty cursives, half the ancient versions, and many ancients who cite, being adverse. In verse 10 it should be “believed.” In verse 12 the weight of authority omits “Christ” at the beginning.

In chapter 2:1 “touching” or “in behalf of” the coming or presence of our Lord Jesus Christ seems to be founded on a misapprehension of the contextual requirement. Nobody doubts that either is a good rendering of the preposition in itself. But the connected language may modify, as well as the subject-matter; and all this has to be weighed. Was it not assumed by the Revisers, as in Alford's Commentary, that the coming of our Lord was the theme which he was about to explain to the Thessalonians? “It is most unnatural,” says the Dean in objection to the rendering of the Vulgate, Authorized Version and many ancient commentators, “that the apostle should thus conjure them by that, concerning which he was about to teach them.” This however is exactly opposed to the fact; for he is beseeching them ■π■ρτ■ς π. τ. κ. ■. ■. Χ. κ. ■. ■. ■, ■. not to be quickly shaken by a false impression about the day of the Lord. This, not His presence, is the real subject in hand. They are so distinct, that the apostle entreats ■π■ρ the one not to be troubled about a wrong view of the other. It is the confusion of the two which led to the wrong rendering, as it also forbids the right understanding of the argument and of the truth in the context. It is impossible to read attentively the chapter before and the following verses without perceiving that the apostle is treating of that day, as the Authorized translators rightly saw in verse 3. And therefore it is that in verse 8 we have, not of the Lord's coming merely, but “of the manifestation of his coming,” which really for the sense coalesces with His day. The one is for the gathering to Him of His friends; the other, for the destruction of His foes. Hence it is most intelligible to beseech the brethren, for the sake or on account of that blessed hope, not to be soon agitated nor yet troubled by the error that the day of the Lord was there. He begs them by a motive of deepest comfort not to be upset by the delusion that the day was present. How could this be, as the Lord had not yet come and gathered His own to Himself on high? How could it be, seeing that the apostasy and the man of sin were not yet developed in all their matured and manifested lawlessness, as they must be for the Lord to execute His judgment on them when that day dawns? This may serve to convince serious readers that the actual misunderstanding was about the ■μ■ρα or day, not the παρουσ■α or presence, as has been erroneously taken for granted. Accordingly too the rendering, with a verb of entreaty as here, is properly “for the sake of,” “by reason of,” or, more tersely, “by,” as in all the well-known English versions (Wield, Tyndale, Cranmer, Geneva, Rhemish, and Authorized Version). It is uncritical to confound ■ρςτ■ν περ■ with ■ρ. ■π■ρ, as the Revisers have done; and the New Testament abounds with proof that, when it was a question of beseeching for a person or asking about a thing, the former is the constant and correct phrase. We are therefore entitled to infer that ■ρ. ■π■ρ has its own distinctive force; and as “on behalf” or “instead of” is excluded by the nature

of the case, so the bearing of the context most naturally points to some such rendering as is in the Authorized Version, and beyond just doubt disproves “touching” in the Revised Version or any other rendering of like import. The Revisers however have correctly expunged the “by” of the Authorized Version in the same clause; for the one article of course forms the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into one closely connected object of thought with “our gathering together unto him,” instead of dissociating them as the unwarranted insertion of “by” does. In verse 2, in the endeavor to be literal have they not missed our own idiom? Dr. Angus ought to be able to say whether “shaken from your mind” is good English. The Authorized Version is at least idiomatic. But they have restored the true reading of “the Lord,” not of “Christ,” and they have given the correct version “is now present” or rather “is present,” instead of the misleading “is at hand,” which has darkened expositors, preachers, and readers without end. In verse 3 they rightly say “the falling away” or apostasy, and as rightly discard “as God,” though it is hard to tell why they did not render morn literally ■τι ■στ■ν θε■ς at the end, instead of repeating the English phrase which represents the interpolated ■ς θε■ν. In verses 7, 8 they are quite right in giving us “lawlessness,” and “the lawless one,” instead of the words in the Authorized Version which would answer to ■δικ■α and πονη■ς. The latter half of verse 7 is also better rendered as a whole; and “Jesus” is added on excellent authority, of moment to set aside pseudo-spiritual applications of the verse, as “slay” or destroy is better than “consume,” which is popularly employed to aid false interpretation. In verse 11 “sendeth them a working of error” rightly displaces “shall send them strong delusion” in the Authorized Version. But could they not do better for the force of τ■ ψε■δει than perpetuate the old “a lie “? How strange that both Bishop Ellicott and the Into Dean Alford should so little comprehend the truth here set out as to fancy, because of verse 7 and the present tense, that God's sending this judicial delusion is now! What about the lawless one's presence in verse 9? It is the ethical, not the historical, present, an usage quite common in all philosophical and indeed other writings, as well as in holy scripture. The error in this case affects, not the translation, but the intelligence of scripture; but it does affect the version in “them that are perishing” as in verse 10 and often in other words elsewhere, where they convert a moral present into a direct or historical one under the illusion that this only is correct. — “Work and word” rightly take the place of “word and work” in the Text. Rec. and Authorized Version.

In chapter 3:4 the “you” of Text. Rec. disappears. There is a conflict of readings at the end of verse 6, whether it be “he” as in the Authorized Version, “they” as in the Revised Version, or “ye” as in the margin. The singular is ill-attested; “they” has the better claim. In verse 12 they rightly change from “by our” to “in the.” The form of verse 14 “that ye have no company with him” may be right; but in so doubtful a case, does it seem wise or fair to commit the Revision to it?

Revised New Testament: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

In 1:1 the omission of the italics supplied in the Authorized Version brings out better the force: “Christ Jesus our hope;” and “true” or “genuine” is better than “own” in 2. The misreading of the Text. Rec. in 4 is the source of the wrong thought in 4, where the real point is God's dispensation or administration, not “godly edifying,” which ought to be an effect of it. In 5 they have well given “charge,” as in 3 and 18, where “commandment” misleads, as many ignorantly think of the law, especially as this follows, not seeing the contrast. It seems surprising that the Revisers in 9 should consign “smiters” “twice to the margin, and give “murderers” in their text. The simple verb certainly means to thresh, or beat, rather than to kill; and the compound in well-known pieces of classic Greek is distinguished, as here, from man-slayers or murderers. (See Lysias, 116; Plat. Phaed. 114; Aristoph. Nub. repeatedly. They rightly present the “gospel of the glory,” instead of the unmeaning or wrong-meaning “glorious gospel.” The glory of God into which Christ has entered is the true and full standard of judgment by which the apostle, who had beyond any other beheld it, measures that which is unsuitable for God and His own. How little those who desire to be law-teachers enter into this! “King of the ages,” in the margin, seems preferable to “King eternal” in the text of 17. Law had been just contrasted with the gospel: God was the sovereign disposer of the ages for His own glory. But here He is the only God; not “only wise,” as in Rom. 16, where the mystery is not revealed, but His righteousness in the gospel of indiscriminate grace, and the law is vindicated yet set aside in Christ deal and risen, and all is conciliated with the fulfillment of His special promises to Israel; none but the “only wise God” could. Here He is the “only God;” He may act in creation or in judgment, in promise, law, or gospel, but He is the only God, whatever be the difference of dealing or dispensation.

In 2:3 why should the Revisers give “desiring” (θ■λ.) in 1:7, and “willeth” (θ.) here, but “desire” (βο■λοηαι) in 8? In 2 Peter 3:9 they render β. “wishing.” Why this looseness and caprice? Buttmann's distinction 1:26), that θ. [■θ■λω] is not only the more general expression for willing, which is true, but that kind especially where a purpose is included, as compared with β., which implies a mere acquiescence in the will of others, seems to be quite untenable even in Homer. It is β. which is used especially to express mind or purpose if required. Mr. Green is also faulty in giving just the same force to the two different words in 1 Tim. 2:3 and 2 Peter 3:9; so indeed are the old well-known English versions. Is not the rendering of 5 clumsy, though close? In 8, 11, the twofold mistake of the Authorized Version is rectified. Read “the men” and “a woman.” In 9 it is rather “deportment” than “dress,” which follows in 10. In 12 a woman is forbidden to exercise (not merely to usurp) authority. Such full power over man is not hers. In 14 the emphasis is not expressed in English, “quite deceived.” It is a mistake to refer 15 to salvation through the birth of Christ. Bishop Ellicott has said what he can in detail as well as contextually for that application, as Dean Alford for “the higher meaning” of σωθ■σεται as in the Revision, but I think in vain. To compare it with 1 Cor. 3:15 shows a strange cast of mind.

In 3:8 the Revisers rightly omit “not greedy of filthy lucre,” which was introduced from Titus 1 The caution here follows in “no lover of money.” But is there no intended reference to disorder through

excess of wine in π■ροινον, which they give simply as “brawler,” especially as “striker” follows? Is “condemnation” of the devil correct in 6? κρ■ηα was either a suit, the matter for it, or the sentence. Mr. Green takes it as “strong impeachment from the devil;” but it seems rather his charge or fault. In 16 there is little doubt that the true reading is ■ς, He who, rather than θε■ς, though this be implied. B is wanting, but ■ A C F G, with some cursives and very ancient versions, support ■ς, as D and the Latins read ■, K L P and most cursives giving θε■ς.

The Revisers render aright the beginning of 4:2 so strangely misunderstood in the Authorized Version and elsewhere. Demons might speak lies, of course; but how can we fairly speak of their “hypocrisy,” or “of their own conscience?” It is instructive to see that beside the demons there are the misleaders and the misled. Translate, therefore, “in (or through) hypocrisy of men that speak lies, cauterized in their own conscience,” &c.— “Savior” goes too far in 10, which should rather be “preserver;” but “both” is rightly dropped in an earlier clause of the verse, as “in spirit” is in 12.

In v. 4 they have with good reason omitted “good and.” To say “acceptable” is just the truth. The old error, “having condemnation,” instead of at most “guilt,” recurs in 12. Why should they not have said “an” ox when treading out corn? The Authorized Version is doubly in fault, “the ox that,” &c. In 23 they rightly give “Be no longer a drinker of water.” The Authorized Version, “Drink no longer water,” goes too far. But in 25 ought they not to have rendered it “the good works also [are] manifest” (or, evident beforehand, &c.)?

Chap. 6 has not a few misreadings in the Text. Rec. and the Authorized Version. “The” teaching or doctrine is right in 1; and the close of 2 should be, “they that partake in (or profit by) the good service are believing and beloved.” The Authorized Version of 5 is opposed to all intelligence of the usage of the article. It should be that godliness is gain, or a way of gain, as, in the Revised Version, where “from such withdraw thyself” is rightly omitted. In 7 the Revisers are probably right in excluding “it is manifest” (δ■λον) or the equivalent, in the various MSS. So also in 10 the Revisers properly say “a root of all kinds of evil,” or of all evils. “The root,” as in the Authorized Version, is good neither in doctrine nor in fact nor in grammar. In 12 “also” only encumbers the sense. It is surprising that the Revisers should in their text confound the sense of ζωογονο■ντος (A D F G, P, &c.) with that of the Text. Rec. ζωοποι. (■ K L, the cursives in general, &c.) “Preserving alive” is admirably in keeping with the Epistle: of. Ex. 1:17, 18, 22, Judg. 8:19, Luke 17:33, Acts 7:19. To suppose a reference, as Alford, to “eternal life” above is outrageous, any more than to resurrection with Chrysostom or others. In 17 they are justified in omitting “living.” In 19 it is “that which is really life,” rather than “eternal life” after the Text. Rec.

2 Timothy

There are no remarkable changes which occur to my mind in the early verses of chap. 1 “Beloved child” in 2 displaces “dearly beloved son,” and “supplications” stands in lieu of “prayers” in 3.— “Stir up” still appears in 6, instead of “stir into flame” (or “rekindle") in the margin. It is hard to see why “discipline” should supplant “a sound mind,” in 7. In 8 the truer force appears, “suffer hardship with the gospel,” &c. What is the meaning of “before time eternal,” in 9? In 10 “incorruption” is right, the body being in question, not the soul, life for the soul and incorruption for the body brought to light by the gospel.—The omission of ■θν■ Gentiles or nations in 12 rests on the meager testimony of ■ A 17, contrary to all other authority; but no doubt the Cambridge professors favored the omission, though Lachmann read the word in his later edition, while Tischendorf in his eighth

edition joined Tregelles, swayed overmuch as usual by the Sinaitic, as well as by the idea that it may have been borrowed from 1 Tim. 2:7. But the context would incline me to its acceptance. In the former Epistle it falls in with the testimony of grace: the glad tidings of a ransom for all could not but go forth to the nations. So here, the power of Christ in death and resurrection gives occasion to the manifestation of eternal counsel, wholly above the coarse of dispensation to Israel; and accordingly the gospel meets men universally in the grace and power of God, and hence in a life superior to death, and a love which no sufferings could daunt or quench. Why should the Revisers repeat the inaccuracy of the Authorized Version in 13? Timothy had heard the truth from the apostle in words taught of the Holy Spirit, and is exhorted to have an outline or pattern of sound words which he had thus heard, an inspired expression of what God has revealed, and this in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. For this power is needed, and Timothy is told to guard the good deposit by the Holy Spirit that dwells in us (i.e., Christians)—both the more urgently wanted because it is a time of departure, as Paul experienced before his decease. Hold “the pattern” misleads, as if Timothy had some well-known formula distinct from apostolic teaching.

In 2:8 the Revisers rightly adopt the ancient reading συλκακοπ■θσιν, but their margin gives a sense preferable to their text. The apostle is not here speaking of his own sufferings. The Text. Rec. σ■ ο■ν (as in the Authorized Version, “Thou therefore,” &c.) crept in early, as it is found in a few uncials, most cursives, and some ancient versions; but it is a mere clerical blunder.—7 it is correctly “shall give thee.” In 13 “for” is rightly added. In the first clause of 19 they give, quite properly, “the firm foundation standeth,” and “the Lord,” instead of” Christ” in the last clause. But the last verse affords an extraordinary sample of boldness in the Committee, which can hardly have been satisfactory to the Bishop of Gloucester and others. It is the sense preferred by Wetstein and G. Wakefield, and, singular to say, Bengel. It seems to me distinctly ungrammatical on the face of it, that a past act in contrast with present state should be represented by ■ζωγρημ■νοι, which really implies the present result of what has been done. To bear the sense given, the former ought to have been ξωγρηθ■ντες, as another has justly remarked. Doubtless the pronouns are distinguished, but it seems harsh indeed to refer α■το■; to the Lord's servant with so much intervening. Beza's proposal seems best— “that out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him, they may awake for [or, unto] His will,” that is, to do God's will. In the margin they do give substantially this alternative; but does it not seem extraordinary that the Committee was found pliant enough to endorse the actual text?

In 3 there is little to notice for general readers till we come to 10, where the Revisers appear to me rightly to read the aorist with ■ A C E G 17 rather than the perfect of the Text. Rec. with the mass of inferior authority (which probably slipt in through 1 Tim. 4:6): “But thou didst follow up my teaching,” &c. In 14 they decide for the plural, as the margin explains, and so the most ancient MSS., though the ancient versions lean with slight dissent to the singular “whom,” as in the Text. Rec. The version of 16 is questionable. As it stands it might imply that some scriptures are not divinely inspired, which is certainly opposed to the scope. “Every scripture, being divinely inspired, [is] also profitable,” &c., differs from the more usual rendering in the margin only in assuming, instead of asserting, divine inspiration. In any ease it is “every” scripture, which would apply in due time to what was yet to be written as well as to what had been already. It is purposely thrown into axiomatic form. If assumed to be God-inspired, it seems needless to say that it is useful or profitable. I therefore prefer in this the construing of the Authorized Version.

In 4:1 the Revisers reject ο■ν ■γ■, and το■ Κυρ■ου of the Text. Rec. as well as κατ■, followed by the Authorized Version, though sustained by the later uncials, almost all the cursives, and all the old versions, even the Latin and Coptic. The testimony of Chrysostom is perplexing, for he seems to support κα■ (■ A D F G., &c.) as well as κατ■. But assuming the critical reading, ought we not to render “I charge both by His appearing and His Kingdom?” And why say “the” living and “the” dead? In the end of 4, have they reflected justly or fully ■κτραπ■σονται? Of course they correct “a” into “the” crown, &c. in 8, and that “love” into “have loved.” In 15 they adopt the reading “withstood” for “hath withstood.” In 18 they drop the initiatory copulative, and read only “the Lord” in 22.

Epistle to Titus.

In 1:4 the Revisers on first-rate authority read “grace and peace” instead of “grace, mercy, peace,” as in Text. Rec. and Authorized Version. “Lord” is also omitted. The first copulative is left out on high authority in 10.

In 2:5 “workers at home,” not merely “keepers” there, as the Authorized Version following Text. Rec.: a letter easily omitted makes the difference. In 7 the true text is “uncorruptness, gravity,” ■φθορ■αν, σεμν■τητα, not ■δ■αφθορ■αν, σ., ■φθαρσ■αν, which last even the Elzevirs and Griesbach, with all modern critics, reject, though Stephanus received it in his edd. of 1546, 1549, and 1550, misled by the Complutensian editors, not Erasmus. In 13 the Revisers translate rightly “the appearing of our great God,” &c.

3:1 is right, “to be obedient,” not “to obey magistrates,” which is already implied. In 5 they rightly follow the Authorized Version, and give “washing.” “Laver” ought not to be even in the margin. (See Eph. 5:26.)

Epistle to Philemon

In 2 ■γαπητ■, “beloved,” of the Text. Rec., followed by the Authorized Version, is properly excluded, and ■δελφ■, “sister,” takes its place on ancient and ample authority. The internal superiority of the critical reading is obvious. But the rendering of 6 seems very dubious in every English version save Tyndale's, the worst perhaps being the Rhemish and the Authorized Version, followed by the Revisers for the sense, though with the change of “fellowship” for “communication.” I believe it ought to be “thy fellowship (or participation) in the faith.” They appear to me no less unhappy in the perpetuating of the Text. Rec. ■μ■ν “you,” in the same verse, though supported by ■ F G P, many cursives, &c.; but ■μ■ν, “us,” has the excellent authority of A C D E K L, about fifty cursives, and other authorities. This would involve the alternative rendering of “acknowledgment” rather than “knowledge.” “Jesus” should probably be omitted. In 7 the true reading seems to be, as they prefer, χαρ■ν γ■ρ π. ■σχον, “for I had great joy.” Even the Elz. (1624) has χαρ■ν, instead of the Stephanic χ■ριν, though both gave ■χομεν, “we have.” The peculiar emphasis of α■τ■ν instead of the vulgar σ■ δ■ is well given. προσλαβο■ in the Text. Rec. was borrowed from verse 17, though many good authorities supply it here. “Lord” should disappear from the end of 20.

Revised New Testament: Hebrews 1-12

The opening of this Epistle seems to me unworthily represented in the Revised Version. In ver. 1 “Divers twice is to make bad worse, though not so incorrect as the “diversely” of Tyndale, the one being obsolete for more than one, the other really meaning differently. They have, of course, substituted ■σχ■του for the Text. Rec., ■σχ■του, which has not the support of a single uncial; and they have avoided the error of “times” instead of parts or portions. “God having of old spoken in many measures and in many modes to the fathers in the prophets, at the end of these days spake to us in [the] Son.” The last expression is evidently the truth of especial weight; and here the Revisers conspicuously fail. Indeed, the anarthrous construction is their habitual stumbling-block, as is the abstract usage of the Greek article, which requires the absence of the definite article in English. Their text is wrong in bringing in “his,” which is not all the idea here, though, of course, true in itself; whilst their margin, “a Son,” is yet worse in every way, as being liable to grave misconstruction anywhere, and peculiarly at issue with a context which has for its aim to set forth His sole, intrinsic, and unapproachable glory as Son of God. The true idea is as Son, or in the person of Him who is Son, contrasted with His servants the prophets. Our tongue, however, does not admit of this characterizing style of speech, like the Greek, after a preposition, but only in the nominative; and hence we must insert our article or even paraphrase it. But can there be any doubt that here, as too often in such cases elsewhere, the Revisers have missed the mark in a very essential point of truth? In 8 they give rightly the very image, or impress, “of His substance.” “Person” is quite wrong, not only in translation, but in doctrine. For a wonder they are right about purification “of sins,” perhaps to avoid the appearance of reading as in Text. Rec. contrary to ■p.m. A B Dp.m. all and many other witnesses. They ought to have translated similarly in Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14, where they have ruined the sense by treating the article as a possessive four times in error. Nor is the omission of δ■ ■αυτο■ ["by himself] by any means so sure as to justify not even a notice in the margin. E K L M are no doubt inferior to ■ A B P, Dp.m. giving δ■ α■το■, but both the Syriac, the AEthiopic and the Coptic are at least equal to the Vulgate and the Armenian. Indeed, Theodoret in his comment expressly says that δ■ α■το■; should be read with an aspirate for δ■ ■αυτο■ (δασ■ως ■ναγιγν■σκειν προσ■κει, ■ντ■ το■, δ■ ■αυτο■, B. Theod. Opp. ed. Sirmond. v. 549). Nor is there the least hint of the middle voice in the aorist participle, the more striking as the purification made was of the sins of others—assuredly not His own. The favorite Vulgate (factus) is here out of the way false, as it is in the next word, and often to the subversion of the truth in this epistle. In 4 the Revisers have improved on “being made” of the Authorized Version, which is very objectionable, but “having become” is not much better. The doubtful point of 6 is the Revisers' adoption of the margin of the Authorized Version, and consigning its text to their margin; the improvement is “first-born” for “first-begotten.” In 7 and 8 and 13 it is better to assimilate if not render the same (for the first πρ■ς is indirect, the second direct), instead of giving “of” and “unto,” as in the Authorized Version. Whether “of” in both cases is better than “as to” seems doubtful. But there is as little doubt that κα■ is wrongly dropt in the Text. Rec. and Authorized Version of 8 as that the Authorized Version is more correct than the Revised Version in not making a reciprocal sentence of the clause that follows, where the predicate by poetical

inversion precedes the subject—a matter of no moment where the latter is defined by the article. In 8 they have not adhered to the preterit rendering of the aorists, though there seems no reason why they might not have said, “Thou didst love righteousness and hate iniquity (or lawlessness). Therefore God, thy God, anointed,” &c. And so in 10 “didst say,” &c. But it does seem strange that the advocates of the Vatican and a few others (MSS. ■ A Dp.m. &c. should have induced the Company to adopt ■ς ■μ■τιον, which reads so unmeaningly in the second clause of 12. Even Tregelles' bracketed, and Lachmann alone adopted the gloss. It is a wonder they did not heed Tischendorf's reading ■λλ■ξεις for ■λ■ξεις, which adheres to the Hebrew, though resting only on ■p.m. Dp.m., Latin auxiliaries, &c., “as a vesture wilt thou change them, and they shall be changed,” but the Vatican does not favor this. In 18 why not “a” rather than “the” footstool?

In 2:1 “lest haply we drift away” is a better rendering than in either the text or the margin of the Authorized Version, both of which are ungrammatical. But is “recompense of reward” well here, because it snits, though cumbrously 10: 35, 11:26? Would not requital or retribution in our text, and recompense elsewhere be better English? The Authorized Version misled the Revisers' Version in this unusual excess of sameness. In 4 it is hard to see why the Authorized Version should be followed in the text and the margin. In 5 the “habitable” world as it really is would dispel some vague impressions which “the world” is apt to leave on ill-taught minds. The version of Psa. 8:4 is kept in 6, not quite in unison with 13:3; but the preterit which prevails in 7 was forgotten in 6. And why should we have “the” angels in 9 as in 7, where it is no question of the whole class but of beings thus characterized Our language allows corresponding precision. And is it certain that ■π■ρ παντος means “for every man?” Why not for every [thing]? We have just heard of π■ντα, τ■ π■ντα, and τ■ν ο■κ., and afterward in ver. 10, but these of men also, not as π■ντας but as πολλο■ς υ■ο■ς. It is not that there is the least dogmatic difficulty as to all mankind, at least for one who applies Christ's death for all in 2 Cor. 5:14, as His death through and for sin, rather than to it, which last is exclusively true of believers. It is a question only of what best suits the context. In 12 “the congregation” is decidedly better than “the church,” as in the Authorized Version. In 13 they desert their preterit, perhaps owing to the Authorized Version of Isa. 8:18. In 14 is it not strange to consign the true order “blood and flesh” to the margin, and to adopt the other and commoner order in the text? In 16 there is a well-known correction of the Authorized Version adopted; for it is a question not at all of having taken the nature of man, but of interest and succor for Abraham's seed, not angels. In 17 “reconciliation” gives place very properly to “propitiation.”

In 3:1 “Christ” of the Authorized Version, following Text. Rec., disappears rightly. But why in 2 “who was” or “who is”? “As being” is more correct. It is hardly to be supposed that Mr. Green meant to omit ■λ■ with the Vatican, especially as he gives “all” in his version. In 6 surely it is Christ as “Son over His house,” not “a Son.” Nor is there ground to say “our,” but “the” boldness and the boast, rather than boasting or glorying, which would be rather κα■χησις. In 9 “wherewith,” not “when,” or “where,” also “by proving,” ■ν δοκιμασ■α, rather than ■δοκ. as in the LXX. and Text. Rec., which adds, με twice. In 10, “this,” not ■λε■νη, “that.” Is not the connection of δι■ with βλ■πετε (12)? If so, it is neglected in the Revised as much as in the Authorized Version. In 14 as “partakers of Christ” has quite a different meaning, would it not have been better to have adopted throughout, as in 1:9, a more suitable rendering? “Fellows” from Psa. 45 is scarcely desirable. Partners or companions might be used. In 16, for τιν■ς of the Text. Rec., they read with most critics rival. For who when they heard, or in hearing, did provoke? In the end of 18 the disobedient

means those who did not listen to the word. Hence in 19 it is “unbelief.” See 4:6, 11.

4:2 presents a notable instance of temerity. I do not speak of the clumsy literality of the word “of hearing,” but of what follows, “because they were [in the margin it was according to some] not united by faith with them that beard.” No doubt Alford, Tregelles and Lachmann were blinded by their fidelity to the more ancient MSS. Tischendorf, strengthened by the Sinaitic which rejects the pl. ace. form, corrected his early change from the Text. Rec. because of the paucity of witnesses in its favor, save the Syriac and some of the Latin. But a more monstrous result than the sense flowing from that which pleased the ancient copyists and the modern critics, as well as the Revisers, it is hard to conceive. Besides, even the marginal alternative fares hardly at their hands. What is the sense from “it was?” “Because the word was not united by faith with them that heard.” How greatly inferior to the Authorized Version! If the ordinary reading, or its form in ■, had a place in the margin, the Revisers ought to have given it a decent rendering, not one which sounds almost ridiculous. Nothing can be more confused and incoherent with the argument than the sense attached to the favorite reading; and even most modern commentators who adopt it on diplomatic grounds give it up, save the late intrepid Dean of Canterbury, who will have no special reference to Caleb and Joshua, yet fairly owns that his own interpretation does not satisfy himself. Without dwelling on minor points, 10 appears to be only in part corrected. The Authorized Version was misled by Tyndale and that of Geneva, and the rendering falls in with the evangelical misapplication of the chapter to a present rest for the soul by faith, instead of the rest of God, which we are to enter at Christ's coming, a stimulus to present labor and to fear of taking our rest now. It ought to be “ceased from his works as God from His own.” It is clear that it can be no question here of Christ giving rest to all those that labor and are heavy-laden, but to those who already believed in, or at least professed, His name; else they would have been called to believe, not to fear, still less to diligence in every good work. One need say nothing of Owen's wild idea adopted by Ebrard and Alford that so describes Christ. Not so; it is the general statement that he who has entered into God's rest has himself to rest from his works—a truth which applies even to God, who rested after His works in creating. It is no question of bad works: God's own were certainly good. It is a mistake that this view converts the aorist into a perfect or present. For if any tense but the aorist were used in Greek, it might, nay must, have misled. Believers now are viewed as ε■σερχ and in no way as ε■σελθ■ντες, and the finite verb is properly in the same tense. It is the case supposed when the rest is entered, not at all the present result of a past act in the perfect. If the present had been used, as often expressive of a general principle, it was obviously liable to mislead the reader, for the entrance is unquestionably future. In 14 is not “the” better than “our” confession? But the close of 15 is more serious. To say “yet” as in the Authorized Version, following others since Tyndale, leaves the door open to misconstruction of the true meaning and even to heterodoxy. Indeed, not a few have drawn, what they scarcely could have done from χωρ■ς ■μαρτ■ας, that it means the Lord, however tempted, never sinned; whereas the true sense is that He has been in all things to tempted in like sort, sin excepted. He never had our sinful temptations from a fallen nature such as James (1:13-15) speaks of. For this He suffered on the cross, and now sympathizes with us in our dangers, difficulties, and weakness. He knew these trials incomparably more than we; but there was no sin in Him, no evil proclivities in His nature as in ours. In 16, why not “for seasonable help?” “Time of need” limits the succor too much to the moment of trespass; the former is the larger and more worthy sense, as it is the most faithful version.

In 5 the first thing we would note is the right omission of ■ in 4, which would make it not hypothetic, but actual, which really is in the clause following. It is not therefore “he that is,” as in the Authorized Version, following the Text. Rec., but, “as” or “when” called. In 8 “though He were Son,” or “Son as He was,” is better than “a” Son, but there is no need of “the” before “author.". In 7, as in 11:17, προσφ■ρω is confounded with ■ναφ■ρω, which does mean offer up as well as bear. In 12 “the rudiments” do not go well with “the first principles” as may be made plainer by 6:1, where our Revisers give us “let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ.” There is nothing better than “the beginning.” First principles are never to be left; but the word of the beginning of Christ might safely be left to go on to the knowledge of His redemption and glorification, which are the true power for acting by the Holy Ghost on the new man. Without this is no “full growth” to which one is pressed on in 6:1. Solid food is for “full-grown men,” as in 14.

In 6:6, “If they shall fall” in the Authorized Version is brought back to the true and literal force, “and have fallen.” It was a fact described. In 7 it is ground, or land, not “the” land.—In 10 they omit “the labor” on high and ample authority. Is not “desire” defective unless more strongly qualified in 11? There is no need of “a” forerunner in 20.

In 7 there is extremely little to criticize: a particle struck out in 4, the article in 5, 10, change of form in 11, 16, 18, and priests instead of priesthood in 14, a quotation curtailed a little in 21, and a particle added in 22, are almost all. Of course, the mistranslation in the Authorized Version of ver. 19 is avoided by the Revisers. The Old English Versions in general treat it wretchedly, from Wield down, Rhemish and all. Not one seems to have heeded the plain fact that 19 is the correlative to 18, marked carefully by the regular μ■ν,... δ■, with the first parenthetic clause at the beginning of 19, which explains why the foregoing commandment was annulled. Think of Tyndale making 18 a period, so as to predicate of the law, that it not only made nothing perfect, which is true, but was the introduction of a better hope, which is not only untrue but utterly false. Cranmer follows him in this; but even Wield had avoided it, as the Geneva Version more. The Rhemish is, as often, ambiguous, and suggestive of wrong more than of right, probably the fruit of sheer blank ignorance of the truth. If the Authorized Version kept clear of positive error in the text, they brought it into their margin. The parenthesis of which they did not think would have proved a safeguard, as well as seeing the contrast between the foregoing commandment and the better hope, the one abrogated and the other brought in. Of the ancient version, the Peschito Syriac is perhaps the nearest, save the Philoxenian, which is closer still. Lachmann, in his early and later editions, punctuates the Greek correctly, but not the Vulgate, which may, if rightly divided, intend the true thought. Theophylact is more distinct than Theodoret or Chrysostom.

In 8:1 there is no need to say more than “a” chief point or summary. In 2 why “sanctuary” in text or “holy things” in margin? Surely it should be uniformly the holy [place] or holies here, ix. 8, 12, 24, and x. 19. A needless “and” is rightly excluded. In 4 the γ■ρ, “for,” of the Text. Rec. and Authorized Version yields to the ο■ν of the Revisers, or rather of the best ancient witnesses. “If then he were on earth, he would not even be a priest, since there are those that offer the gifts according to law “; for here again the article is no more desirable in English than in Greek, though it might have been used in both. It is not that it is optional for the same shade of sense; on the contrary, it is due to exactness in expressing character rather than mere fact. But the Revisers seem not at all alive to this refinement in either language. It will be noticed that τ■ν ■■ρεων of the Text. Rec. with its counterpart in the Authorized Version disappears as the mere gloss of inferior and later copies.

Why “Testament” should be given in the margin of 8, 9, 10 is inconceivable, since the context, as well as the Hebrew, point only to “covenant.” It is quite a different case in ix. 16, 17; but even there neither before nor after, “testament” there too being quite wrong in the margin of 15 and 20. In 11 citizen or “fellow-citizen” is right on the best authority. There is no attempt at distinguishing the call to objective knowledge from the promise of inward knowledge or consciousness, though it has been often pointed out. The omission of “and their iniquities” or lawlessness is supported by but two great uncials (■p.m. B.) and two cursives (17, 23), but by almost all the ancient versions.

In 9:1 the Authorized Version did not follow the Text. Rec. in acknowledging σκην■, Tabernacle. Like the Revisers it supplies “covenant.” No doubt the former was mistaken from 2. The rendering at the close in the Authorized Version is untenable; it should be, “the sanctuary a worldly one,” rather than the Revisers' form, “its sanctuary, a sanctuary of this world.” Mr. Green takes it as “the holy garniture,” which is at least grammatical. In 6-9 the present form is rightly given by the Revisers, “go in,” “offereth,” “hath not yet,” &c., “is yet,” “which (or, “the which") is,” “are offered,” “that cannot.” Again, is it correct to confound λατρε■ειν with προσκνε■ν? No doubt λ. is not δουλε■ειν, but divine service is the idea, and this whether of the Jew as here or of the Christian as in 14, 10:2. In the margin of 11 they give that strange reading of some old witnesses,” that are come,” the spiritual sense of most, no doubt, controlling the hard drivers of diplomatic authority. At the end of this verse they give properly “creation,” instead of “building,” as in the Authorized Version. But have they seized the true force of δι■ in 12? No one denies that the preposition from a local and temporal rises to a causal force, and so to accompaniments, mode, or manner, &c. In 15 it seems very questionable to say “a", death. The famous passage in 16, 17, is fairly rendered, though not so close as might be, and with an interrogation at the end which had better not have been. “Doth it ever avail,” &c., is poor. The validity or force is more suitable here. That the alternative of “covenant” in the margin should not enter this parenthetic digression is to my mind plain from the fact that death of the covenanter is needless to a covenant's validity, whereas it is essential to the operation of a will that the testator die; as is here expressly argued by the inspired writer. Before and after these two verses it is a question only of “covenant.” In 21 the Revisers rightly say with “the” blood, whereas in a general statement, as in 22, it is in English as in Greek anarthrous. In 24 “before the face of God” is more energetic. In 26 it is the consummation “of the ages,” not the equivocal and misleading end “of the world” as in Authorized Version. It was when the past dealings of God in all ways of moral trial conveyed that Christ died as a sacrifice for putting away of sin. The new heavens and earth throughout eternity will display this. 27 is feebler in the Revised than in the Authorized Version, “cometh” being quite uncalled for; judgment is as much the portion of men as once to die. Then comes in 28 what grace gives to faith in Christ once offered and to appear a second time. At His first coming He bore sins of many (not of all: else all would be saved, but of all believers); He will appear again to those that look for Him, as far as regards them apart from sin, unto salvation, i.e., of their bodies, then to be changed into the likeness of the body of His glory.

In 10:1 several obvious blunders of the Authorized Version are corrected: “the” coming good thing, “the same” sacrifices, they “offer.” But how rash to endorse in such a work “they can “! It is known that this plural form is supported by ■ A C Dcorr. P, and probably thirty or more cursives, &c., whereas the singular as in the Text. Rec. and with most critics has the suffrages of Dp.m., E H K L, and a fair number of cursives, some of the most ancient versions, &c. Of coarse in 2 our is read

with an interrogation on the best and fullest authority: so Erasmus, Stephens, and all the modern critics, contrary to the Complutensian editors, Beza, and Elzevirs, who omit it with Hp.m., some cursives, some Latin copies (not the oldest), the Syriac, he., which Wiclif and the Rhemieh follow. “In them” would be quite enough in 3, and better than “in those sacrifices,” as in the Authorized and Revised Versions. In 4 “blood,” not “the” blood. In 5 rightly “didst thou prepare.” But why in 6 “sacrifices for sins?” Why not adhere to the Old Testament familiar “sin-offerings?” So of course in 8. In both the Peschito shows how soon the knowledge of scripture evaporated after the Apostles, for that venerable version actually confounds the burnt-offering with that for sin. I purposely quote from Etheridge, “entire burnt-offerings for sin Thou hast not required.... entire burnt-offerings for sins Thou hast not willed.” No offerings stood in more complete contrast than the holocaust and that for sin; and by this confusion also one loses the four classes here distinguished—burnt-offering, the minchah or unbloody corn oblation, the sacrifice of peace-offering, and the sin-offering. In 9, as in 7, it is “I am come,” not “I come” as in Authorized Version, and “O God” from the Text. Rec. is rightly dropt on the best authority. In 10 they correct the blunder of the Authorized Version, and read “once 'for all'“ without italics. In 12 it is rightly “he” (though it be ο■τος not α■τ■ς), not “this man” as in the Authorized Version. But the connection of “forever” with the offering one sacrifice for sins, instead of with “sat down,” is an error of the first magnitude, common to Wiclif, the Rhemish, the Authorized Version, and the Revised Version, but not Tyndale, Cranmer, or Geneva. The sense of the phrase ε■ς τ■ διηνεκ■ς being continually or in perpetuity, rather than “forever,” is in its own nature incapable of being combined with the aorist, and can only go with such tenses as the present and perfect, which suppose continuance. To make the present construction orthodox, one must conceive some such ellipse “as [the efficacy of which lasts] forever,” which would be intolerable. The only party which the misrendering can serve is the sacerdotal one, which pretends to offer a continual sacrifice for the living and the dead; but in order to have the least real weight the Greek should have been προσφ■ρων, and we should have been landed back into the Judaism of verse 11, with which the Apostle is contrasting Christianity, which mainly depends on the completed act taught by προσεν■γκας as in our verse. It is hardly possible to conceive a blunder in more direct issue with the entire teaching of this Epistle. It is evident that the Authorized Version is not justified in giving the same force “are sanctified” to ■γιασμ■νοι ■σμ■ν in 10 and to το■ς ■γισζομ■νους in 14. The Revisers rightly say in the one case “we have been sanctified,” and in the other “them that are sanctified,” not these that are (or were) being sanctified as in the analogous case of Acts 2:47, 1 Cor. 1:18, which we saw they happily forgot in 1 Cor. 15:2. There is a moral present, and not merely an historical one of actual time. O si sic omnia. The late Dean Alford, was consistently wrong in saying even here, in the face of 10, “them who are being sanctified.” Is there any need for marking the apodosis, formally at the end of 16, “then saith he?” “Before” is certainly wrong in 15. And why in 20 “by” the way? Why not. “the new and living way which he dedicated for us,” &o.? In 21 a great “priest” is right. But why “fullness” here and in vi. 11, when they gave in their text of Col. 2:2 “full assurance?” It is of course “hope” in 23. Would not 28 open more correctly thus, “When one set at naught Moses' law,” &c.? “A man that hath set,” he, offends against more than one point of importance. In 34 it is not as in Text. Rec. “of me in my bonds,” but on good authority “on those in bonds;” also ■ν of the Text Rec. disappears, and the true force is either “that ye yourselves,” &c., or “that ye have for yourselves,” according to the reading preferred. In 38 it is correctly “any righteous (or just) one.” It may not be needful to interpolate “one” or “any man:” but there is no real ground for inferring that

the same man is meant. The Hebrew and the Septuagint exclude such a thought, and certainly the Apostle did not intend. differently. But the form differs according to Divine wisdom, to warn the Jewish professor who professed faith but might not live by it.

It is a nice question as to 9:1 whether ■πστασις here means grounded assurance as in 3:14, or substantiating which more approaches the older view. The Peschito's “realization” might express it best in this, as “demonstration” in ε■γχος. In 2 ■ν τ. means “in virtue of this,” or “by it” briefly. In 3 the perfect is twice misrendered, by the Authorized Version. It should be “have been framed,” and “What is seen hath not come into being;” for the true reading is τ■ βλ. with the best authorities, not τ■ βλ. an accommodation to φ. which is in the plural. In 5 “he hath had testimony"... “that he had,” —not “he had"... “that he,” as in Authorized Version. It is also before “the” translation, not “his” as in Text Rec. In 6 it should be “draweth near” (προσερχ.), as usually, not “cometh” as in Revised Version, following Authorized Version. So also at the end of 10:1, where the Revisers have draw “nigh,” a rendering they give to ■γγ■ζειν. Prepared “for” seems in our day better English than “to” in 7. In 8 “was going” is preferable to went, especially after ■ξπηλθεν just before. “Even” in 11 seems out of place; is it not “Sarah herself also?” Is not this a common mistake of the Revisers? “Even” is used properly where one means to express anything strange, as in 19; is this the idea here? They are right in excluding “and been persuaded of them,” an addition of Text. Rec. in 13—on the slenderest testimony. In 14 the Revisers render ■πιζητοπυσιν, “seek after,” which is all well; but would it not have been better to have given “seek out,” not “after,” to ■κζ. in 6? Here again in 17 we have twice over the confusion of προσφ. with ■ναφ. offering, and not offering “up.” In 26 it is “of,” not “in” Egypt; Lachmann with the Alexandrian copy reading Α■γ■τρου as the Text. Rec. has ■ν ψwas not needful to alter “for” into “concerning” in 40, as the Revisers render περ■ in 13:18.

In xii. 2 “faith,” or the faith, seems to be the thought, not our faith as in the Authorized and Revised Versions. The Revisers say “hath sat down” for κεκ., having given “sat down” for the ■καθ. in 1:2, 8:1, 10:12. The Authorized Version had said “is set” in 8:1 as well as in the passage before us, so that they do not seem to have distinguished on principle. But how was the Company persuaded into deserting ■αυτ■ν or α■τ■ν, accepted even by Alford, Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles, on ample authority? Was it not by the strong pressure of Cambridge admirers of paradox if it be only ancient? No doubt they can cite ■ D E, all p.m. with the same old Latin copies, the Pesch., &c. The resulting sense in this connection is not only inferior beyond comparison, but intolerable. 7 affords a remarkable departure from the Text. Rec. ε■ “if” for ε■ς in the sense of “for.” “For chastening endure (or, better, ye are enduring); as with sons God is dealing with you.” The ancient MSS, and Versions remarkably consent against the text adopted by Erasmus, the Complutensian editors, Colinasus, Stephens, Beza, Elzevirs. Bengel, whose critical insight was great, here failed, thinking the true reading to be the slip of a Greek pen, though he was well aware that the widespread testimony of the old version told a different tale. Even Matthaei, who loved to fight Griesbach, was here compelled to reject the few minuscules and accept the united voice of antiquity; and of course Alford, Lachmann, Scholz, Tischendorf, and Tregelles follow. Is it sound to say that—if ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons? Does His fatherly course depend on our patience? On the other hand, it is important to feel that we endure as chastening, not as punishment: ο■κ ε■ς κ■λασιν, ο■δ■ ε■ς τιμωρ■αν, as Chrysostom pertinently observes. It is as certain as such a thing can be that the text of his comment (Epp. Paulin. vii. 330, ed. Field,

Oxon.) has been tampered with to make it accord with ε■. The version of 10 is properly cleared of obsolete speech, save that “us” and “our” rather enfeeble the form. Ought not 11 to be “No chastening,” &c.?” — “The” many in 15 is a doubtful reading sustained by two great uncials and as many cursives, &c., against all the other authorities. Cf. Mark 9:26. In 17 the Revisers have by the parenthesis set out duly the true meaning. It was not repentance, but the inheritance of blessing which Esau sought out with tears. In 18 the Revisers omit ■ρει on fuller evidence than their insertion in 15; but they supply it from 20 in the general sense instead of adopting Mr. Green's singular turn, “to a fire to be touched and glowing.” If the true meaning of παρητ■σαντο in 19 had been borne in mind,” deprecated,” “declined,” “excused” (see 25), it would perhaps make the absence of μ■ more probable as in ■ P, 10, 73, &c. Of course the last clause of 20 in the Text. Rec. is dropt. In 22, 23 the Revisers have failed to give the true connection, κα■ really indicating each new object, and consequently misrepresented the sense of this weighty passage. The myriads of angels are the general assembly, and “church of firstborn ones” are a new and wholly distinct group, here confounded with παρηγ■ρει, which really goes with ■γγ■λων. How absurd to connect, as the margin does, a Mediator with a testament! With a covenant it is all right. And why “than that of Abel?” According to 11:4 it is Abel, as it were, speaking in his blood or death; παρ■τ■ in L. and others, but it seems a mere gloss for facility. In 26 it should be “I will shake” instead of the present in the Text. Rec. In 28 there is strong and abundant testimony for “we serve,” where the Revisers rightly cleave to the common text.

(To be continued)

Revised New Testament: Hebrews 13 and James

Heb. 13

In 13:8 the Revisers correctly in general render a verse probably mistranslated through anti-Romanist zeal. But ■ν π. may, and probably does, mean “in all things,” or every way, as in verse 18, and often elsewhere; whereas the masculine sense, though popular among Protestants, is here harsh in construction and can hardly be laid down absolutely if we bear in mind 1 Cor. 7. The imperative is right, and “undefiled” a predicate as “in honor.” The beginning of 6 is loosely translated. Surely ■ τρ■πος is the way of dealing without going further to make a smooth construction with the following clause. But the energy of the quotation is far better represented in this and the succeeding verse 6. It is not “may” but do say; and the interrogative is not only correct, but gives real point. In 7 they have correctly treated the words as referring to their guides, not “who” but “the which” or such as spoke to them the word of God, whose faith they were to imitate, contemplating the issue of their career or behavior. It was terminated, and they were to be recalled to mind, no longer to be obeyed like their living leaders (17). “Jesus Christ” is the subject of the distinct proposition that follows. Indeed verse 8 might fittingly open a new parenthesis which would close with 16, though it is no bad transition from the teaching of the deceased leaders to the abiding sameness of the Lord Jesus. But the apposition insinuated in the punctuation of ordinary English Bibles is false. The unchangeableness of Christ is the guard against being carried away. In 9 the received reading followed by the Authorized Version πεπιφ. rightly gives place to παραφ. as in the Revised Version. It is not carried about as in Eph. 4:14, but carried away out of the straight course. Here, however, as in 1:1, the Authorized Version has misled the Revisers into “divers,” not now for “many” but for various, ποικ■λαις. “Diverse” would at least approximate, and perhaps the Revisers meant this, for their spelling is peculiar. As they interpolate an “e” into judg[e]ment, they may cut off an “e” from “divers.” But the word really means motley or various. “Teachings” is unusual as a plural in our tongue, though in the singular it is all right. Probably Dr. Angus found it hard to resist the innovators. In 14 we have no abiding city here, but are seeking after the coming one, for there is but one heavenly Jerusalem. “One” to come as in the Authorized Version is too vague, End incorrect. Why should the Revised Version of 15 be more remote from the Greek than the Authorized Version in the last clause? Does the punctuation of 17 help the sense? “That they may do this” refers to the watching. The chiefs or leaders are to give account of their own duty, not of others' souls. In 20 they give “in the” instead of “through” for ■ν. It expresses the power or virtue in that blood in which God brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus:—In 21 the omission of ■ργω is precarious, even Alford, Lachmann, and Tregelles accepting it. On the authority of A C Dcorr K M P, the cursives, Syriac, AEthiopic, Armenian, &c., sustain it against ■ Dp.m., the Vulgate, which none follow but Tischendorf abroad, and Westcott and Hort at home: The difference, however, seems slight as to sense. There is rather better evidence in favor of ■μ■ν instead of ■μ■ν as in the Text. Rec., though none but the same editors adopt the change. Lachmann had in his early edition added α■τ■ς, and in his later α■τ■ before ποι■ν, the latter of which has ■ A C to support it, though manifest glosses. In 24 it is “from,” not “of,” Italy.

Epistle of James

Why should the Revisers perpetuate the traditional blunder of “The General Epistle of James"? The best critics drop καθολικ■, following B K, A C being defective, but A also dropping it at the end: so many Latin copies, and the Pesch. Syr. It is not “general,” but specially addressed to the twelve tribes.

1:1 has neither the closeness of a literal rendering, nor the freedom of the Authorized Version. If we are to adhere to the letter, it is in, not “of,” the dispersion. The faith of James rises above all the present circumstances of God's ancient people, and addresses the nation as a whole, though distinguishing such of Israel as have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. He thus maintains and expresses God's right over the entire people, wherever and whatever they may be. In 8 “proof” or proving is better than “trying” in the Authorized Version. In 4 “her” has properly given way to “its.” In 6 “doubting,” “doubteth” are better than “waver,” though κλ■δων seems rather “a wave” or billow, than “the surge.” The punctuation, as expressive of the connection of 7, 8, is questionable, though the Authorized Version is hardly correct either in its representation of 8. It is rather a description of him that doubts. Verses 9, 10 are given somewhat loosely, and with uncalled for neglect of the anarthrous construction. Why not as “flower of grass “? In 11 the Revisers depart from the simple “scorching heat,” not “wind,” given to the word in Matt. 20:12, and Luke 12:55; but “goings” is better than “ways.” In 12 it should be not “tried,” but the result “proved,” or as the Revisers say “approved.” “He” would have sufficed instead of “the Lord.” The later uncials and almost all the cursives, &c., read “the Lord.” Why not in 18 “by evils” or evil things, rather than “with evil” as in the Authorized and Revised Versions? In 15 the Revisers overlook the abstract force of the article in Greek, where we leave it out in English. The Authorized Version is right. They follow nearly the Authorized Version in separating ■νωθ■ν ■στι from καταβα■νον, but the Authorized Versions in 3:15 seems just as correct, which they do not follow. It is known that in the oldest uncials, supported by the Latins, the reading is ■στε, “ye know,” not ■στε, “so that.” Then we would proceed, “But let,” &c. The anarthrous form of 20 is ill reflected in the Revised Version, as in the Authorized Version. In 21 “implanted” is correct. In 28 and 24 it is to “consider” or contemplate, rather than “behold.” In 24 does not ■ π. mean more than “he that looketh"? In 26 θρ. “among you” (■ν ■μ■ν) is rightly rejected. But as distinct from ε■σεβε■α, piety, it means the outward service of God, which “religion” inadequately expresses, though it is hard to find a better. In 27 it is well to note this, lest ignorance should treat the verse as a definition of true “religion,” as men speak. The meaning is, that this is a pure and unsullied service before Him who is God and Father: to visit orphans and widows, &c. But the article is omitted before θ. κα■ π. in ■p.m Ccorr. K L, very many cursives, &c.; it is read in other MSS. of the highest authority, as also in Text. Rec.

2:2 of the Revised Version has rightly “synagogue,” according to the peculiar bearing of the Epistle. In 4 “partial” in yourselves of the Authorized Version goes too far; but “divided in your own minds” in the Revision scarcely hits the mark. The true force seems that they became divided, or made a difference “among themselves.” For judges “of” evil thoughts, which is the literal rendering of the Authorized Version, the Revisers give “with.” Of course the meaning is that they had evil thoughts, according to an idiom found sometimes in English. In 5 the true reading on the beet authority is τ■ κ. (“as to the world"), not το■ κ., still less τ. κ. το■του, as in Text. Rec. followed in the Authorized Version “of this world.” In 7 is not the literal force preferable “that was called upon you"? In 11 the Revisers rightly follow ancient authority in “dost” not and “killest,” contrary to Text.

Rec. In 12 recurs the old inability to set forth the anarthrous construction: “a” law of liberty is not the sense but erroneous, though seemingly more accurate than “the” in the Authorized Version. The copulative of the Text. Rec. rightly vanishes. In 14 it is a nice question whether the true thought be “faith” as in the Authorized Version, or “the faith": the Greek admits of either, and it becomes a question of contextual propriety. But “that faith” of the Revised Version is strong beyond warrant. It is the more strange, as in the same connection (17, 20, 22) they give “faith” as an abstraction or personification, and quite rightly. In 18 σου of R. Steph. ("thy,” Authorized Version) is well omitted: why then should the Revisers interpolate “thy “? It was this feeling, no doubt, which led the scribes of C K L, and most of the cursives to insert the word. The real question is as to a final μου which ■ B C and a few cursives omit. In 20 ■ργ■, “barren,” as against ν., “dead” of the Text. Rec. and Authorized Version, is supported by B Cp.m. 27, 29, the best Latin copies, the Sah., and Arm. of Zohrab: slender in number, but grave, especially as assimilation easily accounts for the more popular reading. In 21 would it not be less cumbrous to take as on, or in, offering up? Compare 25 also. In 22 they are right in preferring the margin to the text of Authorized Version. In 23 there is no reason to say more than that A. was called “friend of God.” “The” is needless before spirit in 25, and of course its omission more exact.

In 3:1 “teachers” is correct, and “judgment.” In 8 they rightly read ε■ δ■ “now if,” probably changed into ■δο■ through 4. In 4 the Authorized Version needlessly adds “which,” corrected by the Revisers, and “steersman” displacing “governor.” In 5, 6, the confusion of the copies and the editors is great; so that one may judge the more moderately of the Revisers' text and margin. “A” world, &c. of the Authorized Version is clearly wrong, and here set right. In 8 they reject “unruly” of the Authorized Version for “restless.” In 9 they accept “Lord” for God of the Authorized Version. It is “the” fountain in 11, and “from” the same “opening,” not place merely. In 12 it is “a” fig tree, and the last clause does not speak of a fountain, like Text. Rec. and Authorized Version, but says, with the Revisers, neither can salt water yield sweet. The Authorized Version of 15 appears to me quite as exact as the change here. Compare i. 17. There is much difficulty in deciding the true force of ■δ., whether it be without doubt, variance, or hypocrisy; as the verb of which it is compounded admits of a great variety of meaning. The question in 18 is whether “in peace” should not, as in the Greek, precede “is sown.”

4:1 has in the Revised Version the more vigorous, critical text, but hardly in as terse English as is desirable. “Whence [are] wars, and whence fighting among you? [Are they] not hence, from your pleasures that war in your members?” For the margin of the Authorized Version is right in giving “pleasures.” In 2 ζ. when used in a bad sense, is “ye envy,” or “are jealous.” The first word means “ye lust,” or “covet.” In 3 it is difficult to distinguish in our tongue the active and the middle of α■τ. Dean Alford went too far in calling it “an unaccountable interchange;” whereas it is really an intended, though delicate, and, of course, intelligible difference. The middle as often has an intensive force. In 2 they did not ask with earnestness; in 8 they asked with indifference, and received not; or, if there was any earnestness, it was of an evil kind, to spend in their pleasures. 4 is an instance of valuable correction. The weighty authorities, both MSS. and Versions, reject μοιχο■ κα■. The one designation, though in the feminine, embraces all men or women who sought the world in unfaithfulness to God and their own relationship of privilege. But both the Authorized and the Revised Versions failed to give the full force; for it is really friendship with the world as distinctly as enmity with God, which they rightly say. None of our English versions is right,

I though none is here so wrong as the Rhemish, which, following the Vulgate, confounds ■χθρα with ■χθρ■. But is there sufficient energy in the Revision, any more than the Authorized Version of βουλη θ■? It is “shall have chosen,” or be minded. 5 seems in the Revised Version rightly divided, as had been long suggested. There are two grave objections to the more ordinary division: (1) Who can tell the Scripture alleged to be in view? (2) Where else is φθ. used in a good sense? I think, however, that the margin of the Authorized Version gives the best sense of π. φθ., “enviously.” And why bring in “the scripture” into 6? Have the Revisers done well in adhering to “Be afflicted” in 9?” Surely “Be miserable” would be more in keeping with their own version of Rom. 3:16, and our next chapter, v. 1, as well as with the deeper expression of wretchedness in the word. In 11 is the correction “on” judgeth his brother; for an evil feeling might work in this rather than in speaking against him: either was to judge the law. In 12 also the Revisers rightly say, One is the lawgiver, &c.; but why “only” or “even?” They rightly give “but” in the last clause on authority ample as well as ancient, and “thy neighbor” instead of “another,” as in Text. Rec. In 13, it is not “such a” but “this” city, this city here, and “trade” or “traffic “is better than “buy and sell.” In 14, “ye are” a vapor seems the best attested by far, if the copies be allowed to have misspelt; and, Bengel and Griesbach notwithstanding, ■σται seems simply intolerable. It was probably meant for ■στε, a much more emphatic phrase than ■στιν, as in L, some cursives, and the Latin copies. Does not the text of 15 begin with obsolete English? The margin is not according to the Greek only, but intelligible according to our present speech. In this verse the reading strangely differs. The Revised Version bows to the general judgment of the critics, who follow ■ A B P, &c. in adopting ζ■σομεν instead of ζ■σωμεν with K L, the mass of cursives, the Latins, &c. There is no doubt among unbiased minds that the interchange of the long and short vowels is very common in the oldest MSS., which are, therefore, to be trusted in such a question less than in any other. 4,—therefore, incline to “If the Lord will, and we live, we shall also do this or that.” R. Stephens even read π. in the subjunctive, but this appears to yield no sense, though read by many authorities.

v. Have not the Revisers, by too close adherence to the Authorized Version, lost some of the graphic. force of verse 1? “Weep, howling over your miseries that are coming on.” In 6, “as” of the Text. Rec. is rightly excluded, though not a few authorities favor its insertion. In 9, it is rather “groan” or “complain” than “judge;” and certainly it is “judged,” not “condemned.” In 11, it is “endured,” not “endure.” In 12, it is not “into condemnation,” but “under judgment.” In 18, is it not praise, pot psalms, that the cheerful soul was to sing? Godly order had been secured in 14; and the “saving” of the sick man (15), in answer to the prayer of faith, is “healing,” which is, perhaps, in this case and the like the less equivocal word. “Confess,” therefore (omitted in Text. Rec.), your sine one to another is the remarkable conclusion; it is confidence in mutual love, and in no way official requirement or sacramental efficacy for the soul at departure. The saints are to pray one for another, that they might be healed (16). The question as to the last word is whether it means fervent or in its working. The Authorized Version seems to have conveyed both, the Revised Version the latter. In 39, the Revisers properly add “My,” and say “a,” not “the,” sinner in 20.

(To be continued)

I can use my members as servants; but the moment I make them anything else but servants, it is sin. When man fell, he was under the evil: now we are to be over the evil. We have put on the new man, which is renewed after the image of Him that created him.

Revised New Testament: 1 Peter

Chapter 1:1. Our language is not so lacking in power to characterize that it should be necessary to introduce “a” or “the” where Greek does not. Thus Peter, “apostle of Jesus Christ” is really more expressive and correct than “an” apostle. Of course a similar remark applies to 2 Cor. 1:1, Gal. 1:1, Eph. 1:1, Col. 1:1, 1 and 2 Tim. 1:1, Titus 1:1, Phil. 1:1, James 1:1, if not to Rom. 1:1, and 1 Cor. 1:1, where the context modifies. 2 Peter 1:1 and Jude 1 have nothing to render the indefinite article needful. Again “to the elect who are sojourners” is surely to go beyond the text which speaks only of “elect sojourners” dispersed in Pontes, &c. In 2 we come to an important matter. What is the meaning of “in” sanctification of the Spirit? The Revisers have misrepresented the truth in several instances of dogmatic moment through a fancied accuracy, but mere literality, condemned by their own practice elsewhere. We have seen this in Col. 1:16 and Heb. 1:8, where “in” gives a false sense or nonsense, opening the door to grave error, which, where positive truth is lost, enters in often under cover of the vague or obscure. Now the Revised Version of Matt. 3:11, 5:13, 6:34, 35, 36, 6:7, 7:2, 6, 9:34, suffices to show that the Revisers knew they were in no way limited to “in,” for they admit freely “with” “by,” &c. But they too often overlook this, where their rendering yields no just sense or opposes other Scriptures. It was the more desirable to be right here, because some early Protestant translators had grievously failed as to it. Take Beza, who, swayed evidently by his theological views, gives us “ad sanctificationem Sp. per obedientiam,” &c., which is doubly a falsification of God's word. Him followed our Geneva Version of 1555, “unto sanctification of the Spirit through obedience,” &c. The Rhemish says, “unto sanctification of the Spirit, unto the obedience,” &c. This would be inexplicable, as being destitute of just meaning, if we did not know that the Vulgate has “in sanctificationem Sp. in obedientiam,” &c. The Version of Rheims of course follows it dutifully. The late Dean Alford seems to have been the most influential offender in this assumption of accuracy, adhering to “in” for ■ν, when the Authorized Version had idiomatically and correctly “by” or “with” To talk of the conditional element as environing, or the like, is mere jargon to excuse a translation which conveys no sound meaning. It is cloud and not light. Here the apostle lets the dispersed believers of the circumcision know that, instead of being externally separated in the flesh by rites as the chosen people of Jehovah, they were elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. The contrast is with Ex. 24:7, 8, when Israel stood to obey the law under the blood which threatened death as the penalty, instead of cleansing from every sin those whose one desire was to obey as Christ obeyed. Compare 1 Cor. 6:11, where “sanctified” is before “justified,” as here sanctification is before obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. It is the absolute setting apart of the soul to God from the first. Practical holiness is relative, and is pressed lower down in this very chapter, ver. 15, 16. In 3 it is “living,” not lively, hope; not in this world, but above it by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In 7 “of” gold is rightly dropt. But in 10 it should be “prophets,” not “the” prophets, as in the Authorized and Revised Versions, not the class viewed in their totality, but persons coming ender that category. In 11 they rightly say “glories.” In 12 “you” displaces “us” with reason as being more homogeneous: one way or another a common confusion in the MSS. In 17 they correct the Authorized Version,

“the” Father for “him as Father,” and “every,” for “each,” man's work, “here” being quite an expletive. In 22 the omission of “pure” rests on A B and the Vulgate, a feeble basis as against ■p.m. C K L P, all the cursives, and the mass of ancient versions and ecclesiastical writers, one perhaps excepted. But earlier in the verse “by the Spirit” is an addition without due warrant, as is “forever” at the end of 23, and “of man” for “its” in 24.

2:2 affords some difficulty for translation in the word λογικ■ν, unless we take it with the Authorized Version as “of the word.” “Reasonable” as in the Authorized Version of Rom. 12:1 falls too low, but is not the Revisers' “spiritual” too high? At least, it is not inherent in the word nor necessitated by its usage. “Unto salvation” at the end is sure on ample authority; for salvation, in Peter's writings—save in one exception that proves the rule, by the modification of the phrase to ensure a difference of meaning—looks onward to the final victory at Christ's revelation. In 5 ε■ς, “for,” is read by high and ample authority, and adopted by the Revisers in their phrase “to be.” Verse 6 begins with “Because” on almost universal suffrage, “wherefore also” as in Text. Rec. has scarce a shadow of authority. But what is more important, the beautiful force of the first clause of 7 was lost in the Authorized Version, and even the marginal alteration was a mistranslation. Tyndale unhappily misled, and all the public English versions followed. Faith sees according to God. Christ is in God's eyes a chief corner stone, elect, precious. “To you therefore that believe [is] the preciousness.” Was it needful to define the general phrase ε■ς π.. in 9 by interpolating “God's own?” In the same verse “excellencies” is right. In 12 “which they behold” is not much in advance of the lax Authorized Version, “which they shall behold,” as a reflexion of ■ποπτε■οντες. “Being spectators” would seem more correct—If “your freedom” be the necessary force of τ■ν ■λ., why not “your” wickedness, or malice, of τ■ς κ. in 16? They are really common cases of abstracted usage. Dean Alford is more consistent in claiming the same possessive or quasi-possessive force for the articles with both words. And here it may not be uninstructive to note the weak and unsound attempt of that same dignitary to account for τ■ν ■φρ. ■νθρ. in 15, as limited to such as reviled Christ as evil doers. For the apostle really speaks of men as a whole, and declares the race as such senseless. The phrase imports nothing less. In 21 it is “you” twice, not “us” as in Authorized Version following Steph. (not Elz). The last clause supports the reading of the ancient MSS. The margin of 24 ignorantly repeats the unfounded alternative of the Authorized Version, for both word and tense forbid the idea of a carrying up of our sins in Christ's body to the tree. Usage in the Septuagint, as in the New Testament, limits ■ν■... ■π■ to the single great act of bearing them on the tree.

3. In 1 and 2 “behavior is no doubt more intelligible English for our day than the obsolete “conversation” for manner of life in the Authorized Version. But is it correct to soften the force of the past participle in 2 in this case? In 8 “jewels of gold,” not gold merely. The last word of 8 should be not “courteous,” but “humbleminded,” on ample authority, an evident link of connection with the gracious endurance which knows how to bless in presence of injury. In 13 ζ. is more than “followers” or “imitators” (as in the Text. Rec. μ.) meaning neither, but zealous or emulous of good. In 15 it is “the Christ,” not God as such who is to be sanctified as Lord in their hearts. In 18 to print “spirit” without a capital initial is matter for regret, if there be no real ground to doubt that the Spirit of God is meant. Had the phrase been as in the Text. Rec., τ■ πν., there might so far have been a better ground for supposing the spirit of. Christ as man, though it would not have been decisive against the Holy Spirit. But the anarthrous phrase distinctly points to that Divine Person, though

presented in character rather than objectively; and what is added conclusively proves this— “in which (or in the power of which Spirit) also he went and preached to the spirits in prison,” &c. As the Spirit of Christ in the prophets (1:11) testified beforehand of Christ's sufferings and the glories that should follow, so did His Spirit in Noah (Gen. 6:3) strive with the antediluvians on the sure coming of the flood that was to take them all away from the earth. But this was not all; for disobedient as they were, they were to be, as they are, reserved in prison (certainly not paradise) for a judgment far more solemn. So the unbelieving Jews now might taunt those who believed, with a Christ rejected on earth and absent in heaven, as well as with their fewness; but the apostle reminds them that there were still fewer saved when the flood came, and rebellions unbelief entails a judgment graver far than anything which befalls the body, as illustrated by a time of waiting and testimony which the Lord also compares with that which precedes His return in power and glory. Is it accurate to render the beginning of 20, ■π. π. “which aforetime were disobedient “? Would not this require το■ς ■π.? Is not the force rather “disobedient as they once proved when,” &c.? Their being in prison was in consequence of their previous disobedience to God's patient warning. At the close of the verse “through water” is right, not “by” it. Water was the destructive element, through which grace saved Noah and those with him in the ark: cf. Cor. iii. 15. In 21 the Authorized Version followed Beza (as did Elz.) in rejecting Stephens' reading, which is the ancient one, the Sinaitic cutting the knot by rejecting both. “You” is probably right; but ■περ■τημα is rather “demand,” anything interrogated, than the interrogation which suggests a dubious or misleading sense.

4:5: why more than “living and dead?” Why “the “? Is it not equally good in English as in Greek? It is not the same sense. “The” makes judgment universal; whereas Scripture contrasts it with eternal life. and salvation. See John 5 and Heb. 9—Why “even” to dead? Why not “also “? As in 3:19, 20, the apostle spoke of wicked dead, so does be here of righteous dead, as is implied in living according to God in the Spirit? Here also we have good news brought, not preaching only. Ver. 11 is given fairly well. The meaning is that when one gifted of God speaks, it should be as oracles of God; not according to the oracles of God, the Scriptures (which is not in question, though in itself of course most right), but as expressing God's mind on that before us, as His mouthpiece: serious, but not too serious; consideration; for has He not also given us His Spirit? And wherefore? Truly it supposes dependence on and confidence in God. Ministry also, it is well to remark, is distinguished from speaking, which is apt to become everything among idle people or the active-minded, and knowledge taking practically the place of faith as well as of love.

5: 2. “Tend” is better, as being more comprehensive, than “feed,” cf. John 21—never to be forgotten by Peter—any more than by John. But is the rendering of 8 exact? It is incomparably better than what the Authorized Version here gives, but “over the charge allotted to you” might be construed into one's church or chapel, one's congregation or parish or diocese. Now τ■ν κλ. very simply means the (i.e. your) possessions; and the point is that the elders should not lord it over the saints as their belongings, but ever tend them as the flock of God. Thus were they to be models for them. In 4 it is of course “the” unfading crown of glory. In 5 the needless addition of ■ποτ. “be subject and” in the Authorized Version, following the Text. Rec., is with reason excluded to the unimpeded and energetic flow of the exhortation. In 8 the added ■τι of the Text. Rec. clogs the vigor of words clear and ringing as a trumpet call. In 9 the difficulty of the article reappears, with the unhappy result of the old rendering put in the margin, and a worse adopted in the text. The real question seems to be between “in” or “with” faith. Take Rom. 14:1: have not the Revisers rightly

said “weak in faith"? It is the counterpart of the phrase before us. Here, not content with “the,” they descend to “your.” These things ought not so to be—They rightly give “you” for “us” in 10, as the context ought to have shown, in confirmation of the best external authority. Further, it is “shall,” not the opt. as in Text Rec., with a few copies of slight account. In 12 “as I suppose” or “account” is no slight or doubt of Savanna, but the contrary. “Stand” is the reading of high authority, uncial and cursive, instead of the more popular “ye stand.” It is singular that the Sinaitic is not without a slight support in the margin if two cursives, and some of the oldest Latin copies say expressly what the Authorized Version gives in italics. But the Revisers seem justified in holding it to be some well-known sister, perhaps Peter's wife: the salutation of Marcus that follows confirms this. Dogmatically too it is difficult to suppose elect, or co-elect, said after Christ came otherwise than of individuals. In the Old Testament we have it said corporately or nationally; in the New Testament individually.

Revised New Testament: 2 Peter

I. 1 has the great defect of an equivocal or erroneous rendering of iv (that frequent stumblingblock of the Revisers), and this in a text so much the more important as it is often pressed dogmatically, not seldom wrongly, owing to this very error. I do not dwell on “a” more than once used needlessly here, as this has been frequently noticed elsewhere; but “faith with us in the righteousness” suggests in our idiom the object believed in. This is not the aim of the passage. The Apostle means that the Christian Jews, to whom he is for the second time addressing himself, obtained like precious faith with us “your apostles” (3:2) in virtue of (or through) the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ; as the Revisers rightly give the last words in their text, though not in the margin. There were special promises to the fathers about the blessing of their seed, and God was righteous in fulfilling them. There has always been a believing remnant of that people, if of no other continuously. Jesus, not more truly man than the Lord God of Israel, has been faithful to that word of distinguishing favor; and if those Jews to whom Peter was writing received faith, like precious faith with the apostles, it was in virtue of His making good the promise to them and their children by giving them to believe. Such is the righteousness here meant. Hence “through” in the Authorized Version is substantially correct, as being less ambiguous than “in” of the Revised Version, which is apt to mislead by suggesting His righteousness as the thing believed in, instead of pointing out His fidelity to promise in bestowing faith on them. It may be well to make no abrupt severance of 3 from 2; but surely it is still more requisite not to mar the connection of 3, 4, with 5, the former being a sort of protasis, as the latter is an apodosis in sense. Hence, if it be right to close 2 with a semicolon, it is intolerable to put a period after 4, and to begin 5 as a new sentence. “Since His divine power hath granted to us all things that are for life and godliness.... yea, and for this very reason, adding on your part all diligence, in your faith furnish,” &c. All our old English Versions fail in this; none more than the Revised Version.

There is, however, an important correction which closes verse 3 (the margin of the Authorized Version being better than its text), as it had been in Tyndale and Cranmer. But the Geneva Version went all wrong, following Beza who knew the true reading but slighted it for an inferior one, and even mistranslated the inferior one through his inability to make out its meaning: “■δ■■ δ■ξ■ κα■ ■ρετ■, que lectio in paucis admodum codicibus, iisque dubiae fidei, a nobis est inuenta neque mihi sane probari potest.” Now there are a dozen cursives at least, not to speak of four of the great uncials, in favor of ■δ■■ δ. κ. ■.; so that there is ample and excellent authority. And any reasoning on God's being denied elsewhere to call us to His glory cannot swamp the clear force here of being called by it. Then follows fresh reasoning on ■ρετ■, the upshot being “mihi quidem multo probebilius uidetur, δι■ praepositionem pro ε■ς usurpatam, sicut etiam annotatiuimus Rom. 6 a. 4, et ■ρετ■ν idem atque ■γιασμ■ν, declarare,” &c. No doubt the majority of copies support δι■ δ. κ. ■. it. In meaning the only difference that results is that the more ancient text adds “His own,” but in any case it is “by,” not “to.” Adam innocent enjoyed the good around and gave God thanks; Israel was governed as well as tested by the law. God called us “by His own glory,” outside and above all that is seen, and “by virtue,” the spiritual courage that refuses the snares which

would entice us from the path that leads there. Compare Rom. 23, 5:2.

In 4 is corrected the error of Tyndale, &c., and of the Authorized Version following them. They ought to have gathered from the preceding verse that δεδ. is, if not a deponent, middle in sense, not passive. The change of order in “precious and very great promises” is abundantly sustained; indeed, the precise form in the Text. Rec. has scarce any support, but with a slight change many copies give it, some however having ■μ■ν for ■. mistakenly. In 5 “And beside this” of the Authorized Version is as untenable as any other of the older English. The Revised Version is much better, save as we have seen the dislocation by their punctuation. But “in” your faith is right, as well as “supply,” not “add to,” and so throughout 6 and 7. Only the italic “your” six times over is needless. In 8 “idle [marg. Authorized Version] nor unfruitful” is an improvement without “to be;” but surely die here means “as to” or “as regards,” not “unto” of the Revised Version any more than “in” of the Authorized Version. The Revisers give, like the Authorized Version, rather a paraphrase of 9 than a close version. In 11 the sense is “richly furnished” or supplied, not “ministered.” In 12 the true reading is μελλ■σω, “I shall be ready,” (■ A B C P &c., with the most ancient versions), not ο■κ ■μ. as in the Text. Rec. and the Authorized Version, “I will not be negligent.” The change at the close seems uncalled for, due probably to Dean Alford. The rendering of 16, 17, is loose, not only in general form but even to the diluting ■π■ “by,” to ■π■ “from” at the close. But 19 is given much better by the Revisers, the inspired contrast of the lamp of prophecy with daylight dawning and the day or morning star arising in the heart being clearly given. But it may be doubted whether the textual “private” or the marginal “special” of 20 gives the true force of ■δ■ας. Divine prophecy is a vast connected whole, and none of it comes of its own or an isolated solution. For none (21) was ever ("in old time” was the error of Beza, &c.) brought by man's will; but moved by the Holy Spirit men spoke from God. It all converges on Christ's glory. There is no doubt a serious conflict of readings: ■γιοι, (Text. Rec. ο■ ■) instead of ■π■ has ■ K L &c., ■γιου το■ A. ■π■ θ. ■γιοι C. &c. But the critics generally prefer the text of B and several cursives supported by the Bodleian Syr. and the Coptic, which omit ■γιοι.

In 2:1 the Revisers give rightly “the Master” (δεσπ■τηv) that bought them; for it is purchase, not redemption, which is in question. Purchase is universal; not so redemption, which is inseparable from faith in Christ and the forgiveness of offenses. It is clear from the passage before us that the most wicked are “bought” by the Master, whom they deny to their own swift destruction; that they were “redeemed” is mere assumption, and, in fact, a grave error. In 2 it is “the” truth. In 4 it is “angels when they sinned,” not “the angels that sinned,” which would require τ■ν ■. τ■ν ■.. and then would mean the whole; whereas the apostle speaks only of a part even of those that fell. Ταρταρ■σας is the word translated “cast down to hell,” and occurs here only in the New Testament. It means hurling into the lowest abyss. In the same verse there is a question of reading on which turns either “pits” or “chains,” the more ancient copies inclining to the former, while the expression of Jude may have suggested the latter. In 5 “N. an eighth” means with seven others. If the Revisers render τηρουμ■νους in 4 “to be reserved,” and in 3:11 λυομ■νων “to be destroyed,” why not κολαζομ■νοθς in 9 “to be punished “? Does not this suit ε■ς ■μ. κρ. better than “under punishment"? It is a class so characterized. In 11 it is not “which are greater,” &c., but “greater as they are,” &c. In 12, 13 are hazardous changes, not “shall utterly (or, also) perish in their own corruption,” as in the Authorized Version, but “shall in their destroying surely be destroyed,” and “suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing,” instead of “receiving as they shall wages of

unrighteousness.” Here the Revisers have been induced, probably by Drs. Westcott and Hort, not without other support, of course, to accept the reading of B ■p.m. ■δικο■μενοι. But will the reading, even if feasible on so slender a basis, bear the version?— “In the day-time” is a questionable reading of ■ν ■μ. in this connection, and, as has been remarked, hardly consistent with τρυφ■ν, delicacy or indulgence of life, which might be by day quite as much as by night. Hence interpreters who differ widely in general, Calvin, Estius, Grotius, C. ■ Lap., De Wette, &c., prefer “ephemeral.” There is another singular choice, not of rendering but of reading in the verse, ■γ■παις Acorr B against the overwhelming evidence of ■ A m. C K L P, almost all the cursives, and most ancient Versions, not to speak of early citations, for ■π■ταις followed by the Authorized Version. Is “stayed,” in 16, a real improvement on “forbad” of the Authorized Version, as rendering ■κ■λυσεν? “Withstood” might represent it better than either, or Mr. Green's “checked.” In 17 “springs” and “mists” are right; but the evidence in favor of “forever” is strong. In 18 τ. ■λ■γως ■ποφε■. is the true text, not τ. ■ντως ■ποφυ. They were just escaping, not “clean escaped,” or even “just fled.” In 20 γ■γονεν “is become,” not merely “is.” In 22 the Revisers may rightly omit the copula, but there is the usual laxity in expressing both the presence and the absence of the article: there hath happened to them the [import, pith, spirit] of the true proverb, A dog turned again to his own vomit, and, A sow washed to wallowing in mire.

In 3:2 the Revisers rightly read and translate “the command of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,” ■μ■ν having quite inconsiderable support, even if it could then bear the Authorized Version. In 3 the Authorized Version after Text. Rec. wrongly omits “with mocking.” The rather difficult verses 5-7 seem to be fairly given, though connecting πυρ■ with τεοη., rather than τη. as in the Authorized Version and most others. Of course “his” supplants “the same” in 7. In 9 it is rightly “to you” on preponderant authority; but there is some question between δ■ or ε■ς, the former of which Tischendorf adopts in his last edition with ■ A, half a dozen cursives, and the ancient Versions generally. It would mean “on your account.” In 10 the Revised Version omits rightly “in the night.” Here again we see how lax are their views of the article. In 11 “there,” not “then,” is preferred by the Revisers on small but good authority, the copies greatly differing. “All” is an effort in the Revised Version, as in the Authorized Version, to express the plural which expresses every form of behavior and godliness. In 12 they justly discard the influence of the Vulgate in “hasting unto” (as indeed the margin of the Authorized Version suggests); but whether “earnestly desiring,” as in the Bodleian Syriac, adequately conveys the meaning is another matter. If they mean hastening the coming of that day in heart, for aught more seems far-fetched or worse, I believe them right; but this is rather exposition or application than rendering. Nor is their version of δ■ ■ν, “by reason of which,” though of course correct grammatically, the only one that is sure. The temporal sense is no less just. It is a question of context which suits best here. Bengel construes it with παρουσ■α. The Revisers scarcely seem justified in giving α■τ■ (14) so defined a force as “in His sight.” Even Winer does not go so far. It might be “for” no less than “of” Him. From 15 we learn that Paul wrote to the Jewish Christians, as Peter did in his two Epistles. For it is idle to argue from i. 14, ii. 10, or iv. 3, to set aside the plain force of the address. Nobody doubts that every word is for U8 who were Gentiles; but as little should it be doubted that they are both addressed simply to the Jewish dispersion in the parts designated. These scattered Jews had, before they believed, fallen largely into the evil and even heathen ways of those who surrounded them. Wieseler's notion of Gentiles in chap. 2:25 is at issue with both Paul and Peter. But if this be so, the reference to the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews is unmistakable, which speaks much

of “the day.” The Revisers translate ■ν χ. κ. τ. γ. (18) no better than the Authorized Version. They have no right to say “in the grace,” &c., any more than the Authorized Version “in the knowledge.” The insertion of our definite article here misleads. It is more correct to say “in grace and knowledge,” &c.

Revised New Testament: 1 John

I. 1 stands better in the Revised Version, which not only makes each verse more distinct, but correctly distinguishes the tenses. It is in each “that which;” whilst the two later are not perfects, but simply preterites. But there is no need for the awkwardness of “the life, the eternal life” in 2, any more than for “that eternal life” in the Authorized Version. Nor should the verse open with “For,” but “And.” In 3 is not the true force “report” rather than “declare,” or “show?” “Yea,” &c., well represents κα■ δ■ The first serious difference of reading is in 4, ■με■ς, “we,"(■ Ap.m. B P &c.) for ■μ■ν, “unto you” (Acorr C K L &c.); and “our” (■ B L., many cursives and versions), for ■μ■ν (A C K P, the majority of cursives, and many ancient versions). R. Stephens followed the Complutensian editors in preferring “our,” Elzevir followed Erasmus and Beza in adopting “you;” and so respectively the Revised Version and the Authorized Version. If “our” be right, it would join the believers with the apostles in the same joy through fellowship with the Father and with His Son. But is it not strange that the Revisers adopt a text so ill supported as α■τη ■στ■ν (A, &c.), when there is such strong and united authority for the more emphatic;—■στιν α■υτη (■ B C K L P, the mass of cursives, &c.), “And there is this message,” &c.? Certainly the early editors, Erasmus, the Complutensian, and Colinaeus all give the emphatic form according to ancient authority, but not R. Stephens, Beza, and Elzevir. Was it Beza that influenced the Authorized translators in “This then?” He ventures in his notes to take κα■ as equivalent to ο■ν, where it is clear that it merely adds an entirely new subject; and this a “message,” not “promise,” as would be true if the text of all the older editors could stand. But it is really ■γγελ■α, not ■παγγ., in spite of C P and some cursives. It is remarkable that our translators, in misrendering their text, stumbled on the version of the right text. There is good authority (■ B C P, &c.) for omitting “Christ” in 7, though most witnesses insert it: which one would think should have been stated in the margin.

2:2 is a great improvement on the Authorized Version, where the words added in italics overstep the truth, and unwittingly imply a serious error. If “the sins of” the whole world were expiated, what would there be to judge? Never does Scripture so teach, save as to believers. Yet Christ died for every man—gave Himself a ransom for all; but only of believers is it said that He died and suffered for their sins, or bore them in His body on the tree. But He is the propitiation for the whole world, as well as for our sins; and so the gospel can go forth freely to all the creation. Is 3 adequately rendered by the Revisers? Who could gather the difference between the present and the perfect in the opening clause? Even the Authorized Version makes a faint effort; the Revised Version none. Surely ■γν. (the second “know”) means “we acquired and possess the knowledge of.” So it is at the beginning of 4 also.

Further, is it an intelligent division of the Epistle to make 3-6 a part of the paragraph beginning With ch. 2? To my mind verses 1, 2, form the necessary supplement to the doctrine of chapter 1 in both its parts (1-4, and 5-10), intimating not only the responsibility of the family of God, but the provision of grace to restore in the case of sin. Then 3 begins to unfold the qualities or characteristic ways of the life given us in Christ, the eternal life of the believer: obedience (3-6) and love (7-11), with their opposites. But this points to two paragraphs to be marked accordingly, which

the Revisers have utterly missed by grouping 2:1, 2 with 3-6 as if they were continuous; whereas the great break is after 2; and 3-11 might bettor have gone together, though it is perhaps more strictly correct to give first 3-6, and then 7-11 as distinct.

In 7 the true reading “beloved” is rightly followed, as fitly introducing the commandment—love. Also the Revisers as rightly expunge “from the beginning” at the end of the verse, however important these words are in the middle of it. In 8 the rendering of the Revised Version is correct—“passing away,” not “past,” as in the Authorized Version. Past it will never be till Christ reigns in power and glory. Yet the same thing being true in Him and in the saints (whatever the difference of measure), the darkness passes away, and the true light does now shine.

Is not the arrangement of 12-29 objectionable? It gives evidence that the structure of the Epistle was not understood. For 12 is the comprehensive address to all the family of God (τεκν■α) on the ground of their sins forgiven for Christ's name. Then 13 divides the family into the, three classes of (1) fathers, (2) young men, and (3) babes (παιδ■α), respectively and specifically addressed again in (1) 14, (2) 14-17, and (3) 18-27; 28 and 29 resuming the general designation to the entire family as in 2:1, 3:7, 18, 4:4, and 5:21. Clearly therefore, if this be true as I feel assured, a new paragraph should not begin at 18 as in the Revised Version; as it might also have conduced to clearness if 12 had stood alone, and a new paragraph had begun with 28. No doubt the Revised Version has sought to distinguish τεκν■α from the class contained under it (παιδ■α) by adding “my;” but is this the best way of marking the distinction? Is it not due to the same lack of appreciating the truth intended that the Revisers like others adopt the well nigh absurd variant ■γραψα instead of γρ■φω in the last part of 13? It is contrary to the plain facts of the context, and the necessary bearing of the verse. The Apostle had not written before to the babes; he was now writing to them as such for the first time, as in the same verse to the fathers and to the young men. Then he goes over the ground again to the three in 14-27, where ■γραψα is requisite, not γρ■φω. It is granted that diplomatic evidence is decidedly in favor of the misreading ■γ. in the end of 13. In fact, only K, a Moscow uncial, with a fair amount of cursives and some ancient versions, stands opposed to the great mass of ancient authority. It is one of the very few cases where a few witnesses of less value contain the true reading disfigured from an early date, so that the error was widely diffused. The effect is most disastrous on the interpretation, as any English reader may see in Dean Alford's work, where we are thereby landed in the bewildering conclusion that we have three classes of readers, denoted the first time by τεκν■α! πατ■ρες, νεαν■σκοι, and the second time by παιδ■α, πατ■ρες, νεαν■σκοι: a strange confusion, where the fathers are made the central group, first introduced by τ. and then by π. as if these were identical, whereas there is the necessity of admitting that τ. and π. are differently addressed; a singular thing if they were the same class, to the loss of the truth that the first is the general designation, as the latter described particularly the youngest class. The inference is that τ. and π. address all the readers alike! and that “nothing satisfactory” comes out, which is very true. If γρ■φω, be accepted all through 13, light dawns, and the beautiful order of the truth shines unmistakably. After speaking of all in 12, the writer first briefly addresses each of the three subdivisions, and then a second time more fully, as need required, which gives so much the force to the “fathers” where he could only repeat, without adding one word more; for Christ is all. In 18 “there have arisen” or “come” is better than the Authorized Version, as last “hour” is more vivid. In 19 it is rightly “they all are not of us,” i.e., none are of us. The margin, like the Authorized Version, is in error, if not nonsense.— In 23 the true text

is reinstated from the ignominy of italics on ample and unimpeachable authority (■ B C P, about thirty-five cursives, Vulg. Cop. Syrr. Arm. Aeth, &c.). In 24 ο■ν, “therefore,” is rightly dropt. In 27 “the same” or “his” is a rather evenly-balanced question; but it is “true,” not “truth;” and it is a question between “abide,” or “shall abide,” at the end.

In 28 “if” is better than “when,” as the question is one of contingent consequence, and not exactly time. The margin has to be brought in to supply the deficiency of the Revised Version in rendering ■π' α■το■. “From before Him” has been suggested. In 29 the imp. form of the margin is better than the ind. of the Revised Version; but there is no indication of the difference between the two words for “know.” “Also” is by the Revisers adopted in the last clause; but in this epistle we have the older authorities agreeing in strange readings.

3:1 is an instance of what appears to be an enfeebling gloss appended to the first part of the verse. ■σμεν is admirable in 2; but here κα■ ■σμεν seems justly questioned, though attested by ■ ABC P, many cursives, and the Vulgate with other ancient versions. The Revisers rightly say “children,” not “the sons” as in the Authorized Version. The apostle John brings out eternal life and to be born of God; not the position of sons in contrast with slaves. Compare John 1:12, 13. In 2 they have corrected “it doth not yet appear” into “it is not yet made manifest,” though it does not accord with their claim of precision for the aorist, which Dean Alford would render “it never yet was manifested.” Of course actual appearing is meant, not making known by the word to faith, for this is already and clearly made; as the next clause indeed declares, without the copula of the Text. Rec “We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” The “it” of the margin for “He,” though approved by Tyndale, &c., seems uncalled for. In 3 there is a strong effort to guard against the misconstruing of ■π' α■τ■ “on him,” by the italic addition of set. At length there is an adequate public version of 4, so long misrendered to the inculcation of endless error in theology: “Every one that doeth [or, practiseth] sin doeth [or, practiseth] also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness,” not the transgression of the law, which is not imperfect only but false. Compare Rom. 2:12; 4:15; 5:13, 14; and 1 Cor. 9:20, 21. In 6 “knoweth” in the text is a loose rendering of ■γνωκεν, inferior to the Authorized Version. From 13 “my” is rightly omitted; but the omission of τ■ν ■δελφ■ν near the close is questionable, the general truth being reserved for a later statement. In 16 again we have the perfect ■γν rendered “know;” but while permanent effect is meant, a past act ought also to be implied: “We have known” or “have come to know.” The Text Rec. adds μου in 18: why should the Revisers supply “my"? In 19 it is “shall we know,” not “we know” as in the vulgar text followed by the Authorized Version. I doubt greatly the soundness of the rendering of 20, though it is plain that the Authorized Version is rather free and breaks the connection. Some critics and grammarians are much perplexed to find or make the construction smooth, as omission seems to have been resorted to with the same purpose by the copyists. That Lachmann and Tischendorf should make a new paragraph after this verse, breaking the manifest and weighty link between 20 and 21, might seem incredible if it were not before our eyes. I do not see how one can evade rendering 23 as in the margin, not as in the text, however unusual it may sound, which no doubt led to the tampering in 5. 58lect ε■ς τ■ ■νομα. Compare John 5:24, and other instances of like construction.

4:2 is badly rendered, repeating the old failure of all our English Versions from Wiclif downward, the Rhemish being as often the worst. As the proposition stands in them all, the result is a grave and manifest error. For evil spirits do not shrink from confessing the bare fact stated. What they do

not own is the person thus predicated; for this supposes His glory, yet in the humiliation of manhood. It would be senseless to talk of Moses or David, of Homer, Alexander, or Caesar, coming in flesh; for not one of them could have come otherwise. But the Son of God might have come in His own glory, or as an angel, or in any form He pleased. He was pleased to come in flesh, to come of woman, in the accomplishment of infinite grace. Hence the point here is the person that came in flesh, not the fact that He so came, which would be expressed by the infinitive or an equivalent and appended statement, whereas here we have the participle. It should be therefore "confesseth Jesus Christ come in flesh." This is confirmed in the most direct manner, if we accept (as most modern critics do) the words τ■ν ■ησο■ν without further addition in 3. It is easy to understand in copies accretion more or less from the preceding verse. In 5 there is an effort by inserting "as" to guard against the inference which the Authorized Version might convey, that it is about (περ■) the world, whereas it means out of it (■κ): a worldly source rather than subject. But "in us" will never do for 9, though a seemingly faithful or literal rendering, as in the Rhemish alone of English Versions. It either deprives of all sense, or conveys a false idea. The true force of ■ν ■μ■ν in this connection is "in regard to us," or in our case. The Authorized Version renders as if the Greek were ε■ς ■μ■ς the converse of their error in Rom. 8:18, where from the English we might suppose ■ν ■μ■ν must have been in the text. See the same thing again in 16. In 17 the Revisers of course rightly say "with us," nearly as in the margin of the Authorized Version, instead of their barbarous textual rendering "our love," which is the destruction of the truth intended. Our love could never give us boldness in the day of judgment; whereas if divine love has been perfected with us, even to the giving the Christian now to be in this world as Christ is, we may well have such boldness. How wondrous is our identification with Him who is perfect! More wondrous if this be so now in this world that we should have boldness in that day. There is in 20 a rather bold adoption of ο■ on small but good authority, instead of π■ς, but doctrine is not affected by it.

In 5:5 the Revisers may be justified in introducing the copula, for which there is good authority. In 6 there is a difficulty in fitly representing the change from δι' ■δατος κα■ α■ματος to ■ν τ■; thrice in the latter clauses (■ν being omitted in the last instance in Text. Rec. with most copies, but not the oldest save ■). Christ came by water and blood, not in the power of the water only, but in the power of the water and in the power of the blood. The believer's blessing is through the death of the Second man, not of the first; and this in virtue of His death, not only to purify but to atone. We need expiation, as well as purification; and both we have in the death of Christ; as the Spirit also bears witness, who is, and because He is, the truth. It is needless to discuss verses 7, 8, as it is clear and known that the last half of the former and the first half of the latter are spurious: three (not six) witnesses, and one testimony. Without the living energy of the Holy Spirit the other two witnesses to the death of Christ were of no avail for us. The three unite to assure the believer on God's part that life is in the. Son and nowhere else, as His death alone purifies and expiates. There is needed correction in the text and translation of 13, which is encumbered in the Text. Rec. and Authorized Version, where there ought to be nothing about "and that ye may believe," &c. Minor points might be added after this as before; but nothing further occurs to me just now as of any great moment in the revision of this deep and blessed epistle.

Revised New Testament: 2 and 3 John, Jude

The Second Epistle Of John

I. The Authorized and Revised Versions are questionable as to “lady.” Kyria is not without claim as a proper name instead of the appellative “lady “; while the idea of some that Eclecta is meant seems unfeasible, and indeed refuted by 13. But the Revisers rightly say “in truth” as characteristic of the apostle's love. Loving in truth supposes the truth known, but it goes farther and so stamps the love. Thus in fact the Authorized Version renders the same phrase in verse 4. Again, it is not well to confound lyv. with vv., the perfect with the present part. “That have the knowledge of” might fairly represent the force. In 2 the Revisers say “it” in the last clause to mark the change of construction. In 3 they give correctly the future: “Grace shall be with us,” &c. For ■μ■ν (■ B L P &c., and so Stephens) they read here, instead of ■μ■ν as in K, most cursives, and so Elz. followed by the Authorized Version. Undoubtedly “you” is the more usual wish; but this is rather an assurance, and the peculiar form well admits of the apostle's putting himself with those addressed, as in the preceding verse. “The Lord” (κυρ■ου) is doubtful, though strongly supported, as some of the best uncials, cursives, and versions do not sanction it. In 4 “I rejoice” is a dubious rendering of the aorist, though I presume its adoption was mainly grounded on the perf. that follows, ε■ρ., which certainly must mean, not “I found” only, as in the Authorized Version, but “I do find.” The Revisers rightly give “we received.” — “That we love one another” in 5 goes back from the entreaty of the apostle to the commandment of the Lord when on earth. In 6 divine love is shown to be identified with obedience, or at least inseparable from it, as it really is in the new nature, eternal life in Christ. What created the need for thus pressing the truth is the fact (ver. 7) that many deceivers went forth into the world, those that confess not Jesus Christ coming [■ρχ.] in flesh. The received text ε■σ■λθον, though supported by most, and in the Authorized Version, must yield to the more, ancient and truer ■ξ■λθον. Of course the last clause should be “the” deceiver and “the” Antichrist. Here, too, it will be noticed that those who so wrongly contend for a continuous force in σωζ■μενοι and ■γιαζ■μενοι, the Revisers included, are obliged to own that the present part is timeless in this instance. Compare 3 John 3, where it is really no question of epoch. At any rate the late Dean Alford very properly shows that in these cases the present has nothing to do with time, but represents the great truth of the Incarnation itself, as distinguished from its historical manifestation [■λθ■ν, 1 John 1:6], and from the abiding effect of that manifestation [■ληλυθ■τα, 1 John 4:2); as all three are confessions of the Person ■ησο■ς χριστ■ς, distinguished from the accus. with infin. construction, which would have reduced the confession to simply the fact announced; whereas in each case it is the PERSON who is the primary predicate, the participle carrying the attributive or secondary predicate. There has been sad tampering with the MSS. in 8, and the text accordingly varies in the hands of the editors also. Thus Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Wordsworth follow ■ A, eight cursives, and other good authorities, in the reading α■ργ■σασθε, which gives the at best commonplace sense “ye wrought.” These and others also, as Colinaeus and Alford with the Revisers, give “ye lose not” and “ye receive,” but “we wrought.” The text adopted by Erasmus and the Complutensian editors, by Stephens, Beza, and Elz., yields a

touching appeal to those addressed, that the apostles and all who labor in the truth and for Christ might receive full recompense. Copyists, commentators, and critics missed the meaning, which is as delicate as it is forcible, though Beza was dull enough to say, in alluding to the text with the uniform second person, that the sense is the same. The Complutensians interpolate καλ■ after ε■ργ., as does the Antwerp Polyglott; but not Goldhagen's edition, which some have supposed a reprint of the Greek Testament in either. Romanist theology sought to draw from the verse a Scriptural ground for their Pelagian notion of the meritoriousness of good works. Its real drift was, as one might expect, generally misunderstood. The correction in 9 is most important, “Whosoever goeth “onward,” προ■γων, (■ A B 98m.g. the best Latin, Sab. Aeth.), not παραβα■νων, as in the Text. Rec. and the more ordinary copies. “Transgression” is not the point, but development as to Christ, instead of abiding in the doctrine of Christ, His deity and humanity. It is really more forcible to omit the second το■ χριστο■ or α■το■, and so the oldest MSS. and versions, &c. “Greeting” is the better rendering in 10, 11. In 12 ■ confirms K L P with most cursives in reading ■μ■ν, “our,” with Erasmus, Compl., Steph., Elz.; but ■μ■ν, “your,” has good and ancient authority.

Revised New Testament: 3 John

1. A similar remark applies here as to 2 John There is in 2 the better rendering of “in (lit. concerning) all things,” not “above all things” as in Homeric usage. Thus simply is a strange difficulty, as others before had shown it ought to be, banished from our version. In 8 it is rightly “brethren.” Compare 2 John 7. The literal rendering “thy truth” would hardly convey the meaning, and “the truth that is in thee” as in the Authorized Version is not quite the thought, but “thy [abiding in the] truth, even as thou walkest in truth.” In 4 an omission is supplied, “these things,” or “this.” Only here Text. Rec. omits τ■, which is read by A B C &c., and this the Revisers rightly follow, “in the truth.” The marginal alternative of “grace” for “joy” would scarcely have received notice if the combined Vatican and Vulgate had not stood so high with the Cambridge school. The correction in 5 is important, for the ordinary text is almost senseless, “to the brethren and to strangers.” It is really “toward the brethren, and that, strangers,” το■το instead of the second ε■ς το■ς. Gaius, or Caius, was, thus open-hearted toward the preaching or teaching brethren, and this if strangers; and John would have him go on in that faithful work of love. He would have Gains, not merely to receive them, but to set them forward (6) on their journey worthily of God, who loves such men and such ways. In 7 “the Name” is the true reading on almost all authority worth speaking of, without “his” (α■το■), which is due to the Complutensian editors (not to Erasmus), followed by Beza and Elz. The best authorities give, not ■θν■ν, but ■θνικ■ν, “of those of the nations” or Gentiles. In 8 it is not ■πολ., as in Text. Rec., but ■πολ., to bear up or welcome. It may be well to mention here that ■p.m. and A join in the absurd misreading ■κκλησ■■, instead of ■ληθε■■. This error may have been through the words that follow. How vain to idolize these venerable documents! Had B instead of A been one, we might have heard more on behalf of the variant. From 9 the Text. Rec. drops τι, “somewhat,” which the Revisers of course accept on excellent authority. They have done well to mark ■πιδ■χεται as distinct from ■πολ. in 8. It is used for recognition or admission of authority, and sometimes for entertaining people. Never was a mistake greater than to conceive the Greek Testament lacking in precision. So in 10, “bring to remembrance” is more correct than “remember,” as “wicked” is preferable to “malicious.” The casting out those who would receive the traveling brethren appears to have been an arbitrary rejection or declaring out, not a Scriptural expulsion or putting out on the part of the assembly. Gaius was not to “imitate” the evil but the good (11). The copula of Text. Rec. should disappear. In 12 it is rightly the sing. “thou knowest,” not “ye know” as in the Authorized Version following Text. Rec. It seems strange that in 14, as in 2 John 12, the margin does not represent, as in the Authorized Version, the literal rendering “mouth to mouth.” In 14 we find “the” friends rightly in the Revised Testament on both occasions. In the second epistle we have the children of the elect sister saluting; here as writing to Gains the apostle brings in the friends saluting and saluted. How refined and sincere is the love that is of God!

J E.

1. The Authorized Version has “the,” the Revised Version “a,” servant. Judas, bondman, &c., is best, as often pointed out. “To them that are called” would answer to το■ς κεκλημ■νοις rather

than to τ. κλητο■ς, the called. But “for” Jesus Christ, though grammatical, is open to question; “in” as parallel would seem better, or perhaps “by.” “Sanctified” in the Authorized Version is the right version of a wrong reading displaced on good authority by “beloved.” 3. It seems strange that Lachmann should by punctuation so divide the sentence as to impair or destroy what is otherwise simple and weighty. He puts a comma after the twofold ■μ■ν, the effect of which is to falsify the epistle; for it does not treat of the common salvation, but is an earnest contention for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Mere scholarship without a spiritual mind is untrustworthy in divine things. In Text. Rec. followed by the Authorized Version ■μ■ν is wrongly omitted: the Revised Version inserts it correctly on high authority, and renders the text better in more than one word. In 4 κρ■μα is rather the “charge” for which they were to be judged than “condemnation.” Hence it came to mean the sentence or doom, as with us crime. In 5 the marginal rendering appears to be better than that of the text; but θε■ν of the Text. Rec. is rightly rejected on ample authority. The Revisers correct the double error of the Authorized Version in 5, “once knew.” It should be “know once for all.” “This” is an error, not of rendering like those just named, but of the Text. Rec. followed by Authorized Version. It should be π■ντα, “all things,” not το■το, “this,” as in the later copies. It is a mercy that the love of paradox with deference to A B &c. did not as in Lachmann and Alford introduce ■ησο■ς here, where K■ριος without the article, Jehovah, is the true reading. But why τ■ δ., “afterward"? Why not “in the second place?” In 6 “angels” rightly in the Revised Version, not “the” as if all were concerned. It is a defined set among the angels. But is “hath kept... unto” good English? “He hath in keeping” might do better perhaps; and so I see, nearly, Mr. T. S. Green. In 8 the Revisers rightly give us” —yet,” and drop “filthy,” which is implied in the context, as they represent well the anarthrous force of ο■τοι ■νυπν., which can hardly bear “these dreamers,” but means rather “these in their dreams,” or “dreaming as they do.” In 12 I think there cannot be a doubt of the article as the genuine reading, which gives vividness and objectivity to the σπιλ■δες, whether sunken rocks or blots be meant. But it is not correct to impute to Beza simply the Authorized Version which construes do. with ■αυ. π., inasmuch as the Syriac and ancient versions in general so take it, except perhaps the Vulgate followed by the Rhemish alone of English versions, which takes it with ε■ωχο■—In 13 it should be the plural form “shames” or “disgraces,” which is more usual in English, to guard from the equivoque; for they can clearly have no sense of shame. It means shameful things.

Do not the Revisers furnish an unnatural and misleading version of το■τοις in 14? What is the sense of “to these?” One can imagine a far-fetched way of supposing that Enoch prophesied to the corrupting apostates who shall meet their doom when the Lord is come in judgment. But a dative of reference is far simpler, “for,” “as to,” “of” as in all the English versions like others. They of course give “came” as in prophetic vision, not “cometh,” which is to confound the tense system; and they translate ■ν here rightly with (i.e. amidst) His holy myriads. And here be it noted that Professor Volkmar's assumption that Jude quoted from the so-called Book of Enoch is not only unfounded but gross ignorance; for while the words in our epistle fall into harmony with all revelation, those of the Aethiopic document are as different from Jude's as they are opposed to the truth. The apocryphist makes the Lord come in judgment of His holy myriads 1 instead of His enemies, contrary to all scripture, but the not unnatural thought of any unbeliever, Jew or Gentile. It is untrue that Jude quoted from this pretended Book of Enoch. The κατ■ π■ντων of our epistle (15) resists any such idea. Not improbably it was a Jewish forgery; and men who could resort to such iniquity have no true perception of the truth, as here we see that, if the forger meant to

incorporate the words of Jude into his fable, he failed even to accomplish this seemingly mechanical task, and taught heterodoxy in the change he introduced, however slight in appearance. Compare either the English version of Laurence (chap. 2 p. 2, Oxford, 1821) or the Aethiopic (chap. 2 p. 2, Oxon. 1838). M. de Sacy renders the passage correctly enough, “Et venit cum myriadibus sanctorum, ut faciat judicium super eos,” &c. His note adds: “All reste, on pourrait supposer que l'auteur du livre d'Enoch aurait emprante ce passage de Saint Jude.” Very likely the author imitated Jade, and incorrectly borrowed, as we have seen. Certainly Jude did not quote from this apocryphal book, as Professor Westcott like others seems to suppose.

In this same 15 Tischendorf retains α■τ■ν after ■σεβε■ς as in the Text. Rec., contrary to his critical note (Ed. viii.), which rejects it on the highest authority, but he reads λ■γων against weighty witnesses. In 18 there is a question of text and of translation. Text. Rec., in accordance with the majority, reads ■ν ■. χ., in the last time; but the ancient copies give ■π'■σχ■του [το■] χ., ■ &c. attesting the article, B C &c. omitting it, which the Revisers follow. Compared with other varieties of the phrase, it would seem to mean “at the end of the time.” In 19 the true reading is ■ποδ. without ■αυτο■ς, as Eras. Compl. and Stephens edited, but Colinaeus even before Beza and Elz. added it. The Rescript of Paris supports it and a few cursives, which may have been Beza's three old copies. But this sort of separatist is not to be confounded with the α■ρετικ■ς in Titus 3, 1 Cor. 11, Gal. 5, for the mischief was according to the context from their being within, not from their going out. They were certainly far from the mind and grace of Christ; but if they separated the saints from themselves or themselves from the saints, it was not, it would appear, by an outward breach: they carried on their deadly and corrupting work inside: They were “sensual,” as the Authorized and Revised Versions say, or rather “natural” men. Dean Alford reasons from the words, not from the written word, when he treats ψυσικο■ as midway, between πν. and σαρκικο■. For 1 Cor. 3 plainly prove that σ. is the true midway term, and means one unduly deferring to intellect or fleshly feeling, but a saint (like the Corinthian believers); whereas ψ. means man in his natural and absolutely unrenewed estate, as indeed here described πν. μ■ ■χ. In 22, 23,. the authorities are most conflicting. Some like the Text. Rec. make but two classes, others three. One could not gather from the Greek or the English of the Revisers that some of the most venerable and best documents, supported by the oldest versions and other witnesses. point to ■λ■γχετε. (A C, many cursives and versions), not ■λεε■τε (or 1XEar/., in 22; or yet more to Zancplyoifivoec (14 A B C &o., which they rightly follow. The Vulgate repreBents the ancient text fairly, save that it deserts its own rendering of S, in verse 9, which substantially suits 22 far better than “judicatos.” Dr. Wells and Bengel first vindicated the true text, in which the critics wonderfully agree. Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Wordsworth, Griesbach and Scholz are poor enough,Weetcott and Hort worst of all; for what can be more absurd than for scholars to present, as an inspired text, such a jumble of readings as orie tdv 1XEEcire &atcpevopivovc 04,4'Ere itc 7f.

K.r.X.? For to construe this at all we must take the first words as a strict relative, and the first verb as an indicative, to the utter dislocation of the rest of the sentence, and the destruction of any just sense from it as a whole. The twofold Asars of N B cannot stand, nor the omission of oSc Si in 13 before creoCere. The Revisers did adopt unhappily the first iXEare, but the rest of their text is all right. It seems surprising that they should not have named in their margin the good and ancient evidence for iXiyxErE. In 24 both Authorized and Revised Versions agree in adopting “you” as in N B C L, many cursives, and all the versions of note, though Eras., the Compl., Colinaeus, Stephens,

Bengel, &o. preferred abrcnic," them," with K P and some forty cursives. In 25 there is no reasonable doubt that goo? in the Text. Rec., followed by the Authorized Version, is well left out by the superior authority of the older MSS. and versions. It probably crept in from Rom. 16:27, where it is as perfectly in place as here superfluous. But there are two omissions also of the Text. Rec., which are properly supplied by the Revisers, as, I. X. r.K. bpti-Jv and 7rpO z. r. °wamn, which rest on ample and sure authority, giving of course additional force and beauty to this solemn yet comforting epistle, with its closing doxology.

Revised New Testament: Revelation 1-5

The closing book of the New Testament stands less correctly than any other in the received text. Hence there is much more comparatively to be noted in comparing the Revised Version with the Authorized. Happily among critics the agreement is unusually great, as few can justify the Erasmian editions, which he only partially corrected by the help of the Cornplutensian. Hence many errors have been perpetuated through R. Stephens, Beza, and the Elzevirs, of which no scholar acquainted with the more ancient authorities can doubt the correction. So great has been the effect of better copies (MSS. or Vv.), that perhaps no book in the New Testament now commands more consent among scholars as to its text.

Chapter i. 1 affords an early specimen of rash innovation effected by punctuation, which has not commended itself generally, no not even to Lachmann. It was probably due to the influence of Drs. Westcott and Hurt, who adopt it in their Greek text. Wiclif's is the only English version which preceded them in so strange a view; but J. H. Heinrichs contends for it in the tenth vol. of Koppe's edition, and wrongly, as I cannot but think with Dean Alford. But there can be no doubt that they are justified with almost all critics, and on ample authority, in excluding7c “and” in the closing clause of 2. For the witness of John was the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, but visions seen by him: not consisting of visions in addition to the other two descriptions. He is here, not an apostle only, but emphatically a seer. Such is the character of the book. In 3 there is no need as in the Authorized Version to say “this” and “those,” but “the” in both instances. Some of the ancients and even a pair of cursives (7. 16.) give the demonstrative; but there is no real ground. In 5 the change from “prince” to “ruler” is not much; “loveth” for “loved” is good; “loosed” for “washed” is hazardous, though here Tischendorf too was swayed by the Sinaitic in addition to A C, &c., to give in to Lachmann and Tregelles. The vowel might easily have displaced the diphthong, especially as the rendering is thereby easier, though less akin to the Johannean style. The Greek commentators try to incorporate, both figures. In 6 the Revisers rightly say “a kingdom,” and “the” glory. In 7 they purposely give “the” clouds, but might well have put “land” for earth in the margin. They have also omitted the clause “the beginning and the ending,” brought in from the end of the book, though the Sinaitic, &c. support it here. In 9 they omit “also” of the Authorized Version following the Text. Rec., and “in the” before kingdom, to the great detriment of the force. “Of Jesus Christ” as in the common text cannot stand; but “in Jesus,” though highly supported, is unexampled as to usage, which would seem rather to require “in Christ,” or “in Christ Jesus,” with excellent authority, and in the latter case very large. But “Christ” should disappear from the end of the verse, on the authority of jZ A C P, &c. In 11 a long interpolation after the first word in the common text disappears, and another after “churches.” In 14 “white as white wool” is self-evidently the sense intended; “white like wool” as in the Text Rec. and Authorized Version is not intelligible. It would seem also from iii. 18 that red hot, and so “refined” is meant in 15 also. “And the Living One and I was dead,” opens 18 rightly. “Amen” should vanish, and Hades follow death. In 19 it should be “Write therefore” as is generally known; but why the vague “hereafter,” at the end, and in iv. 1, instead of the more precise “after these things,” which is favored by the context? John was to

write (1) the things which he saw, (2) the things which are, and (3) the things which are about to happen after these (i.e., the seven churches as set out in the seven letters of our Lord): not, as Dean Alford so strangely says, the things seen supplemented by what they mean, which would demand Ilya instead of a. In this, however, the Revised Version is right, like the Authorized Version and almost if not all others. In 20 is not our tongue capable of reflecting the anarthrous usage of “angels,” no less than of “seven churches “? If there is a defining genitive in the one case, there is a numeral in the other, which renders the predicate sufficiently definite without the insertion of our article in the one more than in the other.

In ii. 1 of course the Revisers correct “of” to “in” Ephesus, following a better text than the received one. The confusion and addition in 3 are corrected on good authority. “And thou didst bear” shifts from being the first member to the second place, and is connected with “for My name's sake,” “and hast labored” being expelled. In 4 there is rightly the omission of “somewhat,” but why omit “this"? It is better without addition. Still more important is the exclusion of “quickly” from 5 on the authority of jZ A C P, the Vulgate, Memphitic, and 2Ethiopic, though the Basilican Vat. and perhaps all the cursives support it as did the earlier editors. It was an addition of the copyists, perhaps from 16. In 7 it is not in “the midst of” the paradise of God, but “in” it, “my” being probably a gloss.

In 8 the Revisers correct “is alive” to “lived.” In 9 they omit “works and.” In 10 for “none” they have “not,” and “the” (not “a”) crown of life.

In 13 they leave out “thy works and “; but they refer in their margin to the uncertainty of the Greek text in the clause about Antipas; and assuredly, as it stands in the Alexandrian and Parisian or even Sinaitic Uncials, it is hardly translateable. The later Vatican, and many cursives add ars as the Porphyrian and others have Cv at which removes the difficulty. I do not dwell here or generally on the effort to avoid the English perfect indefinite where the aorist occurs in Greek, as it is of such frequent occurrence. In 14 some,” or persons, that hold is better than them that hold; and a similar remark applies to 15, which closes with “in like manner” instead of “which thing I hate,” a mere blunder of some copies. In 15 there is the curious fact of a reading (Eryviv) introduced by Erasmus, whose MS. here failed, without one known witness, followed in the Greek Bible of Aldus (1518), Cephalceus (1524), and by Colinseus (1534); also in the editions of R. Stephens, of Beza, and of the Elzevirs. In the Complutensian it is of course 07Sep' and so in all critidal editions, Gratz following it, but not Goldhagen. Bengel avoided the error. Yet it is remarkable that all the English translations are right in giving “knoweth,” which answers not to E'71,10 which they read, but to o7Sev, a reading which few of them saw, or thought of.

In 19 a bettor text is followed by the Revisers, which the reader may see by comparison. “Service” should follow “faith,” and the closing clause should be “and thy last works [to be] more than the first.” In 20 “a few things” is all wrong, and on slender ground. Indeed X and some cursives give “much,” some others “many things “; but the weight of authority is decisively against any qualifying term here. In 21 the Revisers rightly say “willeth not to repent.” Tyndale misled the English who followed him into the feeble, if not false, “repented not.” In 22 “I cast,” not merely “will,” as it is also “her” works. In 24 “and” if not “unto” also should vanish: an error in the Text Rec. as in the Authorized Version. So the “and” before “which” is spurious. In 26 “authority” is better than “power"; as it should also be “he that” keepeth my works. In 27 the highest witnesses support the present, not future, “are broken to shivers,” and “they” of the Authorized Version and the margin is

questionable as the subject, instead of the vessels of pottery as in the Revised Version.

In iii. 2 the Revisers give “was” ready to die, reckoning from the time of strengthening, as “are” would be from the epoch of writing. Further, they omit the article on the testimony of A C an& the margin of the Codex Reuchlini, which Erasmus too followed; but all others are adverse, including NB P and the body of eursives, &c. Hence the Revisers translate “no works of thine.” — “On thee” in 3 after. “come” has very good authority, if not the best. “But” should surely open 4, and “even” retire, both on excellent ground, God. Reuchl. misleading in both. In 5 for “the same” read “thus,” the adverb, not the pronoun.

In 7 there is a measure of uncertainty in the readings, but the sense is only affected in a slight degree. But surely in 8 the latter half gives the reason, “because,” not “that” as the Revisers say, connecting what follows with “I know thy works,” and treating the intervening words as a parenthesis. Also is not “little power” more suitable to the context than “a” little, meaning some? Weakness characterized the Philadelphian assembly, but they kept Christ's word and denied not His name. There seems no change of moment in 8, though a marked literality of rendering in the Revised Version, save that they depart from their usual preterit for the aorist at the close. Nor is there anything to detain in 9. In 10 they, with the critics, reject the opening “Behold” on ample and ancient authority. In 12 I am not aware of any authority for the curious slip here in the Elzevir editions of the New Testament which read Xeuii people, for v., temple.

Of course the error in 14 is corrected, and “in Laodicea” takes its place. In 16 the true order is “hot nor cold.” In 17 there is good authority for repeating the article before “miserable,” which certainly gives marked emphasis; but the chief MSS. omit, which makes the construction regular, as in the Revised Version. There is no doubt the Authorized Version erroneously omits it before “wretched,” —Nothing calls for special notice in 18-22.

In iv. 1 a door “opened” is correct, as in iii. 8. The double “was” of the Authorized Version is not necessary any more than “a voice” of the Revised Version. Compare i. 19 for “hereafter.” The copulative disappears rightly from 2. There is no effort made to distinguish KvadOev from IC2;KX111. Yet distinction it is hard for any one to believe not intended, if one compare 3, 4, 8 with 6, v. 11 in the true text, and vii. 11. Another has suggested “round” for the first, and “around” for the second, which admits more of detached objects surrounding, while the first may apply to connected objects though not exclusively. In 4 the Revisers rightly give “thrones” not “seats,” as in the Authorized Version. But in 6 why a “glassy” sea? Does not baXivl point to the material in the vision, and not to its mere smoothness? “Glassy” answers to imA °et+ or imA.of,Sys. or vaawsr,e. It is the more important, because its force symbolically depends on its true meaning; and those who miss that meaning slip into all sorts of aberrations from the truth intended, as one may see in Elliott's Horse Apoc. and other works. Of course by “living creatures” is justly displaced the strange “beasts,” which, given by Wiclif, survived in all the successive English versions down to the Authorized Bible. In 9 and 10 the future form is correct, not the English present as in the Authorized Version. In 11, “were,” not “are,” is the right word.

In v. 3, “no one” is better than “no man,” as in the older versions. “And to read” in 4 is a gloss. So is “to loose” in 5. In 7 “the book” is not duly authenticated; so that the Revisers rightly supply “ie.” In 8 it is “the” saints. In 9 it is “sing,” not “sung.” But the very material change is the quasi-absolute use of ilftipaeas by the omission of “us,” for which the Revisers substitute “men.” This is not only

sustained by A 44, Aeth., but confirmed in the strongest way by the verse following, as we shall see presently. “Purchase” is right, not “redeem.”

Revised New Testament: Revelation 6-9

In 10 the the true reading is not;halts., but airroxis, “them,” which falls in with the omitted object in the preceding verse, and the verb that follows, “they (not we) shall reign.” But “over the earth” is surely the right rendering of 4v; following a verb of rule. When the place in which one reigns is required, it is ■v.

But er; implies the sphere or subject over which the rule extends, as any one can verify in the Greek version of Kings and Chronicles, and indeed in any correct Greek writing. Apart from government or authority, e7r; Tip y. might well mean “on the earth,” but not when so connected as here. There is another question of moment in the verse which the Revisers seem to have decided wrongly, the present instead of the future of the last verb. The reign of the saints over the earth (or, if they will, upon it) by the showing of the Revelation itself was not yet come till chap. xx., after most weighty and striking changes, and it can only be anticipated here. It is untrue, even if the church were in question, (which it is not) that we are yet reigning, though made priests and kings in title. Compare 1 Cor. 4:8, and Rev. 3:21: even our Lord sits, the rejected but exalted King, with His Father on His throne, and has as yet only given us the promise of sitting with Him on His own throne. He will come in His kingdom; and it is in the resurrection or changed state that we shall reign with Him, not in our natural bodies, nor yet in the disembodied condition. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye, not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:2, 3.) That the church now reigns in Christ, all things being put under her as under His feet, is Popery, not Christianity. True doctrine therefore confirms H P and some thirty cursives, some of the best versions and early comments, as against A B, some twenty-six cursives, &c., especially as it is but the question of a central letter easily dropt. This can be readily seen in Rev. 20:6, where the Alexandrian alone has the present against all other authority and the context, though it is not really so absurd there as in v. 10. Yet the Revisers have introduced this violent and really unreasonable change, without even a marginal note to record the protest of one dissenting voice that understood its bearing. The Americans are equally silent. Naturally they correct in 13 the singular confusion of the Authorized Version, and give “on” the sea. They also mark the article “the” blessing, &c. Another important correction long known is the omission not only of “twenty four” in the middle but of the object at the close of 14, the effect of which is to imply that the elders fell down and did homage to the Lamb as well as to Him that sitteth on the throne, in accordance with the verse before. “Him that liveth forever and ever” has not a known Greek copy to warrant the addition, which is due to Western influence. It is noted as singular that Ewald in his Comm (Lipsiae, 1828), after drawing out well the critical correction of 9, 10, should have wound up his remarks by an irreverent and heterodox note on the verse before us, based on this unfounded reading due to Erasmus, who translated Primasius or a later copy of the Vulgate, and translated it ill, for he omitted the article before t'LZA,Tt. The Complutensian text printed before Erasmus' first edition rightly omits the words.

In vi. 1 it is hard to see why the Revisers should render their correct text “with” a voice, as it is a nom. pond. They rightly read “seven,” and as rightly omit “and see,” though B and near forty

cursives support the sense, not one known MS., the precise form (SVirc, a conjecture of Erasmus) of the Text. Rec. The correction here is valuable; for the call of each living creature is not to the prophet of any other than to each horseman, who thereon does come. Some have thought that the copyists were influenced by Ezek. 8:9; possibly it was John 1:39: if so, it was a strange blunder. Even if Kai Me, as is most likely, was inferred from the immediately following Kai c7Sou (May), it was a baseless and fraudulent addition. A similar remark applies to 3, 5, 7. In 2 there is no more to remark in the text than az;TOv instead of ai,q, as in 4, 5 also, which is required by ample authority. The differing force can be a good deal better felt than expressed. The genitive would be the fact simply; the dative, a permanent relation; the accusative, activity on the part of the sitter. Here it is of course no question of a state or fixed position as in Matt. 16:18, Mark 6:35, Luke 12:44, John 8:7, but there is an object actively in view. All three occur in connection with the throne in Rev. 4:2 (ace.) 10 (gen.), v. 1, 7 & 13 (dat.) as in iv. 9, vi. 16, used with marked precision, the more remarkable as in a book abounding with anomalous Hebraistic forms, yet disproving any imputation of ignorance. Dean Alford, in a note on the first, notices how the ace. is used uniformly on the first mention, thus bearing trace of motion toward; but then at sight of xi. 16, where it is not a first mention, he wavers, and gives up the gen. and dat. as seeming to have no rule at all: a conclusion due to his own defect of analysis. “Came” is better than “went.” In 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, and in viii. 1, “had” should be omitted as in Authorized Version of 1. In 4 “power” of the Authorized Version is needless. In 5 “a balance” is right. In 6 “as it were” a voice is required by the most ancient witnesses, though ancient versions, save Vulgate, omit it like our Authorized Version. The Revisers are right in 8 as in 5 giving “saw,” not “beheld” and “looked,” as in the Authorised Version of 1 and 9. “By” is right in indicating direct agency, not “with,” a general character of destruction. In 9 the perfect participle, expressive of a permanent character or state, ought not to have been as in the Authorized Version merged in a simple preterite. For “were” read “have been.” In 10 it is rightly, “O Master, the” &c. In 11 “a white robe was” given is alone true according to the MSS., and ailTois Zicricrrrp is probably if not certainly right. For one could readily understand one or other left out by design as if needless, and the omission of El C. would next lead to the plural form in the versions. It has been thought that 41C1L0-70l9 as in Text. Rec. had the support of many cursives; but not one is known as yet. There is a curious-lacuna in the Complutensian edition, marked in the Greek text in the way so characteristic and common in their accompanying Vulgate, so that we cannot cite that work as to the point. They have marked the defect wrongly however, for their line should have been after Kl1; (Well aiproic and before 7aa rivar. K. 7. X., not before all. It was Erasmus probably who invented the ?TOES. plural, as well as -K The marginal rendering of the Revised Version answers to the reading of B P and some fifty cursives; that of the Text. Rec. is probably Erasmus' guess once more, as we know of no Greek copy that warrants it. We know from Dr. F. Delitzsch's collation that God. Reuchlini, the great Rotterdam scholar's MS., has a lacuna similar to that which the Complutensian edition must have had, (doubtless from the A _potoraurrov of ainois) „and that it gave 77-XviLateetv and not 77-Xlipaiaovrrit. The active sense is unsuitable. The Authorized Version is right; but how they drew it, unless from the Complutensian, it is hard to conceive, as the ordinary text conveys no such meaning. The critical reader can compare a similar conflict of readings in ix. 5, as to 7va /3. where the Complutensian editors give f3acravicwar. In 12 “lo” rightly vanishes, and the “whole” moon is read, on excellent authority. There are changes in 13, 14, but too slight to detain us. In 15 “the rich” properly follows the chief captains or chiliarchs; and the “caves” is better than “dens.” In 16 “said” was the mere carelessness of Tyndale, followed

by the other Protestant English translations, Wiclif and the Rhemish being right. But “their” or “his” wrath in 17 is a nice question, for high authorities support each, as in the case of “them” or “his” in 8; and it does seem singular that the Revisers do not notice the alternative in their margin.

In vii. 1 the omission of “and” is a strong measure, resting on A. C. and the Vulgate against all other authority; and here again no notice in the margin. “This,” not “these things,” is right. “At” instead of “upon as at the end of this verse, is questionable. In 2 we have “sunrising” for “east.” In 3 “in” is changed rightly to “on.” But “children,” not “sons,” is still the word in 4. In 5-8 “sealed” disappears rightly, save at the beginning and at the end. In 9 “these things” we find correctly for “this"; “out of every nation"; and “standing.” In 10 it is “they cry,” not “cried.” In 11-13 there is scarce anything notable; but in 14 it is rightly “come out of the great tribulation.” In 15 “dwell among” is very properly changed into “shall spread his tabernacle over.” In 16 “strike” or “fall” is better than “light.” In 17 we have very literally “be their shepherd and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life,” as also “every tear.”

“Followed” inviii. 1„seems taken from the Authorized Version of 7. In 2 “stand” is right, not “stood.” The marginal “at,” as in the text of the Authorized Version, seems more suitable than “over” the altar. But both Revised Version and Authorized Version miss the force of adRict here. The Authorized Version might have drawn it from their own rendering of chap. xi. 3, though efficacy is perhaps better than power, especially here. The supply of the ellipse by Lyra and Corn. a Lap. and by Beza is erroneous; and “it” or nothing is too vague. “The saints” is correct. In 4 “which came” should be dropt.—In crANOcv here as in v. 7, one may be slow to believe that the perfect does not involve a continuance which the aorist does not express; but it is hard to say more than “took” as the Authorized and Revised Versions. But “the” fire is right. The order of the words at the end is not certain. In 7 “And the first” is better than “The first angel,” which was assimilated to 8, 10, and 12. “And the third part of the earth was burnt up,” should be added as in the Revised Version. In 10 it should be as a “torch.” In 13 the important variant “eagle” on ample authority displaces “angel.”

In ix.1, “fallen” is right, not “fall,” as in Authorized Version, a fault of rendering rather than of reading, for 77-177-Towra is given by not even one cursive. Pit “of the abyss” is also better; and so throughout. In 4 “said” is, right, and “such” represents 077(VCS better than the Authorized Version, as being character and not mere fact. In 6 also the force is given more. But why not put “shapes” in the margin, if it must be given, and have “likenesses” in the text of 7? “Was” is right; and again in the end of 9. The Complutensian, Griesbach, and Scholz have xpvcro2(not without considerable authority, but the true text is “like gold” as in the Authorized and Revised Versions. In 10 “have,” not “had “; also the true text as in the Complutensian is “and stings” &c., as in the Revised Version, according to the best authorities. In 11 “They have over them as king the angel” &c. is the correct rendering. In 12 “the first” woe is right. In 13 the omission of “four” is questionable. In 14 “one” saying seems uncalled for, even on the critical reading; but “at,” not “in.” In 15 “the” hour, &c. In 16 “armies” is correct, “and” to be omitted. In the latter part of 17 as of 19 the present is well. In 19 “their” should be “of the horses.” In 20 and 21 the force is given more literally.

Revised New Testament: Revelation 10-11

The “rainbow” in x. 1 is right, but of no great weight; nor the omission of “foot” in 2, nor “the” seven thunders in 3, nor “their mime” in 4, nor “right” hand in 5. Why in 3 have the Revisers suppressed “own"? They might have left the reason or measure of emphasis to the expositor. But it is surprising that the Revisers should perpetuate in their text so gross a misrendering as “time” in 6. The natural inference from that word is that eternity immediately succeeds to the sounding of the seventh trumpet; whereas it is certain from the book that a millennium and more must intervene after the seventh angel's blast before the great white throne and the new heavens and earth (i.e. the eternal state.) The marginal correction “delay” should have been in the text, meaning in this connection not time but lapse of time or space as in vi. 11. They have, however, well rendered the Hebraistic cast of 7, “then is finished” &c., where “would have been” is more according to usual phraseology; and so in fact the Greek stands in the Text. Rec. as reflecting the Basilican Vatican and some eight cursives, several ancient versions, &c., but surely rather the correction of a copyist than the original text. The Revisers in 8 try to make regular another of the anomalous forms of the Apocalypse by inserting “I heard it.” But why in some cases when it is clearly impossible in all? It seems better to translate freely in all these peculiar forms, which the received text, following the later scribes, has also essayed to present according to regular grammar; whereas it is clear that they were written intentionally in their ruggedness, the writer knowing well how to express himself in correct Greek. And why should the Revisers have departed from the “little” book of their predecessors? No doubt Griesbach, Lachmann, Alford, and Tregelles support them, following A C 6.14; but P, a few cursives &c., agree with the Erasmian and received reading, and the Compl. is only another form of the diminutive (as in 2) with B, the body of cursives, &c. This difference is not unimportant, but meant expressly in contradistinction from chap. x. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,9. The verses that follow (9, 10) in chap. x. support the diminutive. It must be remembered, too, that “book” is wrongly given for “little” book by B, and some 35 cursives in 2, and that X and others read it in 9 and with still more support in 10, where all critics adhere to the dim. as the Authorized and Revised Versions do. No doubt the infinitive is a better text than the imperative, as in the Text Rec. of 9, as it is also the best attested. In 10 “when” displaces “as soon as.” In 11 “they say” is, according to both numerous and the most ancient copies, instead of Veyri in the Text. Rec.—wrongly translated he “said” with some of the Latins. And is not prophesy “over” a singular rendering? Granted that “before” as in the Authorized Version, and Tyndale's “among,” and Wiclif's “to,” are unusual with the dative. “As to” or “concerning” is more suitable. The Revisers say “of,” not “over,” in John 12:16, and quite rightly; they seem inconsistent and pedantic here.

In xi. 1 the Revisers have rightly struck out the interpolation “the angel stood, saying.” But here again they try to soften the singularity of the construction by their rendering of VTop “and one said.” The Bishop of Lincoln's comment allegorizes the reed, speaking as Andreas in the Catena does in another way. Surely the margin is better than the weaker text in 2. With 3 compare the remark on viii. 3. In the critical text of 4 we have another sort of irregularity, when in the same clause appears formal and rational concord; and the Revisers attempt no reflection of it. “Lord” of

the earth is right according to ample and ancient witnesses.—

In 5 desireth," or "willeth," is better than the ambiguous "will" of the Authorized Version; but "shall" desire rests on slight evidence (X A. 38).—

In 6 may or "Shall" desire is right. In 8 why should it not be "their body, or carcass [shall be] on," &c? Of course the Revisers rightly say "their" Lord.—9 is not ill translated though wordily: "And from among the peoples do men." &c. "And some," or "men," or "they," as in the A. V. is more compact. In 10 "rejoice" without "shall" stands on full authority (save 38), and so the Complutensian edition, but not so "make merry," though in the best copies, still less "send," where even the Revisers give the future with A C, &c. In 11 it should be "the" three; but why "the" breath of life?

That "beheld" or "beholding" is right. In 12 the Revisers adhere to "they" heard, as in the Authorized Version. But there is no inconsiderable testimony to "I heard." "The" cloud is the correction of simple mistranslation. In 13 "that," not "the same." —In 15 it should be either "that" of our Lord, or "of our Lord &c. is come." Notoriously the plural form as in the Text. Rec. and the Authorized Version is the mistake of a few cursives. In 16 "sit," not "sat." In 17 "which," or "who," "wast" (without "and art to come",) stand on good authority. They change "hast reigned" of the Authorized Version into "didst reign." In 18 "came" and several other minute changes are adopted. The Revisers are right of course in separating 19, as indeed it is the introduction to the vision that follows, rather than the conclusion of chapter xi. Probably "that is" (L) is right, as later critics think on good authority, though the omission of the article in rj B and most cursives, &c. must make it doubtful. "Testament" is all wrong, and everywhere save in Heb. 9:16, 17, as already noticed.

Revised New Testament: Revelation 12-14

In xii. 1 “sign” as in the old margin takes the place of “wonder,” as in 3. The Authorized Version should have been consistent with its own rendering in xv. 1. Tyndale ought not to have departed from Wiclif in this. The order of the Greek also is better kept in the Revised Version, as will appear from comparing 1 and 3; but there is no great reason for dropping “appeared” here after adopting it almost everywhere else in the Now Testament. No doubt the Authorized Version had preceded them in giving “was seen,” in xi. 19, and so they might have given in xii. 1 and 3, as both give in Acts 13:31, and 1 Tim. 3:16. Generally both give “appeared.” Further, “arrayed” and “clothed” are interchanged as in the Authorized Version, though the Revisers use the former. In 2 the Committee adopt a view of the text, in the insertion of an additional copulative, on the authority of C. 95, apparently confirmed by some of the Latin copies, more extreme than most, including Tischendorf, till the Sinaitic carried him away. Lachmann, in his lesser edition, followed the Alexandrian in having the copulative before c:$6. In 3 “diadems” is right, as in Wiclif and the Rhemish, not “crowns” as in the Authorized Version, &c. “ Drew” in 4 is an error, not of text but of translation in all the English versions from Wiclif down to the Authorized Version. All the English versions, the Revised included, have “stood” for “standeth.” It was Tyndale who misled the early translators in giving “as soon as it was born,” instead of Wiclif's more correct “when she had borne a child” or “been delivered” as in the Revised Version. In 5 all the previous translations avoid the simple “a son, a man child,” as in the Revision; as all give “was to” or “should” rule, and omit “the” nations. The better text would give the last “to” in Roman letters, not italics as in the Authorized Version. In 6 the replaced eicel of the old Manuscripts makes a scarce sensible difference save perhaps in emphasis FIebraistically. In 7 the anomalous construction To D “went to war,” or “going forth to war with,” is unquestionably genuine. The received reading evoNc!ptirrav is that of no known copy, and probably a mere guess of Erasmus from Arethas or the context. God. Reuchlini and the Complutensians give T0i) v.-9 is now accurately rendered by the Revisers in the main; and so yet more plainly 10. In 11 it cannot be as in the Authorized Version “by,” but “because of,” d,5 TO, nor their “lives unto the” death. In 12 it is “woe to the earth and to the sea,” not to “the inhabiters of,” as in the Text. Rec. from Erasmus' Codex Reuchlini or 1. The Complutensiau editors are right so far. But the Revisers follow the older form as in t.j A C P and a few cursives, and hence say, “woe for,” &c. At the end of the verse it is not mere lapse of time, which would be xp4vo R., but Kat pdv or season. Erasmus' manuscript of Reuchlin had the article like A C P and many cursives. It seems the more strange that he omitted it like K. B, and most without comment. In 15 the Revisers have not improved on the Authorized Version. They might easily have done so by closing the verse with “by a river,” instead of “the stream.” They are right in giving “of Jesus” in 17, omitting “Christ,” which has only inferior Latin support. The oldest and even the most numerous juniors do not give “Christ.” The Sinaitic and the Canonici?.4 in the Bodleian (98) strangely read Oco;). It is a pretty bold step of the Revisers to decide the question of what follows, and put what commonly stands at the beginning of chapter xiii. in the close of chapter xii., adopting “he,” (not “I") stood, without a marginal note. No doubt there is good and ancient authority for this departure from the Text. Rec. and Authorized Version; but excellent judges decide for the common

text, and in such circumstances change without a word of caution seems hazardous.

In xiii. 1 the Revisers follow authority in “horns” and heads as against the Vulgate and Arm. Erasmus probably had no other ground for the erroneous order of the Text. Rec. than, besides these, the fact of Codex Reuchlini; having omitted by inadvertence Ke'pc/Ta ccKe Ica". They try to represent 47r/ Ti2,1, IC. by “on,” and er; TAr K. by “upon.” The received reading, answering to “name” in the Authorized Version, is not without good support (C P, several cursives, ancient versions, &c.); but the plural form has yet more, and was the first printed reading in the Complutensian edition. There are critical questions in 2, but they do not claim attention here as the Revisers raise none in text or translation, save in their change from “seat” to “throne.” In 3 they rightly print I saw in italics, in accordance with the Complutensian edition; whereas the Reuchlin copy gave no authority to Erasmus, who ventured to insert ciZov, probably following; Latin copies (and not the best). I am unaware of any cursive save the valuable Parham 17(95) which roads the word; but it was only brought from Mount i Athos in 1837. 4a0. is not “wounded,” as in the Authorized Version, nor yet “smitten,” as in the Revised Version, but “slain,” as in both margins; but “death-stroke” well renders 7rX.. TOi; 9. In 4 the true reading is 7/1., r OTI re., certainly not the Erasmian conjecture TUP S. or ea. as the Reuchlin MS. fails here. B and many cursives, however, had Tti; 1sS.; Probably the Rotterdam scholar translated the Vulgate here, and so forgot the article before i'•ovat'ai, following. There is an omission in the Text. Rec. followed by the Authorized. Version of Kat before the second TA', which the Revisers of course supply. as amply justified. In 5, there is considerable discrepancy as to px.., but the ordinary text has the most ancient and best witnesses, though Lachmann adopted one shade of difference, and Tischendorf in his seventh edition another. But surely Trot paal here is more than “continue,” and means (as Dan. viii. 24; xi. 28, 0, 32 may illustrate) to do, act, work, practice, or pursue his course for 42 months. 7raeduov is a mere gloss from 7, though in B and most (as the Sinaltic has i OAce), and followed, in the Complutensian and Elzevir editions, not in Erasmus, R. Ste, phens, &c. The Armenian version, &c., cut the knot by dropping the infinitive altogether. In 6 too the plural has higher authority than the singular pa.. But the chief change is the discarding on good ground of “and” before the last clause; especially if with Alford we take it as in apposition with God's name and dwelling-place. The Revisers, it seems, regard it as exegetic of the dwelling-place only. In 7 must be added “and people.” In 8 it is certainly name,” emphatically singular, and indeed needing some means of expressing this, like “everyone” in! the Revised Version, or “whose name soever,” as Mr. T. S. Green proposes. Whether Dean Afford's reasoning influenced the Revisers is best known to themselves; but it is impossible to admit the soundness of bringing forward 1 Peter 1:19, 20 as the same thing with our passage, for it expressly speaks of Christ foreknown before the world was founded but manifested before the end of the times. Here there is no question of Christ purposed, but of the name having been written from the world's foundation in the book of the Lamb that has been slain. To say that Rev. 17:8 is cited irrelevantly here is surely idle. Christ's death is nowhere said to have taken place in divine counsels; it was foreknown, but took place in time. The Lord does the things known from of old, but they are nowhere said to have been done then. Is then the Authorized or Revised Version happy? It seems to be equivocal, if not misleading. A comma before “from” would have guarded the truth. The marginal note gives the right view; from which it would appear that the majority of the Committee preferred the wrong. The MSS. are in strange confusion as to 10. The common reading seems to give the sense; and the margin of the Revised Version expresses it better perhaps than the text. In 11 Codex Reuchlini misled Erasmus to edit in

all his editions 4. etpvloa (instead of &patty) followed in R. Stephen's first and second editions, but corrected in his third. It was right in the Coraplutensian edition. Matthaei edited the gloss Tofis inoim “my people” that dwell. Here in 14 “by the means of,” m the Authorized Version as in other English versions, should be “by reason of “; also “who hath” is right. And truly eccentric is the preference with Lachmann of aim.'"). (A C P) to airy. (X B and almost all other copies). There is little here to remark in 15, 16; but the Revisers rightly with others strike out the first “or” of the two in 17, Ta T. 0. Toll lip. being in apposition with 76 X.

In xiv. 1 it should be “the” Lamb on preponderant authority, though the Porphyrian uncial and at least seven cursives, &c., are known to omit the article which the Complutensian edition as well as Erasmus followed. But the Complutensian had better guidance in reading; A g a- o_ Ka. r_ _pop.a, as the Revisers translate, omitted by A _pOtOTEXIEV7011 no doubt in Codex Reuchlini as by Erasmus, Stephens, and Beza, so in the Authorised Version. His name and His Father's name is right. For “written” scriptum, (Iraq') Erasmuslhad kaidimm11, the odd error of Cod. Benchlini, in his editions 1.1, 2, and 3, reproduced in the editions of Aldus, Cephalaeus, &c. But if the idea of “burnt,” inustum, had been meant, the form would have been cEcaepiaov., not kaapavop which of course means burning. In the last clause of 2 it should be “the voice which “..” was as,” &c., on the fullest authority, though the Text. Rec. is not without support. The Complutensian edition is right. Ancient as well as modern versions, like the English, misled the Authorized Version here as elsewhere in “sung” for “sing,” as of course it stands in the Revised Version. But a very nice question is suggested by the conflict of the witnesses: should it be “a new song,” as in chapter v., or “as it were” &c. as in the Authorized and Revised Versions? N B P, most cursives and versions, omit kg, whereas some good cursives, Vulgate, &c., insert it. As to editions Alford and Tregelles bracket the word, Erasmus, Stephens, Beza,- Rlzevir, down to Lachmann adopt it, while the Complutensians, Bengel, Griesbach, Heinrich, Tischendorf (finally as at first), reject it. “Purchased” is right here, and in the following verse, as in chapter v. 9. The third “are” in 4, expressed in the received text, is probably to be understood only as in 14; A C P, &c.; but this makes no difference in sense. In 5, not “guile” but “lie” is the word. The MSS. (save A C P, 12) confirm “for,” but the words “before the throne of God” seem to have not one known Greek witness. In 6 “in mid-heaven” is right. But “set” or “settled” seems better than “dwelt” fora ka_v_VOVS. The anomalous Vevey, for Xbyorra, at the beginning of 7, the Revisers try to express by “And he saith.” The omission of +, “the,” before 0. sea is very doubtful, though three uncials and at least as many cursives favor it. The Revisers rightly omit “city,” in 8, and give “which,” rather than “because,” on good authority, though others not to be despised omit both, and make a new sentence begin here. The omission of the article as in Text. Rec. is unfounded, and due to Erasmus' carelessness, for the Reuchlin copy before him had no such barbarism. There is little to note in 9, save departure from order, and in 10 the article wrongly inserted, which may have led to Ivy. (In., instead of cin. 47. or the omission of the epithet altogether, as in A, 26. &c. Is it a happy rendering to say “an eternal gospel"? Would not “everlasting gospel” or glad tidings be better? Neither here, nor in Rom. 1:1, nor anywhere else is the phrase anarthrous because it had become technical, but because the object was to present it characteristically, in distinction from the good news, at a special time, of God's grace or of Christ's glory. This, true from the garden of Eden, is to be enforced by the solemn warning of judgment at the doors. The Revisers go back to Tyndale and the Geneva version. Did any of these appreciate its exact force? Nor is there more to observe in 11; but 12 shows us kac, inserted before the latter clause, to get rid of an anomaly. From 13 “to me” should

vanish, though not without the countenance of cursives, versions, and commentators. Both Erasmus and the Complutensians endorsed it. The Revisers in the margin give the unmeaning divisionwhich some of the ancients espoused and Wiclif expresses, and the Rhemish. Tyndale, followed by Cranmer and the Geneva version, gave “which hereafter dye in the lorde,” i.e., die in the Lord. But this is singularly far from the scope. On the contrary there was to be, when this epoch arrives, no more dying in the Lord: hence their blessedness is come, rest and reward assured. The Son of Man reaps the earth, and the vintage of unmingled wrath follows. It is the public award at the Lord's appearing, for those who had labored and suffered for Him, and with especial view to the comfort of the saints dying in the Apocalyptic crisis. There was to be no more dying in the Lord, but rather the blessedness of such thenceforward. “For,” not “and,” their works, &c. But ought not the Revisers, in accordance with their practice elsewhere, as in iv. 2, 4 (compared with 9, 10, and xiii. 1, 16, xiv. 9, 11), to have said “upon,” not “on,” the cloud? Cf 15, 16, in which last no doubt the genitive is right, not the accusative nor the dative. Neither cot nor coy is to be read in 15. In 18 the Revisers boldly adopt O with A C, “he that,” &c. But whence did our authorized translators get Tfjr ettoraou “of the vine"? Not from Erasmus or Stephens, but from Beza who refers to Arethas and the Complutensian edition, as well as two of his own copies and.he Vulgate-0 81. aic omnia. “As far as” fairly represents chrti in 20.

Revised New Testament: Revelation 15-16

In 15:1 the Revisers give rightly “seven plagues, the last” (i.e., such as are the last), not “the seven last plagues” as in the Authorized. Version. The reason is annexed why they were the last—because in them was finished the wrath of God. It is scarce necessary to add that “finished” is the true rendering of JTA jaVe, not “filled up,” which would answer rather toenAlipiLOry, the reading of no copy whatever. In 2 occurs again the error of “glassy” in the Revised Version, whereas the Authorized Version “of glass” is correct, as pointed out in the remarks on chap. iv. 6. It is the symbolic material in contrast with the sea of water in the temple: no longer the means of cleansing, but the sign of fixed purity. The misrendering destroys the, doctrine, as far as it goes, and insinuates either mere sentiment or a false thought in lieu of the truth intended. Unlike the vision of ch. iv., this sea was mingled with fire: those who reached it had passed through God's judicially inflicted tribulation, as their enthroned predecessors had not (having been caught up before it). “Them that come victorious from” is certainly more literal and pregnant like the Greek than “them that had gotten the victory over.” It is the usual form of designating a class apart from time. But surely the marginal “upon” or the Authorized Version “on” the glass sea is right, not the mere “by” of the Revised Version. “On the shore” of the sea is a perversion, if the sea refer to the temple; and it would be hard to bring in the Red Sea among the allusions of chapter iv. And if the Red Sea be excluded there, the beauty of the same image here, with the characteristic difference of mingled with fire, would be lost by including the Red Sea in it. To my mind the intention was to show these later overcomers as distinct, not only from the twenty-four elders, but also from the earlier martyrs of chap. vi. 9-11. If so, there is no reason from the imagery of chap. iv. in favor of “by,” or “at,” as against “on,” any more than from Ex. 15 “Over his mark” in the Authorized Version is the Erasmian misreading, with a few cursives, an addition opposed to all the best authorities. The Complutensian editors were right. “The” harps of gold seems to have been the blunder of all the English versions from Wiclif to the Authorized Version. Certainly neither Erasmus nor the Complutensians, neither Stephens nor yet Beza, receive the article, though given in B 2, 7, 8, 16, 29, 32, 35, 38, 39, 43, 47, 48, 50, 87, 94, 97, not to speak of Andreas and Arethas. But there appears to be no doubt that it is an error, probably from repeating the last syllable of the preceding word. It is hard to conceive why the Revisers preferred a;...wv “ages,” to eevan, “nations,” in the face of Jer. 10:7. No doubt the authorities are conflicting; but the Old Testament allusion is evident, and the context confirms it in the verse that follows. Probably the absurdly false reading which Erasmus (not the Complutensians) gave against his own MS. 1, and without any known Greek copy was due to confounding some abbreviation of seculorum for sanctorum, as Tischendorf conjectures; as it is likely that the Revisers' reading is due to 1 Tim. 1:17. No wonder then that Bengel, Griesbach, Heinrich, Scholz, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, T. S. Green, Alford, Wordsworth, hold to lOvel,v, if Westcott and Hort alone, or nearly so, prefer a;u'm, v. But should such a reading have found its way into the text of the Revised New Testament? Surely what has been discredited by so many and various critics of the highest eminence, on ample authority, ought not to be brought by Cambridge influence into a work which seeks universal acceptance. In 4 the pronoun is not found in the best witnesses, though in most of the cursives

&c., 95 shifting its place. The Greek for “holy” differs in the MSS, the best reading that which implies mercy in God (or piety in men), and not what means separation to God. So also the Revisers rightly say “the” nations.; for they shall all come yet and pay homage before God, but this as the fruit of the manifestation of His righteousnesses or righteous acts, not of the gospel as now preached. The gospel of His grace calls and separates the believer to Christ in heaven. It is hardly “I looked” as in the Authorized Version of 5, but “I saw,” as “behold” should vanish; for not even Erasmus' Codex Reuchlini has it and, of course, not the Complutensian edition. But in 6 we have the portentous reading AZOov `• a stone?” (A C 38, 39, 48, 90, 4) favored by Lachmann and Tregelles, as lately by the Cambridge professors, against all the other authorities, though some support the plural form of linen. Ezell. xxviii. seems a poor ground in the gorgeous description of Tire's prince for the holy executors of God's last plagues. No doubt, in chap. xix. 14 the word used is f3. not A. But this is as it should be; for angels are quite distinct from saints, however much superstitious ignorance, never Scripture, tends to merge them together. Here again, what were the Committee about to let the redoubtable twain with their satellites persuade competent and independent minds into such a vagary, or at least so questionable a word? In the editions of L., Tr., and of W. & H., it is not so singular. A public work should have been better safe-guarded. It is “bowls” in 7 rather than “vials"; and so throughout chap. xvi., &c. In 8 it is “finished” as in 1. It was not yet Christ coming to execute judgment in person, and to reign righteously over the earth; but the ministers of divine providence come out to complete the seven plagues of God's wrath before the day of His appearing. It is no question of saints on earth drawing near into the sanctuary (as now by the blood of Jesus in full assurance of faith), but of none able to enter till the angels have finished their task of judgment.

In xvi. 1 the Revisers give it literally “into,” not “upon,” and so in 2, 3, 4. The difference is maintained in the Greek, for it is strictly “upon” in the latter part of 2, 8, 10, 12, (of 4), 17. In the Text Rec. of 2 it is wrongly E;S in the latter part, but en-i is unquestionable. Near the end of 3 -rci seems omitted, as indeed B P and most cursives support the commonly received text. But A C, &c., give TA which might easily be dropt. The sense is substantially the same. In 4 they say “it” became blood. The change in 5 is greater, and on excellent authority. “O Lord” is omitted, and “thou Holy One” appears instead of “and shalt be.” In 6 “for” is dropt rightly. In 7 it should be “I heard the altar say on first-rate authority; as no doubt “another out of” is an interpolation due to the desire of softening so bold a figure. In 8 “it” is probably right, rather than “him,” as in the Authorized Version, which is put in the margin. In 9 why not “the” men? On the other hand they say “the” God, &c. In 10 as in 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, and 17 “angel” is excluded on very good grounds. Of course “throne” should displace “seat.” In 12 it is “from the sun-rising,” not “of the east.” The article in the Greek is probably right. In 16 the Revisers, like many, render “they,” not “he.” Grammatically, it might be either. If “they,” it is the evil spirits as instruments; if “he,” it is the One who employed them. “Of heaven” in 17 is very doubtful, though read by the later B and most cursives. In 18 are some slight corrections; and so there are in verses 19-21, but nothing calls for especial mention. “A man” has ancient and excellent authority in both MSS. and Versions, “men” rather more in Greek copies—and the Revised Version gives better the anarthrous form, as the Authorized Version would rather express the Received Text vi 11v0. with the mass of cursives. In 30 the Greek means, not “the mountains were not” as in the Authorized and Revised Versions, but “no mountains were,” &c. It is the old feebleness, or worse, in respect of the article.

Revised New Testament: Revelation 17-18

In xvii. 1 /tot “to me” rests on the witness of a few cursives, &c. The omission is assuredly right, and has all the higher authorities, and the mass too. But there is conflict as to the articles in the last phrase; and Tischendorf would not have decided against st A P, &c., which omit them, without very good reason. C. is here defective. It seems doubtful. But the Revisers seem to give rightly a preterit or aoristic expression in 2 rather than a perfect. —In 3 it is “a” not “the,” wilderness. In 4 “precious stone.” But why in the Revision, “even the unclean things of her fornication “? No doubt the Authorized Version renders loosely “and filthiness,” &c., or rather follows the Received Text, which was probably only Erasmus' guess, as Codex Reuchlini reads -ra imieairra with almost all witnesses, and so the Complutensian editors and all the critics.-(6) “The” harlots, &c., say the Revisers rightly; and “of the” abominations also. This was a case, not of reading, but of mistranslation in all the older English versions, save that of Rheims. Besides, they had from Latin influence the “whoredom” or fornications of the Authorized Version margin as their text. In 6 why do the Revisers here perpetuate the “martyrs” of the Authorized. Version? They give “witness” in Acts 22:20, and in Rev. 2:13, and of course everywhere, I believe, as indeed elsewhere “martyr” would be a ridiculous blunder; but why here? An oversight it is presumed. “A” great wonder seems strange English. In 7 “wonder” is no doubt.better retained than “marvel.” The Authorized Version erred in omitting “the” ten horns. Erasmus too had no reason to leave out the article at the beginning of 8, for his copy had it all right; and so the Complutensian edition of course. But the translators rendered as if it were there. It was a strange freak of Lachmann to edit lry6wa7r7o on the slip of A (e7Jfypa7rrat), which clearly should have been 1,47pavTat with all other authorities, save perhaps a cursive or two. The “name” or “names” is a fair question, as the witnesses are divided. But there is no doubt about the important correction at the end of the verse, waplcrrat “shall come” or be present, X A B P, more than 40 cursives, &c., as in, the Complutensian edition. Even Erasmus' copy had Ka; ircipecrrt as in X C W, and at least half, a dozen cursives besides; his 'calve', EfITEL which crept into the Received Text, and led to the Authorized Version, “and yet is” is simply baseless and absurd. The Vulgate, like the 2Ethiopic, gives nothing here: so of course Wiclif and the Rhemish, and also, strange to say, Tyndale and Cranmer. The Geneva followed the Stephanie Text. Only some of the copies joined 7rapbrTai with it SE in 9, which last B omits and joins 7r. with o van, and so perhaps the Vulgate and the English Versions that followed it. In 10 the Revisers are justified, I think, in giving “they” for “there"; but are they right in “the” five, “the” one? They well drop the copulative after “five are fallen."-11 is given rather better, “even he is an eighth,” &c. So is 12 less equivocal in the Revised Version. In 13 the Authorized Version gave erroneously “strength” as the equivalent of E ovaia. It should be “authority.” —The ellipse in 14 is filled up cumbrously by the Revisers; I doubt that any supply is needed in English, and the briefer the better, if intelligible. In 16 not “upon” but “and” the beast is the true reading and sense, as in all known MSS., uncial and cursive, and in the ancient versions, &c., save a few Latin copies, and Arethas, some omitting it altogether. The truth conveyed is of high moment; for thus it appears that the ten horns, instead of supplanting the beast, as in the past, are in the future to join him (cf. ver. 12) in destroying the harlot: a death-blow to the mere historicalist theory. The empire once ruled in

unity; the divided kingdoms have ruled since; never yet has there been an imperial head guiding them all in vengeance on the harlot of Rome, any more than the destruction of the Emperor and his satellite kings under the Lamb and the glorified saints from heaven.. (cf. Rev. 19) If history records the two first, prophecy bids us await the two last: to treat these as past is trifling with scripture. It is for the beast at least a divinely executed and everlasting destruction, instead of being, as with the previous empires, a providential overthrow only. Compare Dan. 7:11, 12. Babylon falls otherwise, as we have seen. In 17 the reading of the Received Text is found in no known manuscript Ta pq. TACO° and is probably due to Erasmus, even Andreas and Arethas._. TC_ Ca _01, a0VTal, but refusing support. The true is oi -X X the version is unaffected substantially. I think that the peculiar sway of Rome is marked peculiarly in the Greek of 18, and not justly reflected in the Authorised and Revised versions any more than in the other older Protestant translations. Wiclif and the Rhemish cleaving to the Vulgate are more literal, but as usual crude enough.

In xviii. 1 the copulative which introduces the chapter in the Received Text and the Authorized Version is supported by route cursives and ancient versions, and stands in the Complutensian edition as well as in those of Erasmus; but the best authorities discard it. But (7\\0v, “another,” omitted in Codex Reuchlini and two or three more is read by all the uncials, the cursives generally, the ancient versions, and the Greek and Latin commentators, as it rightly appears not in the Received Text but in the Authorized Version. In 2 it should be “cried with a strong voice,” not 7efxv1: 0.. It. as in the Received Text without known authority, but ierxvpi c. with the best and most. A and many cursives and versions have (!ircerev “is fallen” twice, P has it thrice; but B, very many cursives and old versions and writers, read it but once. There are various insertions and omissions in the copies which call for no special notice here. “Hold” —=—cb. the prison where they are forcibly kept. “Foul” and “unclean” in the Authorized _Ka_.41701.1. version represent.; Th; —In 3 occurs a singular discrepancy among the copies. Should it be 7rit-euicar or WE'71"710(0)KaV (or-aa1V)? “Drunk” or “fallen by"? Alford hesitated, Lachmann gave the last in his lesser and the first in his larger edition, Tischendorf and Wordsworth the first, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort—the last, Bengel, Griesbach, and Scholz adhering to the same sense in 77-7revice of the Received Text. Here again are sundry variations in the copies, omitting or inserting strangely. “Luxury” or “wanton pride” seems better than “delicacies.” In 4 are changes of order from that of the Received Text, but we may leave this. In 5 Received Text (with 33, 34, if we trust. Alter) isircoxo lieycra v “followed,” instead of the unquestionable. eiroAViegariv “were joined, heaped up, clave.” The Authorized and Revised Versions both give “have reached” rather singularly. In 6 “you” disappears for ample reason, as does “unto her” though the Received Text has here better support. “The” double is doubtful, even Lachmann omitting it with A B P and many cursives. The (7-re omitted before K. in the Received Text of 7 makes no substantial difference in the version. In 8 the best authorities (14 I'm• A B C 1', about 35 cursives, good ancient versions, and ecclesiastical writers) concur in “judged,” rather than “judgeth,” as in the Received Text, with several cursives, &c. In 9 “her” vanishes after “bewail” or “weep,” though not without authority; and sir' ((Hy “over her” displaces r'airrij “for her,” and again in 11. In 12 the Revisers rightly leave Out “the” merchandise (lit. lading or cargo); they also say “stone,” and correct like small blemishes in this verse and the following.13, from which last fell out of many copies and the Received Text Ka; 4101101, “and amomum,” or spice, after cinnamon, no doubt from similarity of ending. In 14 “the splendid” instead of “goodly” are “perished” rather than “departed,” which is an inferior reading.

“And” should not begin 16. In 17 is not KI,fl. a “helmsman,” or “pilot,” rather than “shipmaster,” as in the Authorized and Revised Versions? i',KN(ipo• was rather the skipper or shipmaster. But fir; Tkc 77-Xot'or 6 (7p(Xos. “the company in ships” (Received Text front Codex Reuehlim) is a wild departure from o cr; 747rov rXetet, “that saileth to a place,” meaning every passenger for a place, rather than, with M. Stuart, a coaster (i.e., one who does not go out to sea), as the lust clause embraces as many as ply the sea. In 13 it is of course “the,” not “this,” great city. In 19 “their” ships in the sea. The article is omitted in the Received Text on slender ground. In 20 it should be “ye saints and” on excellent and abundant authority, also “ye” apostles, and “ye” prophets, but certainly not “thou” heaven, which is less correct than the Authorized “thou.” But how came the Revisers to render (YK/acup “hath” judged, like the Authorized Version? In 21 (7p. = with a rush, or even “violence” as in the Authorized Version answers better to the usage of the Septuagint (Ex. 32:21, Dent. xxviii. 49, Hos. 5:10, Amos 1:11, Hab. 1:11, not to speak of the apocryphal 1 Mace. iv. 8, 30, vi. 33, 47), than the “mighty fall” of the Revisers. In the classical writers it is used for “passionate feeling,” or “indignation,” never that I know for a great fall. In 22 p. is well given as “minstrels” or “singers,” for it must mean something more distinctive than “musicians.” In “lamp,” rather titan “candle,” and assuredly “sorcery,” not “soreeries.” In 24 that “have been” slain or slaughtered. If the Hebraistic a7p(cra be right, rather than the singular form, it is against the concurrence, of the most ancient MSS., A C 1', with some cursive support, &c. In chap. xvi. 36. 39. support a7pwra, but A B C P and almost all the juniors read aipa.

Revised New Testament: Revelation 19

19:1 “And” should disappear from the beginning according to the best and fullest authority (N A B C P, thirty-five cursives, Vulgate, Memph. Syr. &c., as against several cursives, Arm., Aeth., &c., followed by Erasmus, Complutensian, Stephens, Beza, and Elzevir. But there is as good authority for inserting its “as it were” after “I heard"; and here the Complutensian and Elzevir differ from Erasmus, and Stephens whom the Authorized Version followed. The ancient order too has been departed from, and the grammatical form with perhaps not one copy by Erasmus, and so Stephens, Beza, Elzevir, but not the Complutensian editors who adhered to the constr. ad sans. of Xelaivrevv. Kai 71 pi. “and honor” is an addition from preceding ascription of praise, but not without some small support of inferior authorities here. The Complutensian edition rightly left it out, but Erasmus followed his Codex Reuchlini in its insertion. ToP 0.?)u. “of our God” with the best, and so the Cbmplutensian, not “to” Ti us some copies and ancient versions, &c., still less soply T. 0 in. as in Codex Reuohlini, Erasmus, Stephens, Beza, and Elzevir. In 2 there is little to note, though the copies differ a good deal. The Complutensian editors omit the article before x. as is done in the best copies, but the Codex Reuchlini with others reads it and misled the other early editors. In 3 there is yet less to say. though the copies differ somewhat in form. The order of words in'4 also differs even in the better copies, as of forms also. T67 Of., I doubt not, is here more correct than Toll Of. as in the Received Text. The Complutensian here is no better than Erasmus. The Porphyrian uncial has 71211, Of.-probably a mere lapse for Tti:' Of. The other uncials give the dative, not the genitive. With the saints they have the accusative, as in chap. iv. and xx.; with God or Christ, the accusative the first time as in iv. 2, and xx. 11 (as in xiv. 14, and xix. 11 also) the genitive or the dative afterward, and not without a distinction. The Sinaitic is very wrong in reading the plural in 5 “voices” for “a voice"; as the common text er is superior to acrd in A B C, five-and-twenty cursives, &c., some of which add the further errbr of changing Of. into oi,pavoi). Then Tic 0. is supported by the beet copies against TOL 0. as in many eursives followed by Erasmus, the Complutensian, &c. Ka/ before of q5. wants the excellent authority of 14 C P, but it has the very large support of A B, perhaps all the cursives and ancient versions. “Both” should vanish before “small,” as in the Complutensian against Erasmus and those that went in his wake with Codex Reuchlini, &c. Compare chap. xi. 18, which confirms the copulative in the first ease, not in the last. In 6 the Complutensian edition has 4)9 “as it were,” after not Erasmus; though his own copy has it corrected in red above. A Vienna cursive (36) has it after q5. The best copies give it, and of course before c5. • and so the Complutensian, Stephens, Beza, Elzevir. Singular to say, Lachmann omitted the second “as” with A and a few cursives, contrary to all other authority. ley. is only a question of form-ooTo9 01/7E9, Or-OPTOW, as in the Complutensian, which fast has the best authority, the others arising from desired smoothness. The Revisers are here obliged to content themselves like the Authorized Version, with “reigneth” for 4PaaiXelarea. In xi. 17 they have “didst reign” for “hast reigned” of the Authorized Version. It is not easy to convey in English its aoristic force; and such a case may have misled our old translators into a lower view of its meaning than is just. To represent it always in English as a simple preterite is a delusion. “Our” is lacking in the last clause of the Received Text, and hence in the Authorized Version, through.

Erasmus and the Codex Reuchlini, though not alone, for even A and others omit it. But there is ample proof for it. In 7 there is little but difference of form to note, as in 8 change of order. In 9 copies strangely insert and omit, and shuffle; but such minute points are not my present object. In 10 there is little textual to remark. The chief matter is that the best copies omit ToP before the first I, where Erasmus is right, not Stephens, Beza, or Elzevir; and so before the second where the Complutensian joins them, with undoubtedly much cursive support, but not the best authority. It may be here noticed that the meaning of the last clause is to affirm that the Spirit of prophecy (not merely the Spirit in the apostolic epistles, but in the Revelation also) is the witness of Jesus. This might, from its Old Testament character, have been otherwise doubted. The prophecy too is His testimony; it is very different from the gospel, but it is His witness none the less. And further, it seems an assumption that it is a testimony to Him; for this would be either the dative in Greek (as in English), or the genitive after rep/ as a regular rule. It is the testimony Jesus is rendering in the book, whoever may receive or repeat it. CL mpare chap. i. 2, xii. 17. Tischendorf says that Lachman n omits KaXoOltEvo 9 (11), but it is only so in his earlier small edition (not in his later) with A &c. Indeed some of the best Latin copies add “vocatur” to “vocabatur,” as Tregelles edits the Vulgate; and so it stands in Buttmann's contribution to the larger work. In 12 Lachmann agrees with the Received Text and Authorized Version in reading i;79 “as” with A, many cursives, and versions. The Revisers rightly discard this on ample grounds; and give “diadems” rather than “crowns.” Tischendorf in his latest edition rejected his own previous yielding to B, five and twenty cursives, Septuagint, &c., in the addition of (;rdliaTa rycypappeva Kai as in the Complutension also. The Sinaitic is too careless here to weigh much; the Alexandrian and Porphyrian preserve the true text; C here fails. In 13 the vesture dipt in or sprinkled with blood marks Him as coming in vengeance, as in Isa. 63, which it is utter unintelligence to apply to His own blood. He is the holy Avenger, as once the spotless Lamb. The Hebrew of Isaiah strengthens the value of “sprinkled"; but the Septuagint is little or no help. The MSS. fluctuate painfully. X r.m. has reptpepait,u4vov which Origen and the Latins confirm; P 36 i;epapTurldvov. The majority with A B support, in the Received Text, flePa,a. So reads the Complutensian, and KaXciTat like Erasmus; but the best have K (Up.” KcanTo being a slip). In 14 the article repeated before ev is omitted by iZ B and many cursives, to which the last syllable preceding probably contributed), as in Erasmus, Stephens, and Beza; but it appears in A P and many cursives & in the Complutensian and Elzevir, which the Revisers rightly prefer. “The armies that are in heaven” are the same glorified saints who had been in chap. xvii. 14 described as 0; per' airroi), not angelic but saintly, as is plain also from what follows; they were clothed in /.300-01v0p, fine linen, white, pure. Compare chap. xv. where angels are said to be arrayed in linen (X/v0v), or if we believe the Revisers with “stone” (X/00v) pure, bright; a still farther remove from the clothing of the saints. In 15 the only notable change is the exclusion of Kai “and” before “wrath” which the Received Text had with most from Erasmus' Codex Reuchlini, and a few others, Andr. in some copies, contrary to all the rest and the Complutensian edition. In 16 the article is wrongly in T. R. from Erasmus downwards before “name"; but all English have rightly “a” name, perhaps from the Complutensian. In 17 the Revisers have rightly “birds” rather than “fowl,” and “mid-heaven,” for “the midst of heaven.” But the change of moment is “the great supper of God,” on the authority of

A B P, more than 35 cursives, and most ancient versions, &c., instead of “the supper of the great God” as in the Received Text from Erasmus (not the Complutensian) following Codex Reuchlini and a few others. In 18 the Uncials exhibit all three possible forms after eri, genitive B P and most,

dative X, accusative A and a few followed by Lachmann. Our Authorized Version prints “both” in italics, following the Received Text, which was due to Erasmus. But the Complutensian had TE rightly with the best and most which warrant “both.” But the IT after,a(Kpi.v'y “small” is not read by the more ancient, though in B and more than thirty.juniors which the Complutensian edition follows, not Erasmus or the Received Text. In 19 Lachmann with A and a few cursives has the strange “his” for “their” armies. It may be a mere slip from the end of the verse. The article should be heeded before 7r. “war,” the or their war, though the Received Text after Erasmus and the Complutensian is not without support (1. 6. &c.) and lately the Porphyrian uncial. In 20 the reading of Erasmus and so of the Received Text is perA T. which is not so good Greek as itET'ab.r. but makes no sensible difference in English. It rests on 1. 49. &c., against all of value. Tischendorf in his eighth edition abandons 6 pci' a&r. as in B, many cursives, &c., for per' abr. O as in P, &c. The reading in A 41 Cop. is a blunder; 0 pET7at)T. O. and still more in 34.; 0- /LET' 111T. Akcao7rpocaiTar, “the false prophets with him.” The article should be expressed before “miracles” or rather “signs"; but it as in the Received Text should disappear before 0. at the close, though the Codex Reuchlini was not alone in misleading Erasmus. Is it correct to say with the Revisers as well as the Authorized Version that “had” received &c.? His deceiving was not after, but before, they received the mark of the beast. B and most correct the solecism of X A P, &c. A 1-01/ a-. Tijs K. which Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Alford adopt. In 21 how strange too that Erasmus in his first and second editions should not have 70;) (right in his MS.) before K00,/,06',,00. In his fifth edition it is corrected. The true reading is JEE-X0. (X A B P and almost if not all known authorities; evrop. “goeth” or “proceedeth” was Erasmus' guess, perhaps founded on the Vulgate, but contrary to his MS., Codex Reuchlini. The Complutensian is right, not Steph. nor Beza.

Revised New Testament: Revelation 20

The Revisers in 1 have rightly “coming,” not “come,” as in the Authorized Version, and “abyss” as before for “bottomless pit,” here and in verse 3. English idiom perhaps requires “in” his hand, rather than “upon” literally. The angel was seen in vision with the chain hanging on his hand. In 2 “the” old serpent is more correct than the demonstrative “that,” a not infrequent fault in the Authorized Version. But would not “who” be better than “which” following? “For” completes the sense before “a thousand years.” In 3 airrOv “him” has such slender authority after &X. that all critics feel bound to expunge the word, and translators rightly supply “‘t” as after “sealed.” The copulative rightly disappears before T. which should be distinguished from the singular form, as the Revisers do in vii. 1, 9 (the only true case in the book); elsewhere it is plural, but even so the Revisers might have held to uniformity with advantage save in that case. In 4 even here Wiclif, Tyndale, Cranmer, as well as the versions of Geneva and Rheims, give “seats,” instead of “thrones,” most incongruously. Would not a semicolon have been preferable to a comma after “the word of God"? For the Seer has before him two classes of sufferers in the disembodied state, and there the dividing line is marked by a change of construction. The colon is all right after “unto them” in the earliest part of the verse; because these were already changed and had followed the Lord in glorified bodies out of heaven, as seen in chap. xix. 14, and consequently were described as seated upon thrones. The saints who were slain after the translation of those symbolized by the twenty-four elders might seem to have lost all. They were too late for the rapture to heaven, and they do not survive till the Lord appears in glory to introduce His kingdom over the earth. And a distinction answering to the two classes of martyrs described in our verse had been laid down when the first of the two were seen at an early point of the Apocalyptic visions, the souls of those that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. To their cry, “How long?” it was said that they should rest yet for a time, until both their fellow-servants and their brethren that were about to be killed as they should be fulfilled. Thus the second class is anticipated in verse 11, where the first are seen to have poured out their lives under the altar. In our verse they both are seen still to be in the separate state, the earlier and the later martyrs of the Apocalyptic period; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” They therefore lost nothing by being slain, whether those before the beast was manifested or those after that apostate power persecuted to death in all variety of antagonism to God and His saints. They now lived and reigned with Christ before the thousand years began, no less than the glorified assessors with Christ who knew the resurrection of life before either suffered. The glorious position of the Old and the New Testament saints in general appears in those previously seated on thrones. It was unnecessary to say that they lived and reigned, seeing that there they were long before risen, caught up to heaven, and are now seated on thrones when the world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ was evidently come. The needed assurance. is given in the later clauses for those who only appeared and suffered after the rapture and before Christ's reign on His own throne. Compare Rev. 3:21. Those too had His portion. As He died, lived, and will reign; so they too had been slain for His sake and now reign with Him, as do all saints from the beginning. And all are brought in one way or another into this verse, which does contemplate these special martyrs, but leaves room in

its first clauses before the Revisers' colon for all the saints who had gone before, martyrs or not. May I add that one could hardly conceive, if one did not know, interpreters so benighted as to suppose that “judgment was given to them” means that these saints were judged? No believer comes into judgment, but in the risen state all are destined to judge the world. How strange that orthodox men should blot this out! To make it the same as Eph. 2:6, a present reign of the saints, is to confound prophecy with doctrine and lose all the special truth of the reign with Christ; as it is an utter mistake to take vxci.s. of bodies and apply 7rc7r. to all sorts of martyrdom. Every word seems in my judgment to convey the truth of what is abundantly set forth elsewhere—a resurrection not merely of dead persons, but also “from among” the dead. All must rise, unjust as well as just, but not all together, which is taught nowhere in Scripture, but rather what denies it. Christ rose from out of dead persons: so will the saints at His coming, leaving the rest of the dead undisturbed in their graves. And such is the plain teaching of 5. They await the resurrection of judgment, instead of rising from the dead a thousand years before to judge the world according to the wonderful purpose of God for the earth, before the judgment of the wicked dead and the eternal scene. What can be more emphatic than the words, “This is the first resurrection “? It is not the vision, but the explanation of it, not the riddle, but the solution. Indeed it is remarkable what plain language the Spirit uses here, which men have wished to allegorize.

But I turn from exposition to the less genial task of criticism. The Revisers like others have rightly omitted “But” at the beginning. In 6 we have words which correspond admirably with the apostle's earnest desire in Phil. 3:11, which would be unaccountable if there be only a general resurrection when all rise simultaneously. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part” in it. There seems no escape from this but the desperate expedient of explaining it to mean some present Christian privilege, or a future state of Christendom, as many divines have done. The former idea is perilously near those who taught that the resurrection is past already; the latter is the unworthy dream of glory on the earth for the church without Christ, instead of contentment in suffering with Him and waiting to be glorified together. Almost all the witnesses read “reign” in the future. The Alexandrian alone here commits the blunder of the present tense, though it is really more inexcusable in ch. v. 10, where it had too many companions, which misled the Revisers. Here they rightly join the Authorized Version. In 7 there is little or nothing to note. In 8 the Revisers say “to the war,” rather than “to battle,” the reading of ai,ra,v, omitted in the Received Text, not affecting the version. So in 9 “over” is more correct than “on.” There is no need to add “about” after “compass,” or surround. “From God” is questionable, and probably imported from elsewhere, though many authorities insert the words as in the Received Text. In 10 “both” the beast, &c., should be there, though the Sinaitic omits. In 11 the order in the Received Text is not the best, but the Authorized Version has not suffered; nor in the reading airrob for the better airrtiv, the difference of which has been already before us. The insertion of TOO is right, but so are all versions. In 12 it should be “the great and the small,” as in the Complutensian edition and the Revised Version, though some good copies favor “the small and the great.” It is curious that all the other early Greek editions are wrong, all the early English versions right before the Authorized Version, save in omitting the article. But the omission of the articles in the phrase as in the Received Text has no support from any known manuscript. More than a dozen cursives omit the entire phrase, among them Erasmus' copy, Codex Reuchlini. Before “the throne” should supplant “God,” which has trifling authority. Forms and order slightly vary from the Received Text, but do not affect the sense. The critics from good copies improve the order twice in 13, but there is nothing to show in the rendering. The only

remarkable change in 14 is the addition at the end of “the lake of fire” on ancient and ample evidence. In 15 there is no change of reading to note, but the Revised Version is simpler than the Authorized Version. We may observe that here (11-15) it is not a judgment of the quick, as far as the nations are concerned, as in the end of Matt. 25 Hence no question is raised how they treated the King's messengers, His brethren, who are to go out yet, ere the close of this age, and test the sheep and the goats according to the figure in the Gospel. Here it is a judgment of the dead, “the rest of the dead” left by the resurrection of the righteous, with the addition of the wicked devoured by divine judgment after Satan's last muster of the unrenewed Gentiles (7-9). Not a trace of a saint is seen in the dead before the great white throne. They had to answer in judgment for their sins, and not one is said to have been found written in the book of life; and no wonder, for it is the resurrection of judgment.

Chapter 180

Revised New Testament: Revelation 21:1-8

It is well that in the Revised Version the first eight verses form a separate section. Nowhere in the book is such a division more imperatively called for, though probably even the Revisers themselves do not all appreciate the importance of their own arrangement, which tends to guard the reader from confounding the eternal state with the millennial to the loss of their marked distinctiveness. For as chapter 20 gave us the thousand years, during which on the one hand Satan seduces no more and on the other the risen saints reign with Christ, as the power and pride of man were put down at the beginning, so the last uprising of the nations when Satan is loosed at the end will come to naught, and heaven and earth depart, and God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ the Lord. After this judgment of the dead a new heaven and a new earth are seen, for the first were gone away, and the sea, it is said, exists no more: a most weighty contrast with the world that now is, and also with the world as it is to be during the thousand years. Vegetable and animal life could not be without the sea, unless by a perpetual miracle which would be absurd. The sea is the greatest of separating barriers for the nations, as it represents the restless masses of mankind not subject to regular government. Then heaven and earth is in everlasting order and harmony, all the wicked being consigned to the lake of fire, and God all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). Hence in these verses we have neither nations nor kings any longer; whereas we have both, and a state of things, however new and blessed, suited to both, in the section that begins with verse 9 down to 22:5. But this is really retrogressive; when the Lamb is put forward prominently, and the governmental relation of the Bride, the Lamb's wife (the holy and heavenly city having the glory of God), to the nations—and kings of the earth. In short, as we may see more when we come to the later section, it is as clearly millennial, as the previous short section now before us is post-millennial, when provisional dealings have no more place, and all is fixed forever. Hence there is an absoluteness of blessing in 3, 4, and a universal extent, strikingly distinct from the beautiful picture of the favored complement out of all nations on the earth looking to she reign of Christ in chap. 7:15-17. Here it is a question of “men,” and God Himself with them, tabernacling with them (not merely spreading His tabernacle over them), and they His people (or peoples) and He with them, their God. Nor is it only every tear wiped by Him from their eyes, but death no more and mourning and crying and pain no more, the first things being gone away and all things made new, which is but relatively true of the millennium. So all the wicked are seen to have their part in the lake of fire, which cannot be till the thousand years are over. The distinctive traits point therefore unmistakably here, not in the vision that follows, to the eternal state, of which Scripture says little, but that little full of pregnant instruction.

In 1 ■π■λθον (or- αν) is right, not παρ■λθε as in the Compl. edition as well as the Received Text following Codex Reuchlini and a few other cursives. The true reading is more energetic. The last clause is singularly tampered with in the Alexandrian uncial, “I saw the sea no more,” which is quite short of the truth conveyed. So Dusterdieck is all wrong in talking about a new sea, for the text clearly distinguishes “the sea” from what is said of the first heaven and the first earth. In 2 is one of those unseemly additions for which Erasmus appears to be responsible, following no

known Greek copy but the Clementine edition and inferior manuscripts of the Vulgate. For the more ancient Latin copies (Amos Demid. Fuld. Tol. &c.) reject “1 John” with ■ ABP, more than forty cursives, and all or nearly all the ancient versions. And so also for putting καιν■ν at the end, not the beginning, of the phrase, which would perhaps admit of the marginal rendering of the Revised Version, though the text seems to me correct as in the Authorized Version. “Out of heaven from God” is the true order, though P 1.49. 79. and other cursives support the Received Text and the Authorized Version. It was not earthly, but “out of heaven;” it was not of human source, but divine, “from God;” and, what is noticeable (though the marriage was recorded not here but in chap. xix. more than a thousand years before), “made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.” In 3, consequent on the descent of the holy city, a great voice is heard out of the “heaven” (or “throne"). It is hard to decide, and ought not to be closed up, as in the Revised Version, without even a marginal note, that some ancient authorities support the former, B P, almost all the cursives, and the ancient versions (save the Vulgate and margin of the Armenian as) against 14t A 18. and the exceptions just stated. “The tabernacle of God [is) with men,” His presence in the church now glorified and come down for the eternal state; and thus God will tabernacle (not “over” but) “with” them. On general principles we can say that men are changed thus to have dwelling with them. “Peoples” is the reading of ■ A 1.79.92. and perhaps others; but the mass, with B P and the old versions, supports, as in the Complutensian edition, the singular, which Tischendorf thinks more probably an emendation. It appears to me that α■το■ might rather influence a scribe in favor of the plural and thus bring in the various reading. Tischendorf also omits with ■ B, more than thirty cursives and several ancient versions, &c., θε■ς α■τ■ν or α■τ. θ. and so the Complutensian edition, Tregelles, Westcott, and Hort. In 4 the Received Text, with A. 1. &c., adds “God,” but authority in general omits, as well as ■π' α■τ■ν in B and some fifteen cursives. Before θ■ν. ■ and a few cursives &c. read no article, the effect of which would be to say “there shall be no death more,” not “death shall be no more,” as with the article in A B P and most. It is strange that ■τι should be left out of the last clause, and that Tregelles should cite ■p.m. as omitting it, for there it is, but not the previous ■τι, by an obvious slip, with the strange blunder of πρ■βατα for πρ■τα. Even Afford and Tregelles bracket ■τι, and Tischendorf accepts, as Lachmann, and Westcott and Hort reject it. But this is a narrow line for the Revised Version without a note to the reader that the mass of authority is opposed to A P, and some old Latin copies, though Amos and Fuld. may be doubted. In 5 ■π■ τ■ θ. is right and best supported against το■ θ. as in the Received Text. The dative best expresses proper and permanent relationship. The variety is great as to κ. π. π■ντα, as it should be. “To me” is questionable; though ■ P, most cursives and versions sustain it. “Faithful and true” is best supported. In 6 discrepancy again abounds. “It is” (as in the Received Text), or “they are” (A &c.), “done"; or “I am become,” as in ■ B P, &c. Yet the best supported reading which the Complutensian edition adopted is intrinsically the worst. The first seems to be only formed by Erasmus according to the Vulgate. The second appears to be right. The omission of ε■μι or insertion of α■τ■ is scarce felt in translation. In 7 “these” (not “all") things hardly can be questioned: so good is the authority. It is rather God's everlasting glory in Christ than the special glory of reigning with Christ, the Heir of all things, the final unchanging blessedness of the redeemed, each overcomer having God his God, and he His son, where the article is quite wrong. In 8 the Received Text fails to give the article, though in Codex Reuchlini Erasmus ought to have seen it written above in red. The better authorities (■ A P, some cursives, and old versions, &c.) support Erasmus and the Received Text (as against the

Complutensian edition, Griesbach, Scholz, with B, very many cursives, and other ancient versions, &c.) in omitting κα■ ■μαρτωλο■ς, “and sinners.” The emphatic form is right in the last clause, where Codex Reuchlini misled Erasmus, &c., and P has only “death.” No; it is exactly not death merely because of sin as in Eden at the beginning, nor destructive judgments on the earth as in the past or the future; but now at the end “the second death,” because of grace and truth fully come yet rejected, despised, or corrupted. God is not mocked. If life in Christ be refused, all ends in endless separation and wrath from God; their part is in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Revised New Testament: Revelation 21:9-27

The words “unto me” in 9 are rightly struck out as having no known authority in Greek MSS. Erasmus' Codex Reuchlini opposes the learned editor himself who ventured to father them. The Complutensian editors (save in 1 John 5:7, 8) adhered to their witnesses, such as they were; and of course here the words do not appear. The Armenian Version has the words, and also Lips.4 as the first of the three Latin versions of the Apocalypse in the Univ. Library of Leipzig is designated. “Quibus ergo (says C. F. Matthaei, x. 303, ed. Rigae, 1785) Codicibus nititur πρ■ς με; Responsio apud Wetstenium in promptu est. Scilicet Codd. 1. 3. 5. 6. 13. 14. 15. Et qui semper Erasmo interroganti respondent: 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 28. Ergo omnino XIII. Cujus ergo hi recensionis sunt? Roterodamensis credo, ant Basileensis.” It may be bitterly ironical but is too true. Did Erasmus know of Armenian or Lips.4? If not, the same root of imagination bore the same wild fruit. In the Complutensian edition ■κ τ. ■γ rightly given, omitted not without the support of a few cursives by Erasmus, &c., down to the Received Text, but not affecting our versions. One cannot be surprised that copyists softened the solecism of τ■ν γ■μοντων in ■p.m. A. P. 12. 19. &c. into τ■ν γεμουσ■ν as in ■corr and as this was unsatisfactory into τ■σ γεμο■σας (as in 1. 7. &c.) or γεμ without τ■ς, as in B, and at least twenty-two cursives, &c., and so the Complutensian. B. and many omit τ■ν before ■πτ■. The copies greatly vary in the order of the last words. But “the bride the wife of the Lamb” has the best authority, and the substantial sense is the same. In 10 “the great” should disappear, though Codex Reuchlini misled Erasmus, Complutensian editors, &c., not without six or more other cursives, and all the copies of Andreas' Comm. The manuscripts differ slightly as to the last words, but all the edd. are right, and so the versions, unless one except Wiclif, who has “from heume of God.” In 11 there is no copulative before ■ φ. save in a few cursives and versions, which misled Erasmus &c., and the Authorized Version. The best authorities have it not. But Erasmus does give ■ς λ■θ■ though wanting in Codex Reuchlini and other cursives, &c. In 12 one cannot be surprised that Erasmus did not follow Codex Reuchlini, in ■χουσα τε. But critics generally adhere to the solecism without τε as read in the best copies, and largely. Codex Sinaitic has the strange ■χοντι in the first place, and ■χοντι (corr. ■χουσα) in the second, where the best also give that correction as their text, and Erasmus again gave ■χουσαν. Lachmann alone of editors was bold enough to leave out “and at the gates twelve angels,” a mere omission through similar ending in the Alexandrian, a few Latin copies, and the later Syriac. Some of the Latin commentators, through a slip of copyists, were actually led to imagine “angles” for “angels.” And many and ancient copies support the addition of ■ν■ματα (with or without τ■) in the last clause, which misled Lachmann, Matthaei, Tregelles (bracketed in his ed. N. T.), Alford (bracketed), and Tischendorf till his last or eighth edition. The latest criticism returns to the reading of Erasmus and the Complutensians, the common text in short, as represented in ■ P 1. 37. 39. 47. 5 9. 51. 79. 91. 96. &c., save that τ■ν, should vanish before υ■■ν on good and full authority as against 1. 7. &c. a few giving το■, and others omitting. In 13 Codex Reuchlini and Latin copies led Erasmus, &c., to omit κα■ three times, but the Complutensian is right. In 14 Erasmus departed from ■χων, in 1, which is also read in A B P and several cursives, for ■χων as in most with ■corr. (■p.m. omitting like the Aeth.) But it is doubtful if any MS. authorizes ■ν α■τ■ος as in Erasmus, Stephens, Beza,

(1. like 7. omitting κα■ ■ν α■το■ς probably due to the Vulgate, but the margin of 1. adding in red κα■ ■π' -α■τ■ν). The Received Text from Erasmus also omits δ■δεκα, “twelve,” before “names,” though it stands in the margin of 1. The Complutensian is correct. Erasmus followed 1. (which has other support) in dropping μ■τρον in 15, though there can be no doubt of its genuineness; and so all critics. In 16 Codex Reuchlini is defective, for it has not κα■ τ■ μ■κος α■τ■ς ■σον τ■ πλ■τος. Hence Erasmus seems to have translated from the Vulgate κ. τ. μ. ■. τοσο■τ■ν ■στιν ■σον κα■ τ. πλ. ■ displaces the first words. The Complutensian edition has σταδ■ους, and so A B and most, with Elzevir. But Erasmus &c., gave σταδ■ων, and so ■ P 1, &c. In 17 there is nothing that calls for our notice. In 18 ■ν of the Received Text has large support, but is left out by the best, though Codex Sinaitic.pm. omits ■ and reads the substantive verb. ■μοιον (Compl.) displaces ■μο■α as in 1. &c., as it has by far the best and most witnesses. At the beginning of 19 κα■ stands in 1. 7. and many more, and so in the Received Text, as well, as the Complutensian, but not in the best MSS. or even the oldest Latin. In 20 ■ A B P and about 25 cursives have σ■ρδιον for -ος as in Erasmus, the Complutensian, &c., with many cursives. Other shades of difference may be left.;— But in 21 how came Erasmus to give us διαφαν■ς instead of the true reading διαυγ■ς in 1. and forty more cursives, &c., as well as the uncials ■ A B P? Was it not odd of a scholar like Lachmann to edit after A ■ before να■ς α■τ■ς in 22? The last clause proves that it could not be correct Greek; and apart from this to make it not a predicate but reciprocal has no just sense. In 23 ■ν is not in 1. and many other juniors, beside ■p.m. A B P, &c. Erasmus probably followed the Vulgate. But the Complutensian has it, and several cursives, as well as ■corr. Some have α■τ■ν. But in 24 there is the serious error in the Received Text of τ■ν σζζομ■νων in accordance with the Codex Reuchlini. Probably it is due to some Greek comment as in Cramer's (Cat. P. Gr. vi. 577, Oxon. 1840, though τ■ μ■ν ο■ν σωζ■μενα ■θνη does not justify the confusion of the received text. And such I see is the opinion of Matthaei (x. 198) who cites a scholium of Andreas, which Tischendorf borrows. ■ν (1. omits) τ■ φ., as in the Received Text, should be δι■ τ. φ. on the amplest evidence; and κα■ τ■ν τιμ■ν, though edited by the Complutensians as well as Erasmus, and not without more support than they knew, should disappear on better testimony. No doubt the words were imported from verse 26, which furnishes itself no other occasion for remark, save that Codex Reuchlini leaves it out altogether. In 27 Erasmus found κοινων in his copy, which he changed into κοινο■ν without authority, and so it went on to the Received Text. The Complutensian had the true reading κοιν■ν as in ■ A B P, and the mass of cursives &c. ποιο■ν is in 1. &c., but -■ν is fully justified.

Revised New Testament: Revelation 22:1-5

In 1 “pure” is rightly expunged as an expletive added by several cursives and other authorities, and, as adopted by Erasmus from the Reuchlin copy, current in the received text, but not in the great uncials, à A B P (C being here as often defective) as well as in some thirty juniors and most of the old versions. The first clause of 2 is connected singularly by the Revisers with verse 1: “out of the throne of (bid and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof.” Of course it is possible grammatically; and, if allowed, it would strengthen De Wette's severance of το■ ποταμο■; from ■ν. and connection of it only with ■ντ. κα■ ■ντ. But it seems a strange and poor conclusion to the grand picture of the river of life proceeding out of the throne. That no version is known to us generally as favorable to such a construction is serious, when one considers the responsibility of a Revision intended for ordinary use, and not merely what an individual or two might suggest to students. Is it not going beyond the limits of what is fair, especially if it were the impression of a few men confident in their own judgment and ready in overthrowing the pleas of others?

Let me suggest the spiritual propriety as in my opinion confirming here the rendering hitherto and everywhere approved. The beautiful truth is laid down in the opening verse that at the epoch intended the throne is now styled the throne of God and the Lamb. It was not so before He came to reign; it will not be so when He delivers up the kingdom to God even the Father, when God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) shall be all in all. And out of what is now first called the throne of God and the Lamb proceeds a river of life bright as crystal, the full unhindered power of enjoying that life eternal which the believer has here in utter weakness and with manifold hindrances. Such is its source, character, and time. Then follows in verse 3 the weighty and interesting communication, that in the midst of the street or broadway of the heavenly city and of the river, on this side and on that, was the tree of life according to the promise of Christ in Rev. 2:7. The paradise of God coalesces with the new Jerusalem. Life's tree producing twelve fruits, each month yielding its fruit, not merely on either side of the river, but in the midst of the street, points to the accessibility as well as full and varied supply of bounteous refreshment—this spiritually for the favored on high. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations, here again pointing to the administration of the fullness of the seasons, when God will in Christ sum up all things, or put them all under His headship, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth—in Him in whom also we obtained inheritance. For the characteristic of that day will not be either the earth alone, or the heavens alone, but both, the scene of blessing and glory, and this in suited measure of character: the heavens supremely and absolutely, evil thence expelled forever and never more to recur; the earth filled with glory in a form and measure adapted to a scene where not curse but blessing reigns in righteousness, even if a final uprising of the nations be in store at the end, when Satan is let loose once more to seduce, before the white throne judgment of the wicked raised for their everlasting doom. But under the reign of Christ the coexistence is plain of the heavens and the earth with their suited inhabitants and in due order to the glory of God. Hence, as we see, whatever be on high, the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations. Where weakness was still, remedial grace was not wanting. The nations had the leaves, not a word for them about the

fruits.

As an instance of the danger of speculation, through ignorance of the true bearing of these scriptures, let me call attention to the late Dean Alford's note on the end of 21 to which his comment on 22:2 refers us. “There may be,—I say it with all diffidence,—those who have been saved by Christ without ever forming a part of his visible organized Church.” Of course, if he meant, when the church is glorified above, at Christ's appearing and kingdom, the kings and nations of the earth form no part evidently of that higher object of divine mercy; why he should speak with diffidence of this, if it be all that is meant, is hardly intelligible. All that look with ordinary intelligence for Christ's coming to introduce the kingdom of God over the earth, assert this without hesitation; and as Alford so believed, it is scarce accountable that he should adopt shyness so unusual. Can he by some confusion of mind have meant that people have been saved by Christ without ever forming a part of it, while the church has been on the earth? “And so perhaps some light may be thrown on one of the darkest mysteries of redemption.” I cannot comprehend such language in juxtaposition, unless this last be his thought. If so, it is groundless, false, and mischievous; and the whole connection unjustifiable. Not a word is said about the salvation of these nations (τ■ν σωζ. in 24 being notoriously spurious and even absurd); and “the mysteries” of God, being now revealed by Christ, and since redemption especially, are in no wise “dark.” But the question raised is never in Scripture treated as a “mystery” at all, but as a plain and solemn warning to conscience in contradiction of the Dean's imaginary “light.” “The darkest mysteries of redemption” are to a scripturally instructed mind a monstrosity.

It reminds one of the no less unhappy language on 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, which he applies, like the mass of men who do not understand the gospel, to Christ's preaching in His disembodied state to the disembodied spirits that refused God's voice at the flood which, he says, “throws blessed light on one of the darkest enigmas of divine justice, the cases where the final doom seems infinitely out of proportion to the lapse which has incurred it.” And then he even goes on to limit that it would be presumption in us to limit its occurrence or its efficacy! If I had not spoken plainly of such perilous language during the writer's life, I might scruple to denounce it now that he is gone. The true inference to be drawn by every intelligent reader is that men of learning are peculiarly liable, if not solidly built up in the truth of Christ, to be carried away by appearances of erudition, especially if they plume themselves on superior honesty, which is often no more at bottom than a rash confidence in themselves and contempt of others. The worst of all is ignorance of redemption, and hence sacrificing foundation truth. If the reader desires a full view of the passage on all sides, he may find it in the “Bible Treasury,” 9 pp. 11, 30, 46, 58, 89, 138, 169, 265 278, 334. Could Dean Alford have so much as realized his own words? The true stumbling-block for unbelief is, not the flood coming on antediluvian violence and corruption, but the unending doom of all who believe not. Now the passage speaks not of the later, which was really in Alford's mind, but of the former which is independent of “the darkest enigma,” as it certainly throws not a ray of what he calls “blessed light” on it. For what is implied in the inspired words is that those disobedient to the preaching of Christ's Spirit not only suffered a great temporal punishment but are now kept like unbelievers generally for the final judgment. The entire comment is as illogical as heterodox; and the philology is no better. Truth in all naturally goes together. Archbishop Leighton had the soundest reasons to treat the notion of Christ's descent into hell as a dream; and that this passage if duly weighed proves no way suitable, and cannot by the strongest wresting be drawn to fit such

a purpose. Heartily, and after the most careful scrutiny do I agree with that able, learned, and pious prelate against a baseless if superficially plausible assumption.

Singular to say, Erasmus in 3 rightly deserted the Codex Reuchlini, where it, 7. 30., and some fifteen more, &c., read ■κε■ “there,” for which the Rotterdam scholar conjectured, it is to be presumed in accordance with the Vulgate, ■τι “more,” or “longer": a dangerous device, though here in fact the great mass of the best authorities, unknown to him, were found afterward to justify the word. The Complutensian edition gives the erroneous reading ■κε■. There was no reason for the Authorized Version to say “but,” which the Revisers have replaced with “and.” Absence of curse in the Now Jerusalem is accompanied by the throne of God and the Lamb; and if we have their distinctness thus preserved, the next words involve or rather convey their oneness: “and His (God and the Lamb's) servants shall serve Him.” So it is habitually with John. In 4 the Revisers rightly say “on,” (not “in") their foreheads.” So in 5 they as properly explode the vulgar “there” (■κε■) which Erasmus introduced from his copy, perhaps assimilated to 21:25, though not unsupported; and they follow the true ■τι “more,” as in ■ A P, &c. There is yet another variety without either in the Basilian Vatican (2066) with considerable assent of other witnesses. The copies vary also in other particulars of no great moment, as “shall” give them light, in the best copies and even the Codex Reuchlini instead of the present as in Erasmus, and the Received Text, and the Authorized Version; and “upon” them, as in ■ A &c. “Lamp” is better than “candle.”

Revised New Testament: Revelation 22:6-21

In 6 the first ■ is doubtful, though given in à A 35. 92. The usual formula is κ. ■ θ. as in B P and the cursives generally, as well as the Greek commentators. Chap. 21:22 may be judged favorable to the repeated article. But there need be no hesitation in adopting πνευμ■των τ■ν “spirits of the” (instead of the vulgar “holy,” ■γ■ων 1. 79. &c.) with the Complutensian on the most ancient and ample authority, all the uncials, &c. The Sinaitic is not quite alone in the addition of με after “sent.” 7 begins rightly with the copulative, as in the Complutensian, though Erasmus' Codex Reuchlini is sustained by many MSS., Versions, &c. The Revisers in 8 correctly say am he that heard and saw,” not saw and heard. It is a characteristic fact apart from time. The best authorities also read τ. at the end of the clause. There are other differences of form not worth recording here. In 9 the γ■ρ “for” has no known authority in a Greek MS., and is probably due to Latin influence. It is not in the Codex Reuchlini. Of course the Complutensian edition is right. Tischendorf mentions the omission of Ka; by the Codex Reuchlini before “thy crown,” but not again before “of them which keep.” Erasmus supplied them rightly, though not from his copy. In 10 however the Complutensian agrees with Erasmus on the authority of a few copies (1. 49. 91. &c.) in reading ■τι ■ κ. instead of ■ κ. with the best. Some manuscripts, as 4. 16. 27. 39. 48. 68. omit γ■ρ or ■τι. In 11 ■υπ■ν of the commonly received text is Erasmus' conjecture, his copy being defective from ■ ■ to δικ. ■κι. The word should be ■νπωρ■ς as in all the well known Greek copies; but ■υπωσ■τω is likewise a similar guess, though the manuscripts divide between ■υπανθ■τω as in ■ 18. 32. and ■υπαρωθ■τω as in B and more than 30 cursives. The Alexandrian omits the clause, God. Eph. Resc. is defective. There need be no doubt that δικαιωθ■τω as in the Received Text from Erasmus, &c., must give place to the Complutensian reading δικαιοσυν■ν ποιησ■τω, which of course the Revisers follow, with the sense “do” or “practice” righteousness, not be justified or “be righteous” as in the Authorized Version. They are right also in rendering ■γ. “be made holy,” or sanctified. Again, at the beginning of 12 the copulative has no real place, though Erasmus found it in his copy and did not conjecture it; but it is excluded by the mass of MSS., Versions, and cursives. And the true reading is represented by “is,” not “shall be,” though B and more than 20 cursives favor the future form. “Amos” in 13 is all right in sense, but implied rather than expressed in the best copies. Without dwelling on lesser points, the chief difference is in the presence or absence of the article before πρ first and ■σχ last, as well as before ■ρ. “beginning,” and τ. “end,” which by the best authorities close the sentence. The most extraordinary variant is in 14 where “that wash their robes,” ο■ πλ■νοντες (■ A 7. 38. Vulg. Aeth., &c.) seems to be the true text. But it got changed into ο■ ποιο■ντες τ■ς ■ντολ■ς α■το■ “that do his commandments” in the common texts, Erasmus and the Complutensian, Stephens, B■za, and Elzevir. One could understand, as in Rom. 2, the unchanging character of God as reflected in His children, if the common reading were assuredly right; as it is, the critical text gives prominence to that washing by grace which supposes not more the shedding of Christ's blood than the guilt that demanded it if expiation were to be righteously. Such are they who have title to the tree of life and go in by the gates into the city. Verse 15 points out who are “without,” the dogs and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolators, and every one that loves and makes a lie. There is no evil so

desperate as refusing or giving up the truth when the full revelation of grace is come. There is no ascertained authority in any Greek copy for δ■, even the Codex Reuchlini giving no warrant to Erasmus, who transmitted it to our ordinary text. The article is rightly excluded from the last phrase. Tischendorf inverts the making and loving with 14 and half-a-dozen cursives, and a few ancient citations.

In 16 there is the variety of reading ■τ■ ■ν, and neither before τ. ■κκ. respectively, in ■ B, most cursives, Syr., in A 18. 21. 38. 79. Vulgate, and in 1. 4. 11. 12. 31. 47. 48. Arm., &c. “in” or “for” the churches. The reading κα■ ■ρθριν■ς is doubtless Erasmus' coinage from the Vulgate, for ■ πρ. “the morning.” Why in 17 the Sinaitic omits the articles so requisite before πν. and ν. it is hard to say, but so it is. Erasmus knew better without a copy; for the Codex Reuchlini is defective from “David” in 16. But he wrongly introduced ■λθ■ and ■λθ■τω where the Holy Spirit has ■ρχου and ■ρχ■σθω. Nor should the copulative precede ο θ. though at least two cursives and many ancient versions &c. favor it. For λαμβ. τ■ ■δ the copies give λαβ. ■δ. There is a threefold error in the common text at the beginning of 18: συμμαρτυρο■μαι for μαρτυρ■, and γ■ρ, which answers to nothing, as well as the suppression of ■λ■, the guess-work of Erasmus from following the Latin copies. So also the omission of τ■. (though some copies omit it), τ■ς, το■, and the form ■πιτιθ■ instead of ■γ■, and for ■π' α■τ■, πρ■ς τα■τα, and ■ θ before instead of after ■π' α■τ■ν. The omission of τ■ before β. is due to the same Latinizing source. Aldus, in his reprint of Erasmus' New Testament for his Greek Bible of 1518, did venture on the supply of το■, but not, strange to say, of τ■ς, nor of τ■ (his), though of course the principle is the same. So in 19 ■φαιρ■ is an evidently faulty effort to express the guilt of taking from the words of this inspired book, for which every manuscript has ■φ■λ■, as βιβλ■ου is the correct form rather than β■βλου. Again ■φαιρ■σει is not the right expression but ■φελε■. The next error goes beyond the form; for, as the Revisers agree with all critics, it is a question of “the tree,” not of the “book” of life here, an error due to Latin influence, though even then the form would be incorrect as before. Erasmus mistakenly added και before τ. γ. and omitted τ■ in the last clause. All these points are of course rectified in the Revision. The Complutensian edition is right, save in ■φ■λοι, though this is not without good support of MSS. In 20 Erasmus, the Complutensian, as well as Stephens with many cursives, read να■ after Αμ■ν, for which Beza substituted κα■ “pro ο■ν.” But even this was less daring than his notable proposal, founded on wholly unfounded premises, to dislocate verses 12 and 13 from their place and foist them in, the latter before the former, between that which is printed as verse 16 and verse 17, to the utter destruction of the context, and particularly of the vital tie which binds 17 to 16, one of the loveliest touches in a book abounding with beauty in this kind—In 21 ■ A 26. omit χριδτο■, a rather slender ground for excluding “Christ.” Still less (A. and the Amiatine Latin) has Tischendorf for ending with μ. π. Even the Sinaitic says “with the saints,” as B. and the mass of cursives and versions say “with all the saints.” With “you” all is a guess of Erasmus, as far as Greek copies are concerned, though here again he was influenced by some of the Latins. It is not to be supposed that he knew ■μ■ν (30. &c.) for “our” Lord in the earlier part of the verse, but there too was misled by the Vulgate, &c. It is curious how the earliest, as well as the great multitude of copies, and versions &c., add ■μ■ν, which nevertheless the critics generally drop.

Chapter 184

The Sacraments (So-Called): Part 1

No right-minded Christian will otherwise than highly esteem the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper instituted by our Lord—the latter previous to His death, and the former subsequent to it. Why the Supper should have been previous to it, and the commission to baptize after it, may be an interesting question, but it is one not expressly answered in Scripture. It should at least have preserved the church from the gross error of taking in the literal and carnal sense the words, “This is My body,” “This is My blood.” Indeed, even this should not have been necessary to guard against the degradation of a spiritual truth, and a prostitution of our moral sense, which nothing but the deliberate intention of establishing and justifying sacerdotalism could possibly have brought about. And what will men not do when they are bent on anything? What will they not at length believe? They then take credit for sincerity—a sincerity however in error, which is the consequence of the rejection of truth, and which is therefore altogether without excuse. If utter darkness has no less arisen from an original and continued departure from a divine testimony in the traditional form in which it was known to, and held by, the patriarchs, then spiritual darkness has come about in the church from the rejection, and even perversion, of divine truth. But as all men have not faith, so all Christians have not spirituality. Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul says, “Ye are carnal.” He does not say they were natural, for in that case they would not be Christians—at least not true Christians; but he says they are carnal, at the same time distinguishing the spiritual from the carnal (1 Cor. 2:14, 15; 3:3). Yet nothing then in the church approached the imbecility of a later time. “I have fed you with milk, and not with meat,” says Paul. Is this to be taken literally? A believer in transubstantiation will perhaps say, “Well, Paul was a priest in the church of God, and in the Eucharist” (why not call it always, the Lord's Supper?): “he at least fed them with the flesh of Christ.” But so degraded a notion had at that time neither entered the head of Paul, nor of any other Christian. It was those who were destitute of faith, who, taking, the Lord's words literally, said, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Utterly unspiritual, and taking His words in a gross, carnal, and literal sense, they were of course stumbled. Again, the Lord says, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” Is this to be taken literally? On the other hand, the prophet Jeremiah says (ch. xx. 16), “Thy words were found, and I did eat them,” i.e. the food was spiritual and non-material, and the eating was consequently also spiritual, and non-literal. So in John 6, and in reply to those who, once disciples, went back and walked no more with Him, Jesus said, “Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life;” as much as to say, “If you so grossly misunderstand My words, now that I am with you, how much more egregiously will you misunderstand them when I have ascended to heaven?” The words He had just spoken were to be taken spiritually and not literally, and the eating is in this case also a spiritual and not a literal process.

It is a not uncommon notion, though it is a very incorrect one, that to be baptized, and to partake of the Lord's Supper, are commands. To a nation—a people in the flesh and under the law,

circumcision and the observance of the Passover were indeed commands, at least so long as individuals remained members of the commonwealth of Israel. Every legal obligation had to be fulfilled by such. To put Christianity on this ground, however, is to mistake its spirit and genius. The Christian ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are matters of privilege, not of enforced requirement; nor is there such a thing to be found in the New Testament as “the New Law” —or a new legal system. A person is not a Christian by birth, but a person was a Jew by birth, and upon that ground was under the law.

As regards the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. 11:24, 25 simply enjoins us, as often as we partake of it, to do so in remembrance of Him. As to baptism, there was a command to make disciples of all nations, and to baptize them, but no command to people to be baptized. Acts 10:48 is no exception to this, it is rather “commanded that they should be baptized in the name of the Lord.” Privilege and blessing are not matters of command, but of divine grace: Christians are indeed subject to Christ, but this is not being under law. There is one advantage which the Church of Rome possesses over most other professedly Christian bodies. It meets, in its own way (which after all is but a parody of the truth), the varied needs of souls, and it does this with a dogmatic clearness and fixity of meaning wholly wanting to the usual Protestant systems. It thus meets the felt want of an age feeble in faith, and wearied with uncertainty and confusion. And truly there can be no rest for the conscience, no repose for the heart and mind, without authority to rest on. When the soul has not rest and peace through the finished work of Christ—where justification by faith only is unknown, or the proper (forensic) meaning of the word is denied, and the meaning of infused righteousness substituted for it—where consequently the soul knows not what it is to find perfect rest in Christ, a present and an assumed authority, such as that of the church, or of the Pope, saves the trouble of faith, and the exercises of soul connected with it, and gives at least a superficial and temporary rest or rather lull. The conscience is, as it were, drugged.

Now we feel as strongly as any Roman Catholic that, unless there is adequate authority for our confidence, that confidence is worth nothing, and will certainly fail us sooner or later. But the word of the living God as contained in the holy Scriptures is our authority—that word, in the Spirit's favor, is our confidence. We acknowledge no other, and we place implicit confidence in it. Ministers of that word may be used and blessed to us; but if so, they will be the first to own the distinction between a rule of faith—i.e. a divinely—given standard of what is to be believed—and a means of communicating it. The former cannot err, the latter can. As to the faith even the apostle Paul says, “Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand” (2 Cor. 1:24). If true to the Lord, whose servants they are, they will repudiate any personal authority in matters of faith, and will exhort and encourage their hearers or readers to base their convictions on the Scriptures alone. Tradition is but the enemy's device to injure the integrity of the Bible, as the sole authority for what is to be believed.

In the patriarchal age, and when there were no written records, certain men were the depositaries of simple yet divine revelations, which they communicated to others; but in these days, and in order to preserve such revelations from the alterations and corruptions which frequent repetition would inevitably bring about, human life was vastly prolonged. For instance, Adam was for more than sixty years the contemporary of, Noah's father, Lamech; and Shem died only twenty-four years before the death of Abraham. Shem therefore may have related to Abraham what Lamech had heard from Adam. Here we have, for tradition, certainty of origin and of transmission. Tradition

was in the case of the patriarchs alike genuine and authentic. What now goes by the name of tradition in the Church is devoid of either. The attempt is made to justify it, and there is no want of boldness, or rather of impudence, in assertion: but assertion is not proof; and the written word, the Holy Scriptures, remain, and will remain, the sole standard and authority for what is to be believed. The law may require judges to carry it out; but they are not judges of the law, but of those who transgress the law, still less do they constitute authority to enact. So the true believer is no judge of God's word, but he has competency to understand and apply it. “I have not written to you because ye know not the troth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth” (1 John 2:21); and in the preceding verse, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” Such only have the true verifying faculty. Nor should we be disturbed or alarmed by any expression of horror at what is called “the right of private judgment.” By this is properly meant, not, of course, the right to judge God's word when we have it in our possession, but the obligation to judge of everything by that word. It is not so much a right as an obligation. We are individually responsible to God that we do judge everything by His word, and shape our conduct accordingly. Take for example the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Here is a letter written by the apostle Paul to the saints at Corinth, and to “all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” He sends this epistle, not through any official or presiding individual, for no reference to such a person or office exists in any of the Epistles. Even where in a local assembly bishops or elders, and deacons, are spoken of, it is always as indicating a plurality of them. No trace of a presiding officer is to be found in any one of Paul's Epistles—still less of diocesan episcopacy. The apostle writes to the saints, or to the church, directly and immediately; in fact, upon many points, in reply to questions they had asked him (1 Cor. 7:1). Now, is it to be believed that those Christians either had not the right to take this Epistle as being to them immediately, or if such were the case, that they were unable to read and understand it, as an inspired writing? And so with all the Epistles; excepting those called pastoral.” They were addressed to what was afterward called the “laity;” and will it be pretended that the laity could understand them then, but that we cannot understand them now? To take another example. The Epistle to the Colossians is thus addressed, “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse,” &c. Communication between the apostle and the saints or brethren is direct and immediate. There is not the slightest allusion to any presiding individual: had there been such an office, it is impossible it could be so entirely and so systematically overlooked. We read indeed in. this Epistle (iv. 17), that Archippus had some ministry committed to him by the Lord. Is the Epistle sent either to or through Archippus? On the contrary, Paul requests the Colossian saints to read it amongst themselves, and directs further that it should be read in the church (i.e. assembly) of the Laodiceans, and, moreover, they are to say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it.” The letter itself would probably suffice to convey this message to Archippus, yet such are the Apostle's words, such is the way in which he puts it. If Archippus was (to use the phrase) “their minister,” we get a fine instance of independency here. But he was nothing of the sort, for, as has been shown, no such office was in existence in the early Church. Ministry indeed was, in its purity; but the office of a presiding minister was the invention of a later date.

Where there is no motive for distorting or falsifying God's word, how simple it is! Infinite depths in it, no doubt—how could it be otherwise if it is the word of God?—yet, for the most part, very and purposely simple. Why, then, should it be wrested out of the hands of individual Christians, or be

nullified by committing its interpretation to others, unless to bolster up the fictitious claims of a sacerdotal caste 2 Difference amongst Christians is a very convenient plea for robbing them of the privilege and responsibility committed to them by their Savior and Lord, to hold and to heed His word. But, in fact, the remedy would be worse than the disease; less of truth would be known and held in common by them, than ever, and, in short, the same reason existed for taking the Scriptures out of the hands of the so-called “Fathers” (of whom it may be said, without exaggeration, quot homines, tot sententiae), had there only been in those days an infallible Pope to have done anything so advantageous for the church. But, unfortunately, infallibility came too late to make sense and consistency, much more orthodoxy, out of the Fathers.

A text (2 Peter 1:20) is sometimes quoted, or rather misquoted, in denial of the right of private judgment, “no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation;” but such is not the meaning of this text. It simply means that no prophecy of the Scripture is of self-interpretation, or of isolated meaning and application—that it must be taken as part only of the whole coordinated system of Divine revelation. This holds true of the word of God generally, though applying here more particularly to the coming kingdom. Acts of Uniformity, or the crafty policy of Rome, in instigating the civil power to punish those who, desirous of rendering unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's, cannot, if obedient to their Lord, accept the dogmas and dictates of a cruel and corrupt church, may bring about a certain amount of outward uniformity; yet, after all, we never read in Scripture of the unity of the church, though we do, read of the unity of the Spirit, and of endeavoring to keep this in the bond of peace. But the Spirit is truth; unity in error, therefore, has another origin and source. “To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:4, 5). This was addressed by the Apostle “to the strangers scattered,” &c., evidently converted Jews, true Christians, and applies no less to true Christians now; none the less, if true Christians are sadly scattered in the days in which we live. Living stones themselves, and coming unto Christ as a living stone, they are built up a spiritual house, in the binding power of the Holy Spirit.

Babylon is a specious imitation of this, bricks for stone and slime for mortar, like the Babylon of old; and coming unto the Pope, the spiritual Babylon referred to in Rev. 17:5 rises into view—a vast meretricious system, destined yet to a limited sway, but soon to incur the everlasting judgment of God. And most artfully is the Church of Rome availing herself of the boasted but godless liberty of the day to recover her lost power in this favored but guilty land. It is often imagined that the Romish Church has herself become liberalised by the liberty accorded to her, and to all other ungodliness. Has she ceased to teach her candidates for orders, “Tolerantia religiosa, est impia et absurda” Has she revoked the article of the Council of Trent which decrees thus? “In matters of faith and morals, and whatever relates to the maintenance of Christian doctrine, no one confiding in his own judgment shall dare to wrest the Sacred Scriptures to his own sense of them..... If any disobey, let them be denounced by the ordinaries, and punished according to law.” Has she canceled the following clause in the oath taken by the Roman Catholic Bishops? “The rules of the holy Fathers and Mandates Apostolic, I will with all my power observe, and cause to be observed by others. Heretics, Schismatics, and rebels against the same our Lord (the Pope) aforesaid, I will persecute and attack.”

This is the sort of church which England is at the present time fostering, these are the principles which that church is cherishing. The way from Protestantism to Rome is easy and clear. Baptismal regeneration and apostolical succession are taught us by the orthodox Church of England. From this we have only to pass through the Ritualistic phase: consistency must then land us in Popery. The figment of baptismal regeneration, in place of the quickening power of the Spirit by the word, producing bricks instead of living stones; church ordinances holding people together, instead of the binding power of the Spirit, slime for mortar—this is the Babylon which Satan is building, the counterfeit city of God, the woman who falsely assumes to be the bride of Christ. But though she has yet to reach the climax of her audacity and wickedness, her time is getting short, her cup of iniquity fall, and ready for judgment; strong is the Lord God who will judge in her destruction, the sufferings of the saints whom she has persecuted with all the cruelty of religions, rancor.

The word “sacrament” is from the Latin sacramentum, the military oath of allegiance administered to the Roman soldiers, and is thus an ecclesiastical and not a Scriptural term. In the Latin translation it is used as the equivalent of the Greek word μυστ■ριον, mystery. It is so used in Eph. 5:32, where speaking of marriage the Apostle says, “this is a great mystery.” Hence the Roman Catholics make matrimony a sacrament. The absurdity of this is evident when it is seen that the usual ecclesiastical sense of the word would be gone if the Greek word μυστ■ριον is always to be considered as meaning a sacrament; for instance, “the mystery of the gospel,” “the mystery of godliness,” “the mystery of iniquity,” &c. Yet if not always, with what authority in Eph. 5:32? The Catechism of the Church of England tells us that “a sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace,” &c., “as a means whereby we receive the same.” According to the Prayer-book, therefore, the elements in the Sacraments are channels or vehicles of divine grace. But the above definition of a Sacrament is erroneous, for the “inward and spiritual grace” is not necessary to the definition of a Sacrament, and is mischievously false if we are to regard the water in baptism, or the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, as its channels or vehicles. Yet everyone knows that baptismal regeneration is the teaching of the Prayer-book, and as to the Lord's Supper, the Catechism, in answer to the question “What is the inward part, or thing signified?” replies, “The body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.” But the import of a sacrament in no way depends upon any subjective effort in the individual. Sacraments have also been compared with the tree of life in the garden of Eden, or with that in Rev. 22:2. These, however, in no way represent the death of Christ, and this would be moreover to maintain the opus operatum, to make them operative in themselves, a theory rejected by nearly all the Reformers.

Chapter 185

The Sacraments (So-Called): Part 2

How are we then to define a sacrament, so that the definition may be what a definition should be, viz., adequate, yet devoid of superfluous conditions? A sacrament is an ordinance instituted by Christ Himself, and which exhibits, in a symbolical form, the way, or the meritorious cause, of our salvation. Hence the Anglican body rightly says, there are two sacraments and two only. One of these is subjective, the other objective. Baptism, the subjective, and the initiatory rite of the church, signifies that death and resurrection in and with Christ is the process of salvation. “Know ye not that so many of us as have been baptized unto Jesus Christ have been baptized unto His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him by baptism unto death.” (Rom. 6:3, 4). “Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him,” &c. (Coloss. 2:2). “For ye have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Coloss. 3:3.) “Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24:) Death and resurrection is the fundamental principle of the gospel—on the part of Christ it is the meritorious cause of our salvation, on our part it is the necessary process; and of this truth baptism is the symbol. The Lord's Supper is the ordinance in which the sacrificial death of Christ is symbolically presented to us, as forming the subject-matter of the church's communion with the Lord, and with each other, and that in peace with God. The Lord's Supper is particularly connected with the church as the body of Christ “For we being many are one bread (loaf), and one body” (1 Cor. 10.17); but we are baptized into one body, not by water, but by the Holy Ghost.

Water baptism is connected with the kingdom—a wider sphere than the church. And even though the church and the kingdom are, as long as the church is upon earth, coincident, the terms are not synonymous, either as to their general meaning or in reference to the individuals who may be in either. To be in the church is to be in the kingdom, but the converse will not always be true. Water baptism is connected with the kingdom, and that again is connected with this earth,—the kingdom, whether in its mystic or in its manifested form, here on earth. The principle of death and resurrection is so thorough, that it utterly baffles any attempt on the part of men in the flesh to follow that way—such an attempt would be hopeless. Faith in Christ is the only way. Hence the weakest believer, if a true believer in Him, has a vast vantage-ground. Life in the risen and glorified Son of God is indeed a divine gift, and not only entitles the believer to, but requires that he should, reckon himself dead to sin, dead to the law, and dead to the world. Nor is this mere theory—it is most solemnly and wonderfully true. An earthly religion would be useless to such, it cannot reach him where he is—he worships by the spirit of God—he is in Christ, and boasts in Him. Amidst all the sorrows and changes of this world, he has access to “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort,” who never forsakes or forgets His child, even though He may chasten him for his good; and if called to die, it is his privilege to realize, practically, the momentous importance and unspeakable reality of that life in Jesus, which, having reached his soul, whilst in the body and in this world, passes, through the dissolution of that body, into the presence of Him who is that life—without break of continuity—changeless and his own, from the moment Christ

gave him life, and onward to a never-ending eternity. Beyond the power of sin or death, to touch, taint, or injure it, such gift is God's unspeakable grace and mercy, to poor man, ruined by sin, and under the terrible power of Satan and of death, with eternal judgment before him, the only escape from which is in that Savior who “bore our sins in His own body on the tree,” and who is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

For baptism the Lord gave a formula of words, not as “consecrating” the water, but as giving validity to the rite as performed in His name, and by His authority. No such fixed formula of words, but giving of thanks, attends the celebration of the Lord's Supper; for 1 Cor. 11:24; 14:16, 17, compared with Matt. 26:26, and with 1 Cor. 10:16; prove that ε■λογ■ω=ε■χαριστ■ω, and that, ε■λογ■α=ε■χαριστ■α, i.e. to bless means in this case to give thanks. To quote the words of a very able writer: “The term ε■χαριστια is used metonymically, resembling in all respects the phrase ποτ■ριον ε■λογ■ας, ■ ε■λ■γουμεν in Paul= ■ ε■χαριστηθε■ς ■ρτος κα■ ο■νος, in Justin Martyr—the bread and wine over which the prayer of thanksgiving has been pronounced. The latter says expressly that, immediately after the president of the church has pronounced this prayer of thanksgiving over the bread and wine, and the church joined in it with their amen, the sacramental elements were distributed. He mentions no other consecration.” We quote this, simply as confirming what we have just stated as the teaching of Scripture, not as regarding the “Fathers” to be any authority whatever. On the contrary, it is to the Fathers we must go to find the basis of that systematic perversion of Scripture, and of that traditional and corrupted Christianity, which has existed (though with increasing departure from the truth) from the time the apostles were removed from this world; who even, in their later writings, endeavored to combat the tide of corruption, both of doctrine and in practice, which was then commencing to invade, as it soon overflowed, the church, to its ruin as, a testimony in the world for God.

It can scarcely be necessary to observe that circumcision and the passover were types, whilst baptism and the Lord's Supper are symbols; and symbols only. The type looks forward, and is prophetic; the symbol, as it were, looks back, and is figuratively expressive of a known truth, i.e., is historical. The two sacraments, viz., baptism and the Lord's Supper, are of similar import to circumcision (which signified the cutting off of the flesh), and the passover (which was typical of the expiatory death of Christ); but, the atonement having taken place, Christians commemorate the Lord's Supper in the blessing of accomplished redemption, and hence it has to them the character of the peace-offering. But the sacraments are not operative and efficacious in themselves. Whilst in the Lord's Supper we have communion with the Lord as to His death, and its value to us, nevertheless one main object of the sacrament is to mark off and separate the Christian profession from non-Christianity, and that by signs significative of Christ's death.

This is essential to the meaning and nature of a sacrament, rightly understood. Marriage is not a sacrament, though it is, and was from the first, a divine institution. It does not distinguish Christianity from Judaism or from heathenism, for the relationship exists in these. There are in fact two “sacraments” only, using the term in the proper sense, the term itself no doubt being merely ecclesiastical, though expressing the two New Testament ordinances, and not necessarily in a wrong sense. Confirmation is not regarded as a sacrament in the Anglican body, though it is retained as a rite. Still, not a trace of it is to be found in the Scripture. The word ■πιστηρ■ζω occurs four times, all in the Acts; and it is impossible to read those passages with an unbiassed mind, and not see that the meaning is no ritual process, but morally and spiritually—to strengthen

or establish. Thus Parkhurst says in his Lexicon “In the New Testament it is used only in a figurative and spiritual sense for confirming persons in their adherence to the gospel, notwithstanding opposition and persecution.” These occurrences are Acts 14:22; 15:32 and 41; 28:23; the last text being, “And after he had spent some time there, he departed and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.” And in 15:32, Judas and Silas, the prophets, exhorted and confirmed the brethren. Now the so-called “Bishop” is the person who “confirms” —doubtless for the sake (as is so often said) of decency and order. But this human view of decency and order has utterly overthrown God's order, and made human authority in the church paramount to Scriptural authority, generally with the flimsiest pretense, and often without any at all.

Take, again, what is called “ordination,” or official appointment to the office of a teacher in the church. Here is another most striking instance of the way in which God's word is set at naught, and the sovereign operations of the Holy Spirit completely checked by human regulations under the plea of decency and order. That God sometimes used the apostles as channels, through whom, extraordinarily, to convey some spiritual gift, is most true, and the Greek preposition used (&a, with the genitive), shows that God used them instrumentally (see Acts 8:18 Tim. 1:6); but 1 Tim. 4:14 also shows that when, on a certain occasion, others were associated with the apostle, the particle of association per& is used not that of instrumentality. The place which the apostles had in the church was unique, and marked by God in various way s, not only us a whole, but in detail. That the apostle Paul deputed Timoth; and Titus to ordain elders in specified localities is true; but where is the authority now to ordain elders?—where the proof that it ever was to be transmitted?

Paul, indeed, says to Timothy, “the things which thou hast heard of me, in the presence of many witnesses, the same commit them to faithful men, such as shall be able to teach others also.” Every care was taken that, till the canon of Scripture was completed, the truth which God had revealed should not be lost. But what has this to do with ordination? Truth, which any of us may deem now to be far from generally seen or held, we are anxious to impress upon our children, or others, even although it is already contained in the written word. Guides or rulers in the church there are, and wine) so long as the church is upon earth; but elders or bishops, specifically, there are not, just as there are no apostles, and consequently none deputed to act locally for them. Whatever may have been the qualifications necessary for an elder or bishop, we see from Scripture, e.g., Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:8, 11, 81; 14:12, 26, 29, 34; 1 Peter 4:10, 11, that the ministry of the word in the church (assembly), was open to such as were qualified for it, and for the occasion, by the Spirit, that women only were excepted. If ordination were the sanction, 1 Peter 4:10, 11 would be meaningless. Also, whatever may have been otherwise desirable in an elder or bishop, the essential function pertaining to that office was to rule (i.e., to take a spiritual oversight and care), not to teach (see 1 Tim. 5:17). Doubtless ability to teach was desirable, but this by no means implies that teaching was the primary duty of the elder or bishop, much less that no one might teach who was not an elder. The distinction between the functions of teaching and ruling is clearly made in Rom. 12:7, 8, and 1 Tim. 5:17.

No doubt at an early period of the church's history we find a sacerdotal and hierarchical system in the germ: first, kcal episcopacy, soon to develop into diocesan; a priestly caste, gradually coming into view, with a corresponding metamorphosis of the elements in the Eucharist; the growth of Catholicism, soon to ripen into Popery. But all this is the corruption of the truth, a corruption which,

it is admitted, began to work very early—but which, whatever tradition may say, is branded by Holy Scripture as the corruption of God's word and order. As this sacerdotal element developed itself in the early church, so every truth waned and vanished under its baneful shade. The priesthood of all true believers was ignored or despised, spiritual worship consequently was lost, and a half Christian, half Jewish kind, substituted for it. The simplicity of the way in which the Lord's Supper had formerly been observed was annihilated; the elements underwent a so-called “consecration,” and, began to be regarded with superstitions reverence. The gospel was unknown in its purity and power, and contemned by the side of this perverted “sacramental” system. Immense, in short, was the loss to the Church and to individual souls, and great the dishonor done to God's word, great the despite to the Spirit of grace.

This terrible state of things was but partially rectified at the Reformation, the Church of England was but half reformed; baptismal regeneration and apostolical succession were doctrines never eradicated from its tenets, and we are now living to see the result in a frightful relapse into Romanism, or in the giving up of all faith and even profession of Christianity for blank infidelity, these being the two poles of unbelief, as to the Scriptures, and as to the power of God, through the Spirit. Of supreme importance to the individual, and consequently to the church, as evangelical truth is, experience has proved that there is a tendency, when too exclusively dwelt on, to disregard, either as though it were non-essential, or as though it could have no practical importance, the teaching of Scripture as to the church—her calling and destiny. We do not say this evil goes to the same lengths, or is fraught with such dire effects, as that of being absorbed with, and trusting almost exclusively to, a spurious sacramental system. Very far from this, evangelical truth, i.e., a clear and fall gospel, is of paramount importance—there could be no true church, no happy and intelligent Christians without it.

The gospel, and that only and exclusively, is God's grand ordinance for the salvation of man, and the too general absence of the knowledge of the gospel in its power and fullness, and the substitution for this of mere ordinances, amply accounts for the state of heart and mind in which so many are to be found, even though they may be very devoted church people. But if the teaching of Scripture, on the subject of the church, is in any measure slighted, there is just as certainly great loss to the individual, and great dishonor to the Lord. True, it is impossible to go back to apostolic times; sadly true it is that we seem to have witnessed even in our days, though on a smaller scale, what we might almost call a second fall of the church. Doubtful it is how far any considerable body of Christians now existing in the world can fairly and justly claim to represent the church. Still, when in spirit and in heart all true Christians, the whole church in God the Father is included in our thoughts and spiritual desires—with subjection to our Lord as the Head of His church even the (literally) two or three gathered together unto His name will not fail to know his presence, and to have His blessing. There may, through circumstances, be more or less of isolation; nevertheless, if the eye is single and the heart true, we shall surely find that “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.”

Chapter 186

The Sacraments (So-Called): Part 3

Metaphor is of constant use in the language of Scripture, and no more dangerous and deadly error exists than that of attributing to the sign what belongs only to the thing signified. It's effect is at once to construct a counterfeit Christianity. No book approaches the Bible for the frequency and richness of figurative language and of figurative acts. The amount of truth, enfolded in awn but perceptible to the eye of faith, commands our highest admiration. One of the most common, as it is one of the most beautiful, figures in the Bible is that of water, in allusion either to its cleansing, or to its refreshing and vivifying effects. The Gospel of John abounds in the most remarkable instances of the use of this figure,—chapters 3. and 13. in allusion to its cleansing property; chapters 4. and 7. to its refreshing or vivifying qualities. In chap. 15: 3 the Lord says, "Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you," —the effect produced upon the conscience, the heart, the mind, the walk, by the word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. So in Eph. 5:25, 26, "as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word." In John 13:10, the Lord says, "He that is washed (bathed) needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit"; i.e., there is the one grand washing of regeneration which can never be repeated, but there is the need of constant washing of the feet, prone as we are to contract defilement in our daily walk,—defilement which would hinder communion unless removed. And so, in the type, we find the priests washed all over, at their consecration, but afterward needing only to wash the hands and feet at the laver before approaching to serve God. Thus also water as well as blood came from the side of a dead Christ,—water to cleanse, and blood to expiate.

As regards expiation, we are washed from our sins in the blood of Christ; as regards the new or morally clean nature, we are washed as it were by the water. Neither of these can ever be repeated,—they occur once for all, and forever;—but thanks be to God, there is provision also for the daily cleansing from daily defilement: "He that is, washed (all over) needeth not save to wash his feet." John 3:5 has no reference to baptism, for Christian baptism was not yet instituted, and therefore our Lord would not have blamed Nicodemus for being ignorant of it. "Born of water and of the Spirit," —purification and renewal, alludes to the moral cleansing and new life, of which every one has been the subject who ever was saved, from Adam downwards. The same things,—water or purifying, and the Spirit, or a new life,—are spoken of in Ezek. 36:25-28, and it was this that Nicodemus should have known. From other passages in the Old Testament also, he should have been familiar with the figurative use of the term water; for instance, the Red Heifer, or water of separation amongst the types; and Isa. 1:16-18, "Wash you, make you clean though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Here again we have the water to cleanse and the blood to expiate. Again, as to the refreshing effect of. God's word, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground "; "He every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters," &c. If we compare with this John 7:38, 39, we see the meaning clearly, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water, (but this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on

Him should receive," &c.) The truth is, that John 3 and baptism allude to the same thing (figurative language and a correspondingly figurative act); and similarly John 6 and the Lord's Supper allude to the same thing. But John 3 does not allude to baptism, nor John 6 to the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Supper not being yet instituted or known to the disciples. Moreover, all who partake of the Lord's Supper have not eternal life, whilst all who in the sense of this chapter eat the flesh of Christ have eternal life.

The term "regeneration," (regeneratio, ava7jvvrio-ts.), according to this its etymological signification means being born again. In this sense also the term is used by theological writers. But such is not the Scripture sense of the term. The word translated "regeneration" is in Scripture not civaryvviiats, but 7raXtryryeveata, which name means being "born again." It occurs twice only in the New Testament, viz., in Matt. 19:28, and Titus 3:5, and means a renewed or reconciled state of things—in fact, the Millennium, (compare 1 Cor. 4:8; 6:2; Rev. 20:4; with Matt. 19:28). In their raised and glorified bodies the saints are destined to reign, during the Millennium, over (we do not say on) the earth. This is the period of the regeneration. The words used in Scripture for "born again" are ryeyvtioi livivOcv, John 3:3; and ItvayevvZtio, 1 Peter 1:23. Philo uses the term ra-tnevecria for the renewal of the earth after the deluge,—the latter being, as it were, the washing of regeneration. Doubtless in order to have part in the raXonevecia spoken of by our Lord, a person must be born again, as we learn from John 3:3. Still a new birth is not the scriptural meaning of the word, and the baptismal service of the Church of England is grossly in error in confounding regeneration and the new birth, and still more so in attributing the latter to the ordinance of baptism.

Baptism, like regeneration, imparts, not a change of inward state by the communication of life, but a change of status or position. In Titus 3:5, 6, we read, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." We have here three very distinct statements: 1st, He has saved us; 2nd, "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, (i.e., as in John 3, "born of water, and of the Spirit"), moral cleansing or, purification, and a new life or nature; 3rd, "which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior." Here we have more than the life-giving agency of the Holy Spirit,—we have the special Christian privilege, the Spirit of adoption, whereby we are enabled to address God as Abba, Father!—the gift of the Spirit with all the fullness of spiritual blessing connected with His abiding presence in and with us. The order in Acts 2:38, is, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," and then, as a subsequent thing, "Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Compare Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:13. For a special reason in Acts 10:44 the gift of the Spirit preceded baptism, but this was an exception, both cases proving the distinctness in time and in fact, between baptism and the gift of the Spirit.

Again, in 1 Peter 3:21, "the like antitype whereunto baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh," &c., i.e., not; literally, but symbolically. As the waters of judgment were death to those not in the ark, (and the ark represents Christ, not the Church, or at least Christ's redemption), so death is judgment to those who are without Christ's salvation, but is the process of salvation to those who believe in Him; for "we are buried with Him by baptism, wherein also we are raised with Him," Col. 2:12. The death of Christ is the meritorious cause of our salvation,—our death with Him and resurrection in Him is the process whereby we are saved; and

to us death, instead of being a destroyer, is the cleanser, as well as the passage into a new scene. Of this, baptism is the symbol or representation of a known truth, and hence may be called an antitype (r%,....1,717U7r Of) to that (the deluge), which, though now seen to have a similar meaning, was destitute of that significance till the gospel was preached and Christian baptism was instituted. No such puerile notion is meant, as that the water of baptism was an antitype of the water of the deluge,—this would be to make water typical of itself, a manifest absurdity. The truth figuratively presented to our minds by baptism is the antitype to the waters, or judgment, of the deluge.

The Sacraments (So-Called): Part 4

How is it possible in the face of these Scriptures to misunderstand the meaning of water as a figure, whether with speech or action? Yet how distorted from their true use and import have the Sacraments become!—what the Lord intended for our good, turned into an almost idolatrous object of veneration and superstitious regard. Under somewhat similar circumstances Hezekiah acted well in 2 Kings 18:4. The Church of Rome, boldly, unequivocally, and consistently with itself, asserts the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and holds that what is called “original sin” is removed by it. After the “consecration,” it calls the water “holy,” and attributes life-giving efficacy to its use in baptism.

As to original sin,” it is requisite that we should know what is meant by it. And in the first place it is necessary carefully to distinguish between sin and sins,—the root and the fruit. We all have sin in us, as we all have committed sins, and the latter are the fruit of the former. They are most clearly distinguished in Scripture, and are separately, and in some respects differently, treated of. Christ was made sin for us, but He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Sins are forgiven, sin has been condemned in Christ as sin-offering on the cross. If we go to the Articles of the Church of England, we find (Art. ix.) original or birth sin defined as,.” the fault and the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the nature of Adam.” In Rom. 8:3, this is called “sin in the flesh,” (ArpOvripti aaptcc;9). But this is never said to be forgiven,—God has condemned it in the sacrifice of Christ; and to faith, the Christian is dead to it, (Rom. 6:2, 7), though sin is not dead in him (1 John 1:8). Even in the case of the true Christian, as a matter of fact sin remains in him till he dies (or puts off this body of humiliation), though his sins have been forgiven. How absurd then is it to say that original sin has been washed away in baptism! Evidently the corrupt nature is not washed away, and as to the new or divine nature and reconciliation to God, that depends upon true and individual faith in Christ, and not upon baptism. As we have seen, “by His own will begat He us with the word of truth,” —this is irrespective of any ordinance. As regards the sin of the world, the work is done in virtue of which it will in due time be removed, viz., the work of Christ on the cross: as yet, however, all that can be said is, “we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness,” 1 John 5:19.

The sin of the world consequently is no more yet removed, than sin in the flesh is removed from human nature. In the eternal state no trace of sin will exist in the heavens, or on the earth, which will then have undergone its baptism with fire; but, terrible to think, or to say, apart forever, and in the place of punishment, Satan and all evil doers will be, where they can no more mar or blot the rest of creation; for the kingdom of God will then be no longer in mystery, but in power and in manifested glory.

It is a common saying, and too true a one that, “the Church teaches.” The Church does indeed teach, as a matter of fact, and systematically teaches error. But the very idea of the Church teaching, no less than the fact, is opposed by Scripture. The Church is taught,—it is the business of the Church, (or should be so), to receive and hold fast the truth. The Church confesses the

truth, but does not, according to Scripture, teach it. Teaching is an individual gift, and, like every other gift, involves responsibility to the Lord, on the part of the individual or person to whom the Lord has committed the gift. Those who hear are responsible to the Lord that they accept only what is in accordance with Holy Scripture,—the only standard of truth.

The Holy Spirit would Himself teach by the written word, those who when taught are to teach others. The Holy Spirit would equally aid the hearers in ascertaining whether, what is taught agrees with the revealed and inspired word of God. “Prove all things,” says the apostle, “hold fast that which is good.” Reject, of course, what is otherwise. Even in the case of apostolic teaching, those who heard were commended for comparing what was said with what had been already revealed and written, as we see in Acts 17:11, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Never has there been a case of the Church usurping authority, either to teach, or to appoint those who are to teach, without grievous injury to souls, and what is worse, without contravening the authority of Christ, and hindering the sovereign action of the Holy Ghost. Nothing illustrates this more than the case of the Sacraments, utterly misplaced and perverted, to exalt the pretensions of a mere human priesthood. A multitude of collateral truths suffer through the attempt to maintain and justify this prime evil.

As examples, we take the following quotations. from the well-known work of Dr. Harold Browne, Bishop of Winchester, on the Thirty-nine Articles.

“ But our Lord was to depart from them; and for the future government of His Church, we find a promise that in the regeneration, (i.e., in the new state of things under the gospel of Christ, the renovation of the Church), the twelve apostles should sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. What are the twelve tribes, but the whole Church of God?.... Thus, when the Savior in body departed from them, He left behind Him twelve apostles to sit on the thrones or seats of government in the Church.”

Again; “We come lastly to speak of what has been most commonly called the special grace of Baptism, viz., Regeneration, or the New Birth. We have indeed anticipated the consideration of this already. If by baptism we are all made members of Christ, children of God, the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, then are we new-born in baptism; for therein we are joined to Christ, cut out of the wild olive tree, and grafted into the good tree, born into the Church, into the family of God, as children of our Father which is in heaven. Moreover, if then the Spirit of God becomes our assured guest and present help, the first germ of spiritual life must be ours; and this is all that is meant by new birth.”

Once more; “The doctrine of a real, spiritual presence, is the Anglican doctrine, and was more or less the doctrine of Calvin, and of many foreign reformers. It teaches that Christ is really received by faithful communicants in the Lord's Supper, but that there is no gross or carnal, but only a spiritual and heavenly presence there; not the less real, however, for being spiritual. It teaches, therefore, that the bread and wine—are received naturally; but the body and blood of Christ are received spiritually,” &c. There can be no doubt that this is the teaching of Dr. Browne and of the Church of England: indeed the work from which these extracts are taken, is the standard work on the subject,—one in which candidates for ordination have to undergo examination.

Where is one to begin, or end, in dealing with, not only the ignorance of divine truth they evince, but the gross error of these statements? To expose them as we could wish would be to write a volume on this subject, a task which we are not at present contemplating. There is, however, a moral conviction, so deeply impressed upon our mind, by statements such as these, that, before saying more, we must give expression to it. It is this. The solemn lesson we learn, as to where men may get to,—often good, and in other respects able even,—when not themselves taught by the word and Spirit of God; and on the other hand, the great blessing, and high spiritual advantage, of taking God's word as our sole authority,—reading and studying it reverentially,—gaining spiritual intelligence from it, testing everything by it, and rejecting everything which is counter to it. How many a simple, and in other respects unlearned believer is there, to whom God by His word and Spirit, has given a knowledge of divine things, and a heavenly wisdom, which enables him at once to perceive the character of such teaching, and to feel no less shocked and astonished by it! Wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil, he finds in the knowledge of the truth, not only the blessing of the Lord, but the sure detector of all error and evil.

In Rev. 3:21, we read, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on His throne.” No one could confound these thrones, or be absurd and even profane enough to think that we shall sit upon the throne of God. But the Church as the bride of Christ will sit with Him on His throne as the Son of man, that throne which He will take in accordance with Psa. 8, and from which He will reign in His mediatorial kingdom,—Israel being then restored to their land, and all the promises and prophecies fulfilled. This is the period of the regeneration,—the time alluded to in Matthew xis. 28, “In the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” And though the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone, yet we nowhere read that in the renovated state of the Church, i.e., in glory, the apostles will rule the Church. The twelve tribes of Israel are quite distinct, and connected with the earthly Jerusalem.

Chapter 188

The Sacraments (So-Called): Part 5

But in what sense could the Apostles rule now? Paul and Peter in their writings speak of their departure from this world, and prophetically announce the utter ruin of the Church in the latter times.

Even the sway of the Pope is more rational than the notion that the Apostles are governing the Church. There certainly is not much appearance of their doing so by their writings (even if there could be sense in saying so), for never were their writings more slighted. Paul indeed makes it a charge against the Corinthian saints, “Ye have reigned as kings without us.” Did they begin to reign when he died and went to heaven? “I would to God,” says he, “ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.” True believers are now, in title, kings and priests unto God, and as already they exercise priestly functions, so in God's own good time will they exercise that of ruling as kings. For this honor we await our changed or resurrection bodies, and glorified with Christ shall then reign with Him over (we do not say on) this earth. We are “begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation,” &c. And by what means or process are we thus begotten? “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.... And this is the word, which by the gospel is preached unto you.” (1 Peter 1:23, 25.) Again, James says, “Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth;” i.e. the word of truth is the incorruptible seed, as in Luke 8:11, “The seed is the Word of God.” How then can any one be either so mistaken or so wicked as to corrupt divine truth, and speak about a germ imparted at baptism? The error arises from the endeavor to bolster up another error, that of a sacerdotal order in the church, and thus it ever is, that one error begets another. The germ is the Word of God. “That on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart having heard the Word keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

As regards “the kingdom of heaven,” this phrase occurs only in Matthew's Gospel—its equivalent—in the other Gospels being “The kingdom of God,” though the terms are not entirely synonymous. To be in the kingdom as a true subject, one must be born again, as we have been reading in Peter, and as is stated in John 3:3. But, till that kingdom comes in manifested power and glory, mere professors may enter it, and hence we have “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” Christ's people are made by baptism All this confusion and error arises from a depreciation of the gospel, an exaltation and abuse of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, and the introduction of the fiction of sacramental grace.

To this is added the extraordinary notion for any Christian to entertain, that we enter into covenant with God in the sacraments. That the blood of Christ is the blood of the new covenant is true, but we are expressly told that the new covenant is with the house of Israel, whilst Paul says he is a minister of the new covenant, “not of the letter, but of the spirit,” 2 Cor. 3:6, that is, we have the blessings of the new covenant, but are not the subjects of the covenant itself. All this grievous and

mischievous error arises from ignorance of the grace of God in the gospel, with which in fact it is irreconcilable. Another perversion of the truth we may briefly glance at before closing, that of referring Mal. 1:11 to the Christian dispensation, “and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering,” i.e. the Mincha, or meat offering. The Roman Catholics think that they carry this out in both clauses, i.e. as regards both incense and offering. But the only application of this text to the church is in a spiritual sense. Praise and thanksgiving—offered to God by those who are cleansed from their sins in the precious blood of Christ, and hence who are “accepted in the Beloved,” —does ascend to God through Christ, and with the fragrance of His Person and work. These and acts of charity are the sacrifices, which the true priests of God offer to Him, on the altar which sanctifies the gift,—viz., Christ: see Heb. 13:10, 15, 16. Properly speaking, however, Mal. 1:11, has no reference to the present economy, but will be fulfilled literally, during the Millennium.

The boldness with which Roman Catholicism asserts her dogmas has at least the merit of a certain amount of consistency, though it is sometimes very inconsistent where they least expect it. For instance, if the so-called sacrifice of the mass is an unbloody sacrifice, then it is a sacrifice of non-redemption, for “without the shedding of blood is no remission.” But again, if in virtue of transubstantiation, the wine is turned into the blood of Christ, how can it be an unbloody sacrifice? The attenuated Anglican sense is, of all, the most irrational; though the word of the minister, on delivering the elements to the communicants, happily avoids reference to it, and beautifully says, “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this, in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving.” In this sense only, do we eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood, but in this sense the elements are no vehicles or channels of divine grace; the feeding is, in no sense or manner, a physical process.

The wretched notion that the sacraments are an extension or continuation of the Incarnation is very easily disposed of, by remembering that the sacraments bring before us the death of Christ, that baptism symbolizes not only His death, but that by it we too are dead and buried, according to the Christian doctrine, and as raised to newness of life we should walk according to that new life. The commencement of the Christian career is, death to the old man, by baptism figuratively; and baptism is unto Christ's death. But death having terminated Incarnation, how can the sacraments be a continuation of that, the end of which they commemorate and figuratively exhibit? The truth connected with baptism makes a clean end of the old man; and as to life in Christ and union with Him, it is as dead, risen and ascended, it is to a Christ in glory that we are united by the Holy Spirit, for “unless a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” For there must be the judgment of sin. Are we Christians in reality and truth? Then Christ on the cross suffered, at the hands of God, the judgment of our sins, He was there made sin for us, personally and individually. This is what is properly called Substitution, i.e. suffering in our stead. The death of the body we may know; death as the wages of sin, death in its spiritual power and effect, we never can know, for (blessed be God!) Jesus has borne that for us, and has said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.” Again, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand.” Let us leave those to carp at Divine grace, who are so willfully ignorant of it, as were those to whom the Lord said, “But

ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.” The mock humility, which says it is presumptuous to feel sure that God hath saved us, will find its true worth at last. Weakness of faith, or want of spiritual intelligence, one can understand and sympathize with; the systematic denial of the words of Scripture, and the maintenance of what is nothing short of a counterfeit Christianity, is altogether another thing, and deserving only of our abhorrence. Yet, sad to say, the latter is increasingly and deliberately preferred. That evangelical spirit, which once was true and strong in the land, is almost if not quite gone; everything which was good seems to be waning and fading, falsehood and corruption carry all before them, and the Savior's gracious promise to the individual, for a day which He foresaw, is now our resource, “Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

With this as our present portion, our sure and certain hope is to see Him as He is and to be with Him and like Him forever: “Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.”

J. B. P.

Chapter 189

Salvation

Salvation is not God claiming from man, nor man acting for God or making out the means of meeting Him. But in God acting for man it is power at work in man's favor; and this not to help or plead merely, but to deliver from the state he was in—to save him.

And it is such to every one that believes, Jew or Greek, who alike need to be saved. God's power to save takes man up in his sin and need, not in his titles or claims, even if given of God as of old to Israel, and applies to a lost Gentile as to a lost Jew. Grace levels such distinctions and meets every one that believes; for the way is faith, not law, and thus is as open to the Greek as to the Jew. The gospel is God's power to salvation.

Chapter 190

Samson's Riddle

Gen. 1-9

“Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.” Samson's riddle is God's riddle. (Judg. 14:14.)

This had been abundantly illustrated in the story of this world. May I not say it is the key of the whole of it? It figuratively shows us God and the Enemy at their several work—the Enemy doing his work as the Strong and the Eater; and God, in gracious victorious power, forcing him to yield both meat and sweetness—constantly and ever bringing good out of evil, and building new systems of wonder and glory and joy out of the ruins Satan has wrought.

I am now, however, looking at this only as it is presented to us in the earliest chapters of Scripture—I mean in Gen. 1-9.

Man in innocency is set in the garden of Eden; and there, (as in His whole creation,) God is glorified and has His joy, while the creature is blest and happy.

But man loses this goodly estate. He forfeits his innocency under the temptation of the Serpent, and with his innocency he loses everything.

This leads at once into a new scene. To be sure it does. But we have to ask, What do we see of man, and of the blessed God Himself there?

God makes a coat of skins for Adam and puts it on him, and also another for Eve and puts it on her.

I ask again, Was this a work more or less grateful to Him than His previous six days' work of creation? Let us consider it. At the work of creation the Lord God had materials before Him, and in beauty and in fruitfulness He was garnishing the heavens and furnishing the earth. But now He has Christ before Him and He is occupied with that work of grace which had been the secret and counsel of His bosom in His own eternity, and which will be for wonder and joy and praise in another eternity.

And as to Adam, he, at the beginning, called his help-meet “Woman,” but now he calls her “Eve, because she was the mother of all living.”

I ask again, In which of these names of his helpmeet did Adam find his chief joy? I will let this give the answer— “He received her at the first as from himself, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; but now he receives her as the mother (and to himself the witness) of that mysterious Seed who was to conduct a controversy with the great enemy who had lately ruined him, till He had overthrown and crushed him.”

May I not now say, Can we doubt which of these was the spring of the richer joy to Adam? And besides this exultation in the spirit of Adam, there is evidence of a like joy or exultation on the lips

of Eve, when she cries, “I have gotten a man from the Lord,” on the birth of her first-born. And afterward there is a striking expression of intelligent believing triumph in Abel, when he offers the fat with the lamb upon his altar. And still further, as we do not see in Eden, saints are presented to us as calling together on the name of the Lord, as walking with Clod, as dying to this life and this world, and as taken to heaven. And what is all this to the heart of man? Is this more or less than innocency in the garden? Is not heaven a brighter scene than Eden could have been, had it continued man's unsoiled inheritance forever? (Gen. 1-5)

I leave these contrasts, that they may tell us whether or not the Eater was forced, in that earliest moment of our history, to yield meat, and the Strong one sweetness.

We come, however, to another and a later field of observation, where again we find God Himself and His creature man, as well as the ruthless Eater.

Wickedness ripens itself, heading itself up to its full form, and the Flood, the judgment of God, overwhelms it. But an ark, for salvation through the judgment, is in grace prescribed by God, and in faith built by Noah. And when it is ready, all the creatures of the earth, according to God's election, I may say, come up to take their place in it. And then, in the due moment, when all are housed, Noah and his wife, his sons and their wives, and all these separated creatures of every sort, God Himself shuts them in, imparting His own strength and safety to His chosen, and making their condition as unassailable as His own throne could be.

Then, while in the ark, Noah had exercises of heart-exercises, I may say, in the Spirit. There was the opening of the window, and the mission of the raven and the dove, and the taking in of the dove, and again sending her out, and again a second time taking her in with an olive-leaf in her mouth; and then, the uncovering of the ark; all this having its various mystic meaning of bright and wondrous truth. And as the time comes for leaving the ark, everything goes forth just as fresh and abundant as when they went in thirteen months before; nothing wanting, however small and insignificant; nothing damaged, however tender and exposed; and all this, a second time, under the eye of Noah. What must all this have been to his spirit! What fresh and varied delight must all this have been to him, though the work of the Eater had made this imprisonment in the day of the judgment of God necessary to him! (Gen. 6-8)

And, after all this great parenthetic season, and the ark is left of all that it had carried through the judgment of God, and “the earth that now is,” as Peter calls it, is trod by Noah and his ransomed host, we see his altar and his sacrifice, and God's acceptance of it. Noah takes the new world as in the name of Jesus. He enters it on the authority and by virtue of what Christ was to him. He reads his title to it in the blood of the Lamb of God, and offers his burnt-offerings of praise accordingly. The ark had been Christ to him in the day of judgment, and the kingdom that follows shall be his only through Christ. What a free-will offering was this! And what was it to the God of his salvation? We may know something of that when we read, “And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake.” Had there ever been such language in the Divine bosom before? God had rested in His work of creation with infinite delight, we know. He rested, as we read, and was refreshed. But now, the value of Christ for a doomed creation is before Him, put there in all the preciousness of the blood of atonement, by the faith of a sinner who was confessing to Him, in the mysterious language of his altar, that all his title to anything and to everything was to be found in the sacrifice of His own Lamb. Before this,

God had said, “It is not good that man should be alone;” but now He says “in His heart, I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake.” Before this, He had seen that the work of His hand was good, but now He was smelling a sweet savor in the work of Christ.

Was not all this meat and sweetness again? The enemy had indeed approved himself an Eater and a Strong one, as afore he had in the garden—corrupting man outside Eden, as at the beginning he had corrupted him within it. But had not God again made him yield meat and sweetness? Were not Divine delights in this scene of redemption of a higher character than they had been in the day of creation? Is not the value of Christ more to God than all the beauty and order that are displayed in the works of His hand? And is not His ransomed Noah in the ark, a richer one than Adam His creature in the garden? He was receiving the gifts of grace, and rendering the free-hearted obedience of faith; he was learning the sufficiency of Christ for him and experiencing the exercises of the Spirit in him. He saw himself not merely in a created but in a redeemed system.

It is a great sight to see to—the Eater has yielded meat, and the Strong sweetness. And we are still in sight of this great mystery to the end of these chapters, after the new world had been gained, and “the earth that now is” has been formerly taken and inherited. For there we see Noah seated in royal and, priestly state. He is “blessed,” as Adam was in his day, and told to “be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth.” (Gen. 1:28; 9:1.) The trail of the Serpent is indeed over the whole scene and condition of things. Adam had the earth subdued to him, and the creatures of the forest and of the field and of the sea and of the air owned his lordship of them, taking names from him as it pleased him to give them, they in acknowledgment, and he in the exercise, of sovereignty; while it is only in the dread and fear of Noah that the creatures of the earth now stand. It was no longer their homage rendered to man, but their sense of control by reason of the eminency of man. Here was the fruit and the witness of the work of the Eater. But with this, Noah's table was more richly spread now than Adam's had been at first. The herb of the field nourished man then—the flesh of the beasts of field shall now nourish him; for Adam's was the due food of an innocent one, Noah's is the food of a ransomed one. Adam enjoyed the life of an untainted creature—Noah the life of a blood-bought sinner.

Here was the witnessing afresh how meat was forced out of the Eater. It was a world around, wearing the scars and bruises of a deadly fight; it was a table within which told of full and sure and glorious, and blood-sealed redemption.

But, further, the Lord God makes a covenant, with Noah, and with all the creatures around him that He will secure the earth from a second Flood. And in token of this, he hangs the bow in the cloud, up there as under His own eye, that He may look on it, and thus remember His promise. What thoughts and words are these; and yet these are the words of the Spirit, telling us of the intimate ways of God with us, and our souls, and our circumstances! The cloud might threaten, and swell itself with water; the bow should control it. The cloud might frown; the tow should smile. The Lord should be refreshed and glorified now in the counsels of His grace, as at the first He had been in the works of His hands. And the creation was set, not in fallible but in sure conditions.

There had been no threatening cloud in the sky of Eden—but then, there was no shining bow riding in triumph upon it. The cloud was now the witness that the Eater had done his work—a deadly work—a work of forfeiture and ruin; but the bow was alike the witness that God had got

meat and sweetness out of him. (Gen. 9)

Wondrous riddle; beginning to show itself here at the very first.

The fall or ruin of man has been accomplished through the subtlety of the Eater, the Strong man, the old Serpent which is the Devil and Satan; but in the midst of the ruins, God Himself is gathering richer joy and brighter glory than He had known before. And as to His creature man, his communion with God is deeper and more blessed, his destinies more excellent and glorious, being either heavenly like that of Enoch and the antediluvian saints, or in royal and priestly dignities, like that of Noah, in a redeemed and not merely a created system, with the sure tokens of God's unfailing guardianship before him.

Scripture Queries and Answers

Q. Will you do me the great favor to direct me as to the reconciliation of your views of the parenthetical nature of the Christian Dispensation with the passages in the New Testament which seem to teach that Abraham and Christians are one in relation to all the benefits that flow from the mercy of God through the Redeemer? If the Scriptures alluded to did not seem so plainly to contradict your distinction of heavenly and earthly, I could adopt your view, But with only the light I have now, there is nothing for me but painful uncertainty.

Lexington, Va., Dec. 30, 1881. F. P. M.

A. The passages of the New Testament to which our correspondent refers are doubtless such texts as Rom. 4:11, Gal. 3, and Heb. 11 The reason why they are supposed inconsistent with the special privileges of the believer now, is that the distinctive place of the Christian, and yet more of the Church, is not apprehended. People assume that to be born of God, and to be justified by faith, are the sum and substance of present blessing. But it is not so. All saints are necessarily born of the Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit was never enjoyed till Pentecost; and on this depends the body of Christ. Compare Acts 1:2 with 1 Cor. 12:13. And the gift of the Spirit, as thus over and above the new birth, as it could not be before redemption, was to be the permanent privilege of the Christian. The Comforter or Paraclete was to abide with the disciples forever. Even as to justification by faith, Rom. 4 makes this difference between Abraham and us: he believed that God was able to perform His promise; we believe on Him that raised up from the dead Jesus our Lord, after accomplishing. His work in death for our offense. The Old Testament had promise; we rest on accomplishment; so that there is a grave difference at the threshold. Then Gal. 4 shows that even the true saints of old were in servitude; but that now it is a question of the adoption of sons, the Spirit of the Son being sent forth into the hearts of the sons, crying Abba, Father. The inheritance of promise is common ground; but this quite consists with fresh and inferior blessing consequent on redemption. If we think not of the individual, but of our corporate relationship, the difference is at least as marked. The olive tree of testimony according to promise is not at all the same as the house of God, or the body of Christ. There is continuity in the olive tree, even if some of the natural branches were broken off for unbelief to let in the Gentile wild olive graft; and the Gentile, if not continuing in goodness, is to be cut off, that God may ingraft again the natural branches no longer abiding in unbelief. “And so all Israel shall be saved” in the depth of God's wisdom and mercy. But this is quite distinct from Eph. 2, where the two are formed into one man, in which is neither Jew nor Gentile; and we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone. During the Old Testament the middle wall was not broken down, nor were both made one. Even in the Lord's ministry here below, “Go not,” said He, “into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:” dead and risen, He sends them to any or all. How could the house be even begun before the foundation, not of prophets and then apostles, but “of the apostles and prophets” whom the ascended Head gave as gifts? And the body is formed in union with Him by the Spirit sent down from heaven.

Thus, if there are benefits which all saints enjoy from God's mercy through Christ, which is thankfully owned, there are fresh and unspeakably great privileges which flow from redemption, and the presence of the Holy Ghost, who associates us in unity with Christ on high. In these last lies the peculiar blessings of the Christian and the Church. When Christ comes, the worthies of faith will, no doubt, receive the promise; but God has none the less provided some better thing for us, though we and they shall together enter on glory in that day.

Q. 1 Peter 3:18-20 What is the meaning? Did Christ preach after death to the Old Testament saints?

A. To be understood, this verse must be taken with what goes before. Christ was put to death in flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, in which also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, disobedient as they at one time were when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved through water; which figure also doth now save you, &c. Just as we read in 1 Peter 1:10-12 of Christ's Spirit in the prophets testifying, so here we learn that His Spirit (i.e. in Noah) preached. Those who heard were disobedient then, and their spirits are in prison now. Christ's Spirit by Noah went and preached to them when they were living men, before the Deluge came; but they rejected the Word, and now consequently their spirits await the judgment at the resurrection of the unjust. The collocation of the Greek (το■ς ■ν φυλακ■ πνε■μασιν) is decisive, that the true connection is not with the preaching, but between the spirits and prison. They were sinners disobedient to the message, not saints comforted. The preaching was on earth, where the unbelieving rejection was; and because of it their spirits are now imprisoned (the very opposite of paradise) till judgment come.

Scripture Queries and Answers

1.-Phil. 2:21. Will you please interpret the passage “All seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ “?

2.-In a paper of a small periodical for September the writer defines “their own things” as the “certainty of salvation,” “my portion on earth” “heavenly joys conveyed to my soul by the Spirit of God come down from heaven.” Then he says “Now when we are seeking our own things... It is very evident that we cannot devote ourselves to Christ's things.” Is this in any sense the right force of this scripture? Do you consider that any of the things enumerated were in the mind of the Spirit of God in this passage?

Are not “the things of Jesus Christ” His own interests, in the plucking of a brand from eternal ruin as truly as “the conscious union (of the beloved) with Christ… in heavenly places “? QUERIST.

A. (There is no just doubt that the apostle here speaks with deep feeling of the waning of love and devotedness to Christ, His interests and objects, among all that bore His name It is not to be limited to his then companions, any more than to unwillingness to undertake so long a journey as from Rome to Philippi It is his solemn assertion of the selfishness creeping over Christians as a whole, though he intimates in the passage itself blessed exceptions in Timothy and Epaphroditus, as in the saints doubtless to whom he was writing. “The things of Christ,” it is manifest from the epistle itself, include the gospel and fellowship with it and its conflicts, love for the saints and sympathetic help in their every need, not only spiritual but personal and temporal, individual progress in the grace of Christ as well as gracious consideration of one another, with Himself

before us both in the love that came down to obey even to the death of the cross and in the glory where He is now on high, as well as in the assurance of His speedy coming. The Epistle essentially contemplates the saints as in the wilderness, not in Canaan, though this be true also and the view in Ephesians.

2.-It is false doctrine, therefore, that Christ's things according to this epistle (and it is here only this expression occurs) begin in heavenly places (Jordan behind), and that “my own continue during my course,” in the true sense of this scripture. This is an exaggeration of the truth which is always untrue, an atmosphere of falsetto for those who are not breathing the free air of Christ and all the truth. The apostle, the Holy Spirit, does not mean “a great deal in Christianity” as “one's own.” Selfish interests are meant, I do not say open sins which man would blame, but such things as he would rather praise (Psa. 49:8). It is not only a false interpretation, but, it is to be feared, of the enemy, that seeking our own things means to learn the certainty of salvation, the heavenly joys, &c. The practical issue of this dangerous and evil one-sidedness would be to expose souls under such influence to real selfishness, value for rank and social enjoyment, love of money, power, and party, &c. the very snares against which the unsophisticated truth would guard the simple in God's grace. It is false that our own things ought to continue during our course. We fail if we allow selfishness for an hour. In every respect the teaching is erroneous and mischievous.

Chapter 192

Scripture Queries and Answers: Hebrews 13:7-8

Q. Heb. 13:7, 8. Does this mean that the faithful leaders here alluded to made Christ their constant theme in their speech one with another as well as with others?

A. I do not doubt that so it was with these servants of the Lord, as it should be with all of us who love Him. But this scripture says nothing about it, speaking of two wholly distinct matters. (1) Ver. 7 calls on the Hebrew Christians to remember their guides, who (the which) spoke to them the word of God, revealed truth in general; and to follow their faith, surveying thoughout the issue or termination of their career. Their “conversation” in the sense of Christian course was closed. The saints who remembered them would do well to imitate their faith when here. (2) Ver. 8 introduces a new subject: if there be any link with ver. 7, it is contrast with the faithful servants who were gone. “Jesus Christ [is] yesterday and to-day the same, and forever.” He is declared to be, though man, the Unchangeable One. What a safeguard against being carried away by various and strange teachings! Christ truly known satisfies the heart and gives rest to the mind otherwise greedy of novelties. Thus do even the naturally fickle become by grace restful and stable, as they grow up to Him in all things.

Chapter 193

The Shunammite

In the Old Testament times we find the Lord bringing out fresh resources on repeated failures, and faith ever ready to adopt them, nay, and at times to caculate upon them and to look for them. Failure of everything under man's hand, or as in his stewardship, is witnessed again and again; but God's resources are unexhausted, and faith is undismayed and undistracted.

When Israel in the wilderness make the golden calf, and thus break the very first article of the Covenant under which all was then sat, Moses acts as one that counted on finding something in God to meet the catastrophe. (Ex. 33)

When the nation, brought into the land under Joshua, again break the Covenant, as they do oft-times, the Lord, in the energy of His Spirit, calls forth the judges for their deliverance, and faith in them is ready for the occasion.

When the priesthood ruined itself afterward, and Ichabod was written on the forehead of Israel, God has a prophet (a new and strange provision) in the secret place of His counsel and resources, and Samuel, as such, in faith leads on to Ebenezer, or God's help, for this fallen people.

When the kingdom, in time, ruins itself, as the people in the wilderness had done, and as the nation under the judges had done, and the throne and house of David are in the dust, and Israel a captive, faith still waits in the certainty that God had not failed, though all beside had. The Temple may be a desolation, the Ark may have disappeared, all that was sacred have been lost, the land itself the property of the uncircumcised, and the people of God the slaves of the Gentile; still a Daniel, a Nehemiah, and an Esther, and other kindred hearts, can maintain their Nazaritism, and look for days of fresh discoveries of what God is and has for Israel.

God's resources are thus unexhausted by man's failures, and faith undistracted.

But in the present New Testament days we have somewhat of another thing to mark; and it is this—the full satisfaction that faith takes in what God has already provided it with, and the jealousy and care of the Spirit that we use it, and hold by it, in the perfect satisfaction of its being equal to all new and rising exigencies.

The difference is, therefore, this. In other days, faith calculated on what it was still to get; in these present days, it is faithful to, and abides by, that which it has already got. For it has got Christ, the end of all divine provisions.

We have only to road the Epistles to perceive this, Christ, the Christ of God, and Scripture, the word of His grace, becoming our standing provision. How does the Spirit there keep all the boast of the heart in that which is thus already with us! And surely faith takes up the mind of the Spirit. How do the Epistles speak of Christ as being all to us, exhorting us to go on with Him as we have begun with Him, to be built up in Him as we have been rooted in Him, to hold fast, to continue in the things we have learned already, and to be still refusing all but Christ and the Word. “I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace,” is Apostolic language.

Here is a difference. But there is kindredness in past and present, Old Testament and Now Testament days, in this; that failure on man's part, and consequent confusion in the scene around us, have alike given character to both. And faith is the same, knowing and using God's resources in, the face of the confusion: only, again I say, with this difference, that the resource, in past Old Testament days, was something new; now, it is ever one and the same; that is, God, and the word of His grace, Christ and Scripture.

Of old faith acted in that way, now faith acts in this way.

When, of old, as we have seen, the golden calf was made, faith looked for a new revelation of God's Name. When the nation in the laid forfeited their place under the wing of Jehovah, faith found its object in the freshly-awakened Judge or Deliverer. When the priesthood was defiled, faith used the prophet. When the kingdom was a ruin, faith still waited in hope of sure and certain sovereign relief in new ways suited to new conditions—as Mordecai at such a time said, “Enlargement and deliverance shall arise to the Jews from another place.” But now, in the face of failure and confusion, take it what form it may, faith has God and His word, Christ and Scripture, standing and abiding resources known alike at every moment of New Testament times: nothing fresh, nothing new, but that which is given in grace faith uses, and remains calm and undistracted, however grieved and humbled. For “the ends of the world” are come upon us. (1 Cor. 10:11). We look not for further exhibitions, but we use what we have, let Church ruins and Christendom confusion be what they may. Faith holds the beginning of its confidence steadfast unto the end. Faith is prepared for failure in God's stewards; but having reached Himself, it rests at ease and is satisfied.

The Shunamite in 2 Kings 4 illustrates these beautiful ways of faith, and does so beautifully. She was not dismayed or distracted by a day of failure and confusion; she is prepared for such under man's hand; but, having apprehended and reached God and His resources, she is satisfied, and abides there.

This finely shows itself in her history. At the beginning of it, she apprehends Elisha justly. Without introduction she perceives him to be “a man of God,” and as such she welcomes and entertains him. She can count on God having His resources at command, though the kingdom be reprobate. And this she does in the due manner. She knows his character as well as his person. If he be a man of God, she will trust him as having the tastes and sympathies of such, and as such she prepares for him. A little chamber on the wall, and then the necessary furniture, a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick. Not to display the treasures of her house, but to meet him in character, is her thought; and this is communion. Her instincts are fine, as her faith is strong and intelligent.

The scenery was heavenly. I mean, all about that chamber bespoke heavenly strangers on the earth in the days of corruption and apostacy. Things were then in utter moral ruin. Ahab's family, the house of Omri, was on the throne, and nothing in the kingdom then was worthy of God. Little things do, and alone do, for God's people then. In Solomon-days it must be otherwise. Now, a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick, is enough—then, servants and their apparel and their sitting, with all beside, must set out earthly, worldly greatness.

All this is full of beauty. and of meaning. This dear woman apprehends God's witness in this evil day. She knows that God is true, though every man a liar. She knows that, if foundations be

destroyed, God is still in His holy temple. In this evil day she sees God's resources in this vessel. He is a stranger, a lonely man, a kind of Jonah in Nineveh, unintroduced, unaccredited. But she apprehends him; and having accepted him, she holds fast by him. The husband may talk of new moons and sabbaths; Elisha himself may talk, of the servant and his staff—but with her God's vessel is everything. He had been the beginning of her confidence, and she will have him as such steadfast to the end.

For faith, in those days as well as in these days, held to God's resources. Faith looked again and again, as I have said, for new resources, as new exigencies sprang forth; but while these resources were in God's hand for His people, until they had given place, through fresh corruption, to new ones, faith clung to them. So this Shunamite to the Prophet, when all in the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes, whether on the Throne or in the Sanctuary, was in ruins.

Chapter 194

On Singing in the Assembly

[Dear Mr. Editor, As there are some of the Lord's people who are needlessly troubled, and are troubling others with questions relating to this subject, I send you the following remarks, which are the substance of a letter to a brother, that you may use them as you please].

The question has often been asked: “Is there any Scriptural warrant for singing hymns at the Lord's table?” and that too, by Christians who are more or less familiar with Scripture. They would never yield to such speculations, if they were but content to allow the Word of God, if but one line of it, to settle every question that arises. When Scripture speaks but very seldom on any given topic, there is almost certain to be a bone of contention; and for this simple reason:—that men habitually prefer their own thoughts to the declarations of Scripture.

If Christians desire only to be governed by God's Word, it would not matter one jot or tittle whether that Word spoke much or little upon a certain subject so long as it spoke. A single word of Scripture ought to be sufficient to set any mind forever at rest. A “Thus saith the Lord” is worth volumes upon volumes of arguments from the best or most original men that ever lived.

Now the subject of hymn-singing is one on which the Scriptures say very little indeed. I suppose the reason is that the Holy Spirit never recognized the probability of Christians calling in question what is so instructive and universal, and withal so reverent, holy, and blessed an exercise. The word which gives us “hymn” only occurs six times in the whole of the New Testament; four times as a verb (1,,uatc) and twice as a noun (iip,v09). In Matt. 26:30, and Mark 14:26 the original is:— “And when they had hymned.” In Acts 16:25 it is:— “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and hymned to God.” In Heb. 2:12 we have “In the midst of the church will I hymn to thee.”

These are the only instances in which the word is used as a verb, but it is used as a noun in Eph. 5:19, and Col. 3:16,— “Singing in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”

I am not going to write a paper on “Hymnology;” as it might be unprofitable and certainly is unnecessary for our present purpose; but I wish to give a clear and decisive answer to the question:— “Is there any Scriptural warrant for singing hymns at the Lord's table? “

In order to have a right understanding of any subject under discussion, it is well to attend to the real meaning of terms. What then is the definition of a hymn? Rose's edition of Parkhurst's Greek and English Lexicon to the New Testament says the word that 77,11.1,09 means a hymn, a song in honor of God, as among heathen of the gods; or a celebration in verse of some hero, and his exploits. So the more general Lexicon of Liddell and Scott, &c.

Let us look then at the word as it occurs in the New Testament. In Matt. 26:30 and Mark 14:26 we had these words:— “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.”

Now we must bear in mind that the Lord had been speaking to His disciples many things concerning Himself and them. He had been telling them how that He was going to suffer and to die, and how in giving Himself thus to die on the cross, He was fulfilling that Passover of which

they were then partaking, after which paschal supper He Himself instituted what is called the Lord's Supper. He gave them the bread and then the wine, telling them to eat and drink in remembrance of Him. See also 1 Cor. 11. It was at this very supper (the same which we repeat every Lord's day morning) that they sung a hymn.

I do not go into the question as to what sort of a hymn it was, interesting as it might be in its proper place; but it is sufficient to know that they sang. And I ask, if they sang then with the Lord in their midst, was that not a precedent of sufficient weight to warrant our doing the same, supposing there were not another verse of Scripture on the subject?

It is useless for my object to offer any comment on the word in Acts 16, as if will be said that they were singing, not in the assembly, but in a prison. But I ask you to turn to Heb. 2:12, where we have a quotation from Psa. 22, a psalm which every Christian admits is in view of suffering and of glory, a prophecy of the experiences of the Lord Himself.

In the first part we have “the sufferings of Christ” and in the second “the glories that should follow.” (See 1 Peter 1 and Matt. 26 and xxvii.) In verse 22, He is seen standing on the resurrection side of the grave, saying “I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation (or assembly) will I sing praise unto Thee.” This is what we see so beautifully carried out and practically fulfilled in John 20 in the words “Go tell my brethren that I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God,” and then farther on He is seen “in their midst.”

If we turn now to Heb. 2:12, we shall find the Holy Spirit quoting this passage from the psalm and applying it to Christ saying:— “In the midst of the church (or, assembly) will I sing praise (or, hymn) unto thee.” Is this nothing to or for us? Is it a mere historical fact, or a living reality to faith? Did He only fulfill it then? Is it not abidingly true now? or do we fail to believe it?

If it be true that Christ is in the midst of the assembly, hymning to God, shall we refuse to join with and follow Him who thus leads our praises? Is it not our chief joy on earth?

But it may be said that we can praise God without putting our words into meter and singing out of a humanly composed hymn-book. It may be argued that, inasmuch as our experiences must come infinitely short of Christ's, it interferes with the Spirit's action if we give such expression to those experiences, because in so doing we confine Him, as it were, within the covers of a printed book.

My answer is, that, on the very first occasion of the Lord's Supper with the Lord there personally, He Himself joined with the disciples in singing a hymn. Moreover, if the hymn they then sang was one of the Psalms, which corresponded with the circumstances the blessed Lord was then passing through, as most Christians think, His entrance into its depth must certainly have been infinitely beyond the experience of the disciples, yet, He did not on that account discourage their singing it. If, on the other hand, it was a humanly-composed hymn, an uninspired breathing of a godly soul, suitable to express the disciples' experiences, He in grace condescended to identify Himself with them in their experiences and sang with them. Whichever way you take it, it condemns the fastidiousness of those who decline to sin; a particular hymn, either because it may be beyond them; or else (which is far more frequent) because they think themselves beyond it.

But it is sometimes objected that, when the Lord sang with the disciples, it was under a different dispensation. But surely they do not so speak of the Lord's Supper, which began on that very

same night in which the Lord took and brake bread saying “Do this in remembrance of Me.” It was the inauguration of this precious institution; and if the Lord on that occasion set us an example in the breaking of bread, He also set us an example in singing a hymn at the time.

Again, as if the example of the Master were not enough, we find on referring to Corinthians xiv. that it was customary for the early Christians to sing in their church assemblages. In that chapter the apostle is speaking of various things which ought, and others which ought not, to be done in the Assembly, not privately but when come together. He had already spoken of the things concerning their private life in previous chapters; but now he turns to things actually occurring when the church assembled; such as, speaking with tongues, and to edification; singing or praying, understood or not. While giving directions for the right doing of all things, he says:—“What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”

What is the inference at which we must arrive as to such words? The only conclusion which to me seems true or even possible is that singing at the Lord's Supper, or in assembly meetings, was the divinely and approved customary practice of the saints in those early days. The Apostle does not deprecate any of the things which he mentions, whether praying, prophesying or singing; he merely gives directions that they shall be done in the Spirit, and so in a decent and orderly manner Verse 26 of the same chapter is another illustration of this.. “How is it then brethren? When ye come together, everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation: let all things be done unto edifying.” Did he tell them they were not to have their psalms, their doctrines, etc? No; but he insists that they were to be exercised to edification, and in accordance with the order and comeliness suitable to the occasion, thoroughly subject to the Lord. In short they themselves were to be led of the Holy Spirit. Christ was present in their midst.

In Eph. 5:19, and Col. iii. 16, the Apostle tells us to speak to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing, and making melody in our hearts to the Lord; and I am told that this means that we are to do so (not in the assembly but) in the family or in private company. But surely if it is well to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs in my heart, it is also good to express the feelings of the heart by voice and lips; and if it is good to do so at home, it is also good to do it elsewhere, and not by myself only but also with others; and, lastly, if I can do it to the Lord at all, I can surely do it when assembled at the most precious and solemn meetings of all. Indeed, as we have seen, Scripture warrants all this without reasoning.

There is one other remark I would make before closing this paper, and it is this:—that although I think what some sneeringly call a “a humanly composed hymn-book” to be of God, nevertheless, like every other privilege, it has been abused. But are we going to abandon a true and happy privilege because some are unwise enough to abuse it? It is sad to think that any saint could desire to abolish the hymn-book and so reduce the assemblies to melancholy and incongruous silence; but we do need that hearts should be exercised as to the too free and unspiritually minded use of it. The principles of the New Testament demand that every brother in the assembly (who is not otherwise disqualified) be open or at liberty to be used by the Spirit to give out a hymn, engage in prayer, or give thanks, etc. But those principles give him no license to do so when and how he pleases. There is a wide difference between liberty and license, yet this difference is far too often forgotten., It may be too that brothers who are most free with the hymn-book are seldom or never

heard in prayer or happy service of the word. This, fact alone ought to weigh with those who give out hymns to be sung at the table of the Lord. H. C.

Chapter 195

The Spirit's Liberty in Ministry of the Word

The question of “lay-preaching” is one of the greatest importance, and one in which it is obvious, the interests of the Church are deeply concerned; because if God give His Spirit to “laymen” for the purpose, there is positive loss in the hindrance, and the Spirit of God is grieved. The point to be proved by those who are opposed to it is this, either that no laymen have the Spirit of God in testimony, or that, having it, the sanction of man is necessary for its exercise. I do not purpose here a general investigation of the principles of the subject, but merely to inquire whether laymen are entitled to preach, if the Lord give them opportunity; or, whether there be any such human sanction needful for their doing so. I affirm that there is not; that no such sanction can be proved to be necessary from Scripture; and that no such sanction was therein afforded. The question is not, whether all laymen are individually qualified, but whether as laymen they are disqualified, unless they are what is commonly called ordained, I say commonly called, because the word, as used in scripture, does not in the original convey what it does to an English ear at present. I affirm that no such ordination was a qualification to preach in the days of Scripture statement.

I do not despise order; I do not despise pastoral care; I love it where it really exists, as that which savors in its place of the sweetest of God's services. Though it may be exercised sometimes in a manner not to our present taste and thought, a good shepherd will seek the scattered sheep. But I confine myself to a simple question—the assertion, that laymen ought not to preach without episcopal or other analogous appointment. My assertion is, that they are entitled; that they did so in Scripture; were justified in doing so, God blesses them therein; and that the principles of Scripture require it, assuming of course here that they are qualified by God; for the question here is not competency to act, but title to act if competent. Neither do I despise herein (God forbid that I should do so!) the holy setting apart, according to godliness, to any office such as are competent, by those that have authority to do so.

Let us see what Scripture says on the subject. The question can only arise as to their speaking in the church, or out of the church. These admitted all anomalous cases will readily be agreed in. And, first in the church. And here I remark, that the directions in 1 Cor. 14 are entirely inconsistent with the necessity of ordination to speak. There is a line drawn here, but it is not, “if ordained, or unordained” “Let your women keep silence in the churches,” a direction which never could have had place, were the speaking confined to a definitely ordained person. But it takes quite another ground; and it implies directly, not that it is right for every man to speak, but that there was preclusion of none because of their character as laymen. Women were the precluded class: there the line was drawn. If men had not the gift of speaking, of course they would be silent, if they followed the directions there given. The apostle says, “every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation.” Does he say none ought to speak but one ordained? No; “let all things be done unto edifying.” This is the grand secret, the grand rule— “in a tongue by two, or at the most by three, and by course, an interpret.” Prophets two or three, &c. “For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.” “For God,” &c. “Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted

unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience."

We have then a distinction, not of ordained and unordained, but of those who, from their character women are not permitted to speak, and the rest are; and directed in what order to do so, and the ground of distinction stated. And this is God's plan of decency and order. For the rest, they were all to speak, that all might learn, and all be comforted; not all to speak at once, not all to speak every day, but all as God led them, according to the order there laid down, and as God was pleased to give them ability for the edifying of the church. I apply all this simply and exclusively to the question of laymen speaking; and I assert, that there was no such principle recognized as that they should not, but the contrary.

It will be said, I know, that these were the times of extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; but this is a false view of the case. Do they mean to argue, that ordination did not begin as a distinctive title till after the departure of the Spirit of God? Moreover the Spirit of God does not justify by systematic rules breaking through its own order: it would be most mischievous to say it did. But the case was not one of the prerogative of spiritual gifts, but of order, for women had spiritual gifts, as we read elsewhere, and directions are given for their exercise; but they were not to use them in the church, because it was out of order, not comely. But there was no hint that any or all the men were not! but the contrary, because it was not out of order. Aptness to teach may be a very important qualification for a bishop; but it cannot be said, from Scripture, to be disorderly for a layman to speak in the church, if God have given him ability.

Besides, though those extraordinary gifts may have ceased, I by no means admit, that the ordinary gifts for the edification of the church of believers have ceased. On the contrary, I believe they are the instrument, the real instrument, of edification; nor do I see why, on principle, they should not be exercised in the church, or why the church has not a title to the edification derived from them. If I were to speak of lay-preaching, I should be referred to the orderly way in which Christ had given—in His church—some apostles, &c. Now, unless one man centers all these in one person by virtue of ordination, I do not see how it applies. I read, "some, one; some, another." The Head, Christ, "from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplied, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love." And I read, that there are given, one the eye, the other the foot, the other, the ear, that there might be no schism in the body. And if we have lost many, and ornamental members, it is no reason why we should cut off the rest; the word of wisdom, or the word of knowledge, or the like. If the Spirit of God be clean gone out of the church, how came that about? Was it when laymen spoke, or office was maintained? It will then be said they will do it out of, but not in the church. Why not? Thus far, then, for speaking in, the church. I advocate no system. I mourn over the departure of many of the comely parts, or, however, on which God set comeliness. I take these Scriptures as scriptural evidence, that the notion of laymen speaking in the church being wrong, has not the Scriptures to rest on.

I speak not here of elders, or appointed teachers; of their value or not. I speak merely of the one point, the wrongness of a layman speaking in the church as such. If we are told of the danger arising from all teaching, I admit it at once. But we are warned against its not by wrongness as regards office, or its effect merely on others; but as one of the things in which, as evil will come out, so the remedy is applied to the spirit from which it flows: "My brethren, be not many teachers,

for so shall ye heap to yourselves greater condemnation." But the warning still again shows, that there was no such restriction of office as is now supposed, for it would have been, "you have no business to teach at all, you are not ordained:" But, no; the correction was turned to moral profit, not to formal distinction of pre-eminent office.

But it comes to be more important out of the church; because it precludes the testimony of the gospel by a vast number of persons, who may have faithfully borne it to others. Let us inquire into the scriptural facts. In the first place, then, all the Christians preached—went every where preaching the word (Acts 8:4). Some critics have endeavored to elude this plain passage by saying, that this is speaking, which a layman may do. The short answer is—It is not. It is ε■αγγελιζ■μενοι,—evangelizing the word. And we read elsewhere that "the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord." Now, unless all the church were ordained—I think they are to preach, as far as they have ability—here is the simplest case possible; the case in point. The first general preaching of the gospel, which the Lord blessed beyond the walls of Jerusalem, was by laymen, or, (however, it knew no distinction.) It had not entered into their minds then, that they who knew the glory of Christ were not to speak of it, where, and how, God enabled them. And "the hand of the Lord was with them."

Paul preached without any other mission than seeing the glory of the Lord and His word—in a synagogue too, and boasts of it. And he gives his reasons for Christians preaching elsewhere—"as it is written: I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe and therefore speak." Apollos preached; and when Paul would have sent him from Ephesus to Corinth, he would not go. Yet, so far from being ordained before beginning to preach, he knew only the baptism of John. And Aquilla and Priscilla took him to them, and expounded to him the way of God more perfectly. At Rome many of the brethren, waxing bold by Paul's bonds, preached the word without fear. And here I must add, as critics vex themselves about this too, the word is κηρ■σσουσιν—are heralds. The same habits of wandering preaching we find, in 2 John and 3 John, guarded not by ordination, but by doctrine. Nor as there such a thing mentioned in Scripture as ordaining to preach the gospel. Paul preached before he went out on his work from Antioch. And if they will plead his being set apart there, they are quite welcome; for I reason not against such setting apart, but against the assertion that laymen are incompetent to preach. But the case, if it proves anything for them, proves that laymen can ordain as well as preach—that is all. The only other passage, not commonly quoted, but which seems to me nearer the purpose, is, The same commit thou to faithful men, able to teach others also." But the thing committed here was the doctrine, and it proves tradition, if anything, not ordination; for it does not appear that they were ordained for the purpose.

I have now produced ample evidence from Scripture to a simple mind. I am not attacking ordination, nor anything that may, in the eyes of others appear valuable; but simply the assertion that laymen ought not to speak in or preach out of the church; and I say that this assertion is a novelty in Christianity, for that Scripture recognizes their doing so. I have abstained from diffusive discussions upon what has led to it, or the principles which are involved in it. I put the scriptural fact to anybody's conscience; and I call upon any one to produce any Scripture positively, or on principle, forbidding laymen to preach, or requiring episcopal, or other analogous, ordination for the purpose.

And here I will advert to what is commonly adduced upon the subject, the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. It is remarkable that those who do so should pass by a case immediately preceding, bearing upon this immediate subject: Faded and Medad prophesying in the camp, though they had not come up to the door of the tabernacle, because the Spirit rested upon them. “Would God,” said the meek man of God, “that all the Lord's people were prophets!” What was here typically proposed—the pouring out the Spirit on all—was, in principle fulfilled in the Christian dispensation. Then subsequently Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, acted not under the influence and energy of the Spirit in testifying to the people, but would have assumed authority—the kingship of Moses, and the priesthood of Aaron. This was their fault. These things were typical of our dispensation. So the apostle states. They make universal preaching desirable, and the assumption of priesthood a sin. If this be not the force of these passages, let those who object to the explanation explain what is. To the same is the argument of the apostle applied, the exclusion from the office of priesthood save by such call as Christ had; in which, in one sense, all believers are partakers; in another sense, He is alone, unaccompanied into the holy place.

In a word, the assumption of preaching by laymen is right. The assumption of priesthood by any, save as all believers are priests, is wrong. This is the dispensation of the outpouring of the Spirit here, qualifying for preaching any here who can do so—in a word, speaking of Jesus (for the distinction between speaking and preaching is quite unsustainable by Scripture, as any one may see, if he takes the trouble). And now it is that Christ alone exercises the priesthood within the veil in the presence of God for us. This I believe to be the force of these passages. The type of the pouring out of the Spirit in the camp, with the gracious wish of Moses, is the characteristic, the essential distinction, of Christianity.

Accordingly we find, in its primary presentation to the world, the Spirit poured out on the one hundred and twenty who were assembled together, who thereupon began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. And St. Peter, standing up, explains to the Jews, that they were not drunk, but that it was the thing spoken of by Joel—the undistinguished pouring—out of the Spirit upon men of all classes, servants and hand-maidens, their sons and their daughters prophesying—the pouring-out of the Spirit upon all flesh. This was the characteristic of its agency, and this we have seen acted upon in the subsequent history: to deny this is to mistake the only power of the dispensation, and, I will add, to lose it. And what is the consequence? Irregular action goes on, and cannot be restrained, for kingly power cannot be assumed to such purpose, or they are taking the part of Dathan and Abiram. But the power of the Spirit, in which God would give competency to restrain evil, has been slighted; and office which has been relied on affords no remedy, unless the rights which the Roman Catholic system has assumed be attached to it, which is the assumption of power not given to the church at all.

It is not for me to assert what is the evil of the present day: I am sure it is not the overflowing boldness of testimony against evil. And if evil teaching exists, the remedy is not in hindering or rejecting (for hindered it surely will not be, nor can it be) lay-preaching, but the cordial co-operation of those who hold the truth, by which the common energy (and common energy is infinite energy in this matter) should be exercised to sustain it against that which does not hold the truth, and the clergy and all may be persuaded it will be needed. Thus the distinction will be between truth and error, and not office and the Spirit—the most mischievous that human wit could have devised. In the mean time those who hold office really from God, will find those who have the Spirit, but not

special office, gladly, aye, thankfully, most thankfully, recognize them in it, instead of being thrown into opposition, and color given to those who have not the Spirit, in their apparent similarity of conduct; and apparent evidence afforded, that those who have office are opposed to the Spirit, in their prohibition of those who have it gift exercising it.

The times call for decision; and the only thing which will withstand evil and error is truth, and truth wielded as a common cause against error and self-will by the saints under the Spirit. And then God can be wholly with them, instead of being, obliged to withdraw His countenance from them when they are opposed to their brethren, and rejecting them when He must justify them. Surely it is the order of His glory and all their blessing to do so too. May He by His Spirit guide you into all truth.

Chapter 196

The Unity of the Spirit: Part 1

Eph. 4:3

It is needless for one to insist at length on that which is sufficiently plain to every Christian reader—the importance which God attaches to keeping the unity of the Spirit. It is true that “endeavoring” fails to give the real force of the word employed by the Spirit of God. “Endeavoring” is an expression which in the ordinary language of the day is habitually applied to that which men essay or seek after, even if they have not a hope of accomplishing. They feel that they may fail, but at any rate they try or “endeavor” to do this or that. Such is not the meaning of the word here, but rather zeal in heeding and carrying out what is already true, giving diligence “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” This, however, shows that not mere effort to attain, but earnestness to maintain, is the exhortation intended.

For the unity of the Spirit is to faith a subsisting fact; and the keeping it is no less our present duty. It is not that we have unity of ours to make, or that God is to make it for us in heaven by and by. It is here, and now that the Spirit has formed this unity the keeping of which is clearly our responsibility on earth. No doubt there is much to learn from the fact that it really is, as it is called, “the unity of the Spirit.” It is not at all mere unity on our part, nor is it the unity of the body, though this is one result, but of the Holy Ghost who baptized into one body all who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free. It puts forward the Divine agent, the efficient source and power of unity, the Holy Spirit; but it supposes and includes the one body, which itself is so positive and permanent a reality that expressions often used about it are proved thereby incorrect. Of rending the body we hear in man's language or writings, never in God's word. Just as a bone of Christ was not to be broken, so the body of Christ, the church, cannot be rent. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as there is one hope of our calling.” These are the vital, abiding, and unchangeable truths in that new relationship. As surely as one Spirit has been sent down from heaven, there is but one body on earth; but that which the members of the body are called to keep is the unity of the Spirit.

It is not, as many interpret it, the unity of our spirits where the Lord guides one and all in communion with the Father and the Son, which is no doubt a very desirable, right, and blessed thing in its place, but provided for rather in John 17:21, 22, than here. “That all might be one,” in the Gospel of John, refers to our rising by grace above all that would set or keep us apart, one in the Father and the Son. So the Lord asked for us of the Father, that we might be characterized by unity. But in the scripture before us, as in the writings of Paul generally, at least where the “body” is introduced, it is another truth attaching to the same objects, yet not at all a contingent or changeable condition of soul, but the permanent and blessed fact, that God has established unity for His own glory by the presence of His Spirit, who has united us to Christ our exalted Head in heaven.

There is since Pentecost a divine unity on the earth; not the mere aggregate of the individuals evermore called by grace, but those now made one by the Spirit of God. There is thus a divine

corporation on the earth, if one may be allowed to use so familiar an expression. This divine society here below is not formed by the will of the persons who compose it, although it is to be supposed that their hearts if right and intelligent thoroughly go along with the grace that so united them. But the church or assembly of God is formed by God's will; as it was purposed by His grace, so is it made good livingly by His power, the Holy Ghost being the effectuator of this blessed unity. Hence the Spirit of God for that very reason has the deepest and the most intimate interest in carrying out this unity for Christ's glory according to the counsels of the Father. It is called the unity of the Spirit; yet let none imagine that he can intelligently keep the unity of the Spirit and forget for a moment in principle or practice the one body of Christ.

There are, of course, various ways in which the saints may fail to keep this unity; but there are two general though opposite directions in which the failure may work, which are as prevalent as they are manifest. The first is by setting up a unity larger than that of the Spirit; the second by making it less. There may be a worldly looseness on the one hand, or mere partyism on the other; and the danger is so great that only God's Spirit can keep us looking to Christ by the word. Whatever may be the object or excuse, the will of man himself of course is at bottom the motive at work in opposition to God's will.

In the first case men are prone to enlarge the unity. They insist on taking in multitudes beyond the members of the body of Christ, souls recognized as of Christ without adequate ground for it. Oh what dishonor to that excellent Name! I speak not of infirmity in accrediting any supposed to be true, but of the deliberate intention to accept, and treat as belonging to Christ's body, persons who do not themselves even profess to be His members, and have evidently never passed from death unto life. Rome, it is true, had so done in its medieval sway over the west; and the Eastern bodies, the Greeks, Nestorians, &c., were no better, any more than the Catholic church before that great rent which set them at variance. They had all sought and received the world by means of fleshly ordinances, apart from faith and the reception of the Spirit. The Reformation, much as it did, in no adequate way rectified this radical error. Protestantism rejected the woman ruling over the nations, and if possible all nations; but, ignorant of the unity of the Spirit, it set up in each realm, where its influence extended, its own independent religion as by law established.

Such is the well-known principle of nationalistic bodies, wherever found, whether in England or in Scotland, in Germany or in Holland. They profess to receive all decent people in the districts or parishes. It is avowedly a religion for every body, and in no way the intention or the desire to incorporate none that are not living members of Christ. Birth or local connections are allowed unless there be open scandal. There is no demand of life or faith, still less of the gift of the Holy Ghost, as of old (Acts 11:16, 17). It is rather such a pattern as Israel affords, not the church wherein is neither Jew nor Greek but all are one in Christ Jesus. It is a question of family life and of geographical limits, and people are not Israelites or heathen but own the Christian religion, being in what is commonly called a national church; yet is it not clear that in a national church the unity of the Spirit cannot possibly be kept? One may be a true Christian, or child of God, but there is neither, the thought nor the possibility for a member of a national church to keep therein “the unity of the Spirit.” Hence they speak of the Church of England, not of the church of God in England: still less do they contemplate all that are Christ's on the earth.

The fact is that, in escaping from Babylon, they have come to acknowledge a unity wholly different from, and opposed, to that of the Spirit. They have set up a unity which, if carried out with complete success, would comprehend the whole nation, saving perhaps those who eschew all show of religion. For I do not forget that the Rubric provides against heinous or manifest scandal. Notoriously, however, in every quarter, and almost in every family, there may be persons of more or less respectability, moral and amiable men, who know they are not born of God, and would shrink from pretending to be members of Christ, if they were not misled to claim the place on ritual ground. Most of these would shrink from being called “saints,” and hesitate not to apply the word as a cant term of reproach to God's children who are not ashamed to call themselves what they are.

Clearly then such as disclaim the name thus are not saints, unless you can honestly conceive of a believer so sunk or dark as to make a scorn of God's designation for His children. And you may rest assured without a doubt that he who thinks and talks so does not walk as becomes a saint. Now if a man is not what scripture calls a saint, he is certainly not a Christian, except for God's judgment of his hollow profession. Is it not plain that a Christian is a saint, and a good deal more? There were saints in Old Testament times; there were saints before the cross of Christ; but were they really Christians so called? A Christian is a saint since redemption, one who is separated to God by faith of the gospel, in the power of the Holy Ghost, on the ground of the work of Christ. Whatever he may have been naturally before, God has quickened him together with Christ, having forgiven all his offenses; and now, brought nigh by the blood of Christ, he draws near to God as a child. He is also a member of Christ's body.

Now these are the persons who are called in the bond of peace to keep with diligence the unity of the Spirit, setting their faces against everything which might falsify that unity. It is not merely that the spirit inwardly, and the personal conduct outwardly, must be suitable to it, which of course is true; but if the affections and walk were ever so excellent, it would be a serious thing for the Christian to annul or overlook the expression of that unity. Yet does not every, believer dishonor it who owns any unity whatever that is not of the Holy Ghost? If he owns the fellowship of nationalism in this or any other country, is it not clear that he is off the ground on which scripture places all the saints? As a nationalist, how can he be keeping the unity of the Spirit? He may behave as a true child of God otherwise; he may in general walk worthy of all respect and love; and certainly he ought to be an object of tender concern to any who are zealous in keeping the unity of the Spirit. For if true to their calling they must pray for the deliverance of all the children of God who are not in this following the will and word of the Lord Jesus.

Unquestionably those who own a unity which takes in the flesh, on the basis of rites open to all the world, are on ground far wider than that of the Spirit, and cannot be walking in accordance with it. True unity is exclusive of every other; as you cannot serve two masters, you cannot share a twofold communion. The unity of the Spirit admits of no rival.

But there is another, form of departure from the truth which may hinder God's children from keeping the unity of the Spirit. They may by misuse of doctrine or discipline form a unity not only in fact but in principle and design narrower than Christ's body. Are such on God's ground? I trow not. They may openly draw up their own form of government, or they may privily have an understood, though unwritten, system of rules which exclude saints as godly as themselves who cannot accept

these rules. Here we have a sect. Their decrees are not the commandments of the Lord, yet they become practically as authoritative as His word, or (as is usual) yet more so. What is it for men to pretend that they have no human rules, when they introduce some unheard of conditions of fellowship, here rigidly, there loosely, according to varying policy or the caprice of their rulers on those who come within their range? Anything of this nature takes the shape, not exactly of nationalism, but of sectarianism, which (instead of too wide or loose borders) rather seeks to split up those who should be together, making their communion express their difference from their brethren, and in no way standing together on that unity which is of God. It is in principle sectarianism; and if they know better, they are more guilty than ordinary dissenters.

Under this head we find God's children often scattered through the pressure of questionable and even wrong discipline, or of unduly urged if not false doctrine. Some prefer a communion which is distinctively Arminian, or decidedly Calvinistic. Some might press particular views as to the coming and kingdom of Christ; others as to ministry, bishops, elders, &c.; others again as to baptism, the mode or the subjects. These ecclesiastical legislators seem not at all aware that their abuse of these doc trines or practices is incompatible with keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, they themselves being wrong, if not in their views, at least in the way they are pressed.

Chapter 197

The Unity of the Spirit: Part 2

Eph. 4:3

Behind these public and settled aberrations from the will of God about His children, it will be found that there lie predisposing causes that grieve the Holy Ghost and hinder the true and spiritual perception of the saint. The most personal and perhaps most common hindrances flow from the state of the soul, through ignorance of a full delivering gospel. Sin in these circumstances has never been thoroughly judged as before God, and consequently deliverance (Rom. 8:2) is but partially, if at all, known even in principle. Still less is there the power of the Spirit in unsparing application of death with Christ to self practically. Perhaps even the forgiveness of sins as a complete thing has been but feebly apprehended, as made apparent by the notion of the need of a fresh recurrence to the blood of Christ, or (as others would put it) of a constant process of cleansing going on, which they ground on a misunderstanding of the present tense in 1 John 1:7, ignorantly reducing it from its moral import to mere actual time. Others again have a wholly superficial and even fallacious view of the world, as if it were now all consecrated to the Christian by that cross of Christ, whereby on the contrary the Christian is crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to him.

The flesh and the world being thus inadequately judged according to God's word in the light of the risen Christ, the heart is not in communion with God touching all within and without. Though there may be the utmost zeal for souls as far as their danger and God's pardoning grace are understood, and true and burning love that Christ should be honored in their blessing, nature still has a large place, and the word and Spirit of God do not absolutely govern the heart separate to Him who is dead, risen, and on high. In such a condition how can souls be expected to form a sound or spiritual judgment on the church, complicated as the question now is by its ruined state? They value science, letters, philosophy, which exalt the flesh, as well as associations which allow of ease and honor in the world. From lack of intelligence in the word, and feeble sense of fellowship with the Father and the Son, they fail to judge the present evil. age and are absorbed in “their own things,” if not ever seeking greater. They are consequently in danger of being the victims of prejudice and prepossession. They do not give to Christ His due and supreme place in a practical way; nor do they freely rise above brotherly kindness into the purer atmosphere of love according to God, so as to care for the church unselfishly as Christ's body. They are not prepared to break fully through the vain conversation which tradition has generated as much in Christendom as of old in Judaism They shrink from the trying consequences which unhesitating and thorough obedience of the truth must entail on every one who is subject to the Lord. The eye is not single, and therefore the body is not full of light; the path looks uncertain, the word seems difficult, and danger appears to lie in the faith that follows the Lord at all cost.

Are we then to fall back on prudence and require a certain measure of intelligence before reception? This is just one main mischief that has to be ever assiduously avoided, and treated as a mistake in principle, yea, a sin against Christ and the church. Nor could anything more directly

tend to make the most sectarian of all sects than to exact, from the souls who seek to come in, a right judgment as to truth least known by the saints, the mystery of Christ, or in particular the one body for them made harder still, as it is apt to be in practice, by sections growing out of the actual fallen condition of Christendom.

Never was such a requirement heard of, even when the church began and the presence of the Holy Spirit was a wholly now thing. Saints were received on the confession of Christ's name, God having given to all the like gift, His seal and passport. The intelligence was on the part of those who recognized the worth of that Name and the gift of the Spirit as to themselves at the beginning. Had they claimed intelligence of the church as a condition of fellowship, it would have really proved their own lack of intelligence, and counteracted that for which Christ died—the gathering together in one of God's scattered children.

Has the present ruin of the church altered this primary principle? The firm foundation of God stands, but with this seal: The Lord knows them that are His; and, Let every one that names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity. What bears His name is like a great house with vessels of honor, and vessels of dishonor, from which last a man has to purge himself, if he would himself be a vessel of honor, sanctified, meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work. If the public state be evil, individual fidelity to Christ is imperative: unity is not to overbear it, nor bind the Christian to unite the Lord's name with unrighteousness. Personal purity is to be followed also; and this not in isolation but with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Not a word about requiring ecclesiastical or doctrinal intelligence, but “with those that call” &c., i.e., with real saints in a day of lax and hollow profession.

At a later day, “the last hour” of John, we see how strongly the Spirit of God insists on first principles. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” In presence of many antichrists, Christ abides the touchstone. The Spirit holds to His person unhesitatingly. To add aught is to take from Him, to dishonor His name.

Is then knowledge of truth or growth in spiritual intelligence to be slighted? In no way; but it is false and vain to require either as a preliminary condition from saints who seek fellowship according to God. Help them, instruct them, lead them on in both. This is a time service, but arduous withal. The other is sectarian, and wrong.

If there are any who plead for so great a departure from Scripture and more especially from the characteristic truth of God's assembly, let them betray their new invention in opposition to the Lord, that others also may fear. Christ ever abides the one test, the only center, to whom the Holy Spirit gathers. What the Lord declared just before the church began remains even more manifestly true, now that He is dishonored in the house of His new friends no less than in that of His old. “He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad.” (Matt. 12:30.) It is imperative to be with Christ for one's soul, in order to please God and not dishonor His Son; but there is now the privilege and duty of gathering, as well as of individual allegiance; and he who does not gather with Him only scatters, whatever appearances may say to the contrary. It is

the once rejected and dead, the now risen and glorified, Christ, who is the attractive center; and hence the sign of His death in the breaking of bread is equally the sign of the one body, which they in effect deny and contemn who would restrain it to their few, refusing “the many,” that is, all whom Christ contemplates and welcomes. He has not asked this at their hands; nor does He sanction such action in His word. And if not warranted of Him, what is it but party and arbitrary restriction, which does not refuse the vile only but the precious, unless they fall in with their unauthorized course whether they think it right or not?

Thus the direct tendency is to coerce and demoralize; for what is sought is not conviction on ground of Scripture, but, where there is no conviction, a blindfold subjection, a bare and often reluctant and unhappy acquiescence, an appearance of fellowship which is no longer living but dead. For the Spirit we have received is assuredly a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind; and in no way does He endorse what is thus formal in character, under human pressure or influence. The consequence is terrible: a premium to the more vaulting and turbulent spirits, who now more than ever would “hold the reins;” the comparative retirement, from their just and grace-given place, of those who care not to rule save in the fear of the Lord and by His word; the destruction of moral principle in such (and they are very many) as seek to silence their disapproval of the movement as a whole and in detail, either by attachment to leaders, or in holding to the greater number, which they fondly call unity. Protest (say some), but stay within; that is, protest but only in word! This we used to regard as the painful compromise of place-loving evangelicals; now do we not see it standing where it ought not? It is anything but truth and right; and this unity!

But there is all the difference of truth and error, on the one hand, between consistency with the unity of the Spirit for Christ's glory, carried out in holiness and grace according to His word, and, on the other, the self-deceived and misleading abuse of unity to cry up a party bent on division with violence, which refused humiliation and prayer to arrest the evil, and declared Scripture needless for its, demands or its justification.

No intelligent saint would ask for a positive letter of commandment, like a Jew; no one expects a modern place or passing circumstance to be named in the Scripture: to speak as if anything of the sort were sought is to evade and condemn oneself yet more. Where is the scriptural principle for turning a local difference into a wedge of universal division? Beyond controversy, when a question is raised with a world-wide scattering of the saints as the penalty, all who love the church are bound to be assured that the test is of God according to His Word.

Some of us remember such a test more than thirty years ago. But then it was whether we could consent to make a true or a false Christ an open question. This we rejected with horror, when a large company of saints adhered to their leaders (even while they ignored the judgment of the assembly where the evil occurred), who let in the known partisans of a proved anti-Christian teacher, and denied formally their responsibility to judge it solemnly for themselves.

This was no test of man. It is the certain distinct requirement of the Lord. We are divinely commanded to reject any who bring not the doctrine of Christ. (2 John.) This goes far beyond the dealing due to those who act independently or make a sect. No ecclesiastical error, however real or grave, could justify such rigor. The foundation truth of Christ demands it. We owe it to Him who is our Lord, who died for us, whose glory the word guards as nothing else. To say that then it was

a question of the Head, now of the body, in order to put the two as much as possible on a level, is both want of faith in Him and want of intelligence in the word. It is an undue and even unholy exalting of the church, and so not only an unspiritual blunder but an evident excuse for yielding to sectarianism. We should never have been warranted to have acted as we did in 1848-9, if Christ had not been blasphemed. As a test it is absolutely unscriptural to equalize the church with Him, even if it had been true, which it was not of late, that the one body was at stake, for the meeting wrongly begun was nowhere recognized.

The comparison is a sophism. For the question of old was not about Christ as Head at all, but about His person and relationship to God as such. An antichrist was taught; it was not a mere failure, bad as this may be, in holding His headship. And so far now from maintaining the unity of the Spirit, so far from acting faithfully on the ground of the one body, the object has been and is to force on us the recognition of a meeting which had deliberately gone out and set up in self-will as a party, a meeting that never yet adequately and honestly owned these public sins to those against whom they sinned, not to say to all saints. The aim, of course, really was division, for no sober Christian thought such ways right; but certain were resolved, cost what it might, to sever between those prepared to accept as of God a meeting guilty of unjudged party work, and those who cannot but reject such independency for Christ's and the church's sake.

If this is not a human test, and as the result a sect, it would be hard to find either; for the ground is not even a difference of doctrine, still less as to Christ, but at most a question of discipline, even if the discipline were right. But I will go further. Take the hope of the return of the Lord Jesus. You know how very important it is for Christians to be waiting in truth and heart for Christ from heaven; but would you require that those who seek fellowship in the name of the Lord should understand and confess that hope before you receive them in the Lord? Would not this be a sect? Be it that your assertion of the Christian hope is ever so right, and that the person in quest of fellowship is ever so ignorant on that subject; but who authorizes you or others to stand at the door and forbid his entrance? Perhaps by entertaining some wrong thought, he may fancy that the Christian, like the Jew, or the Gentile in Rev. 7, has to go through the great final tribulation. Granted that he little understands the place of the Christian from not seeing his union with Christ in heaven, which is made known by the Holy Spirit in this day. Hence he is in confusion and knows not that the Lord will come and take His own before the days of that terrible retribution which is coming upon the world. He may even share the thoughts of men as unwise as any in Thessalonica and fall into the delusion of trying to escape the great tribulation, as some did forty years ago by going to Canada. Too much occupied with prophecy, they had lost or never known the true hope of Christ's coming; and whenever we get absorbed with anything, whether prophecy, or the church, or the gospel, rather than with Christ, what but grace can hinder us from going farther astray?

And this brings me to the main point I would now press. The unity of the Spirit embraces not only the intelligent but the simplest of God's children; it contemplates the body of Christ, and all the members in particular. For those who believe the gospel of salvation have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them and are Christ's members. They are therefore responsible to walk, as we are to own Him, in that relationship which grace has given to all. As members of Christ's body, they are bound diligently to keep the unity of the Spirit. There are national bodies and dissenting societies which have within them many, if not the mass, of God's children; and these systems, by claiming to be churches, prove a great perplexity to the believer. The evil of party, which showed itself in the early

days, not only repeats itself, but works now with very great aggravation. Notwithstanding, grace would strengthen those who seek to do Christ's will according to their true relationship. It is man, and man pushed on by the enemy, that makes stumbling-blocks and difficulties great, yea in appearance insuperable, so that the children of God may be tempted to give up true unity. Of course every faithful servant of the Lord has to seek, if not the removal of these obstacles, at least to help God's children in surmounting them. In a day of growing confusion, the constant effort of the enemy is to deceive and baffle and make it seem hopeless to keep the unity of the Spirit.

It is for us to consider whether we are using diligence to keep that unity in peace. No doubt there are internal dispositions or conditions requisite to do it aright. Some say the mystery must be known. Of such intelligence I do not doubt the importance in its place and time; but of this the apostle hints not a word here. What does he say? “With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.” Such are the declared and worthy qualities which the apostle seeks in those who would keep the unity of the Spirit.

And is it not well for us to challenge our souls, whether our confidence is in the apostle's word or in man's theories? O that we might cultivate such ways of grace as these in ourselves, and urge them on others, in order to a walk worthy of our, calling! Can we doubt that it is in this condition only that we can duly keep that unity: not in haste, or harshness, not in impatience of others or self-confidence, but with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love? There was need of all this then: is it less indispensable in our greater difficulties now?

For then there was no perplexity through open rivals, no competitors for the claim of God's assembly on earth. The main hindrance was from within. Now there are those and other obstacles. Am I connected with any association which ignores the One body and one Spirit? Am I attached to anything that systematically opposes this unity? It is not a question merely of wrong persons coming in unawares; for the fatal thing is not that evil should enter, but that it is known and allowed. What evil things did not effect an entrance into the assembly even in apostolic days? But God owns the unity as of the Spirit so long as there is the true-hearted purpose, in dependence on the Lord and according to His word, to keep or purge out evil. It is not the entrance or amount or even character of evil that destroys the assembly, but the continued acceptance of it under the Lord's name, even when, it is known.

But God will not sanction in His assembly the allowance of any real evil whatever; and evil, no matter what its shape or measure, must be judged as inconsistent with His presence who dwells there. The assembly is the pillar and ground of the truth: how then can falsehood be a matter of indifference in the house of the living God? Christ is the truth; and, without controversy, great is the mystery of piety. Hence the church's intolerance of that which undermines Christ. There must be the disallowance of all leaven where the feast of Christ the paschal Lamb is kept. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump; and none can be tolerated, be it moral, as in 1 Cor. 5, or doctrinal, as in Gal. 5. If one called a brother be characterized by corruption or violence, by ways wholly opposed to the truth and character of Christ and to the very nature of God, he must be excluded from His assembly.

What then is to be done if we find views, judgments, and principles at work which trench on and narrow, and so really counteract, the Spirit's unity? What if unscriptural tests be pressed so as to shut out deliberately souls at least as godly as themselves? What if conscience toward God be not

respected, if there be no longer room for liberty in the Spirit and responsibility to the Lord Jesus? Were it merely an opinion of one or more, which was held without forcing it on others, there would be in this no sufficient ground for resistance. It would be sad to see saints preoccupied with their little theories in presence of Christ and that word which lives and abides forever. Ordinarily it would suffice to express regret at, and protest against, what one might believe unsuitable among Christians; for we are called to peace and forbearance as well as fidelity. If you find in others what you cannot approve of, does not Scripture amply forewarn you of this, and call for patience, whilst looking to the Lord?

The children of God, called though they be to the enjoyment and expression of Christ, habitually demand the exercise of long-suffering and grace, as beyond doubt you yourself draw largely on the forbearance of your brethren. It cannot seriously be expected that those who compose the church of God should forego the character of a family, with its fathers, young men, and babes, to imitate an army under martial law. Regimental order is as far as possible from that which the written word prescribes to God's church, where, instead of a regulation standard, the utmost variety prevails, high and low, strong and weak, or even uncomely. 1 Cor. 12.

Scripture lays down the rule by which foreign elements, if they enter, are to be tried; and as there are manifold evils that may seek a footing, so there are distinct scriptures that apply to each case, from private rebuke to public censure, or in the last resort putting away. Those who cause divisions and stumblings are to be avoided; the factious, after a first and second admonition, to be refused; the disorderly, to be withdrawn from; those that sin, to be reproved before all; the wicked, to be put away. Reserve and rebid e have their application, no less than the extreme sentence of excision.

Nor would one deny the just practice of declaring outside these who have either gone away, willfully refusing all admonition, or who audaciously despise and deny the unquestioned assembly by setting up another meeting, and so render admonition to be scarce more than a form.

Chapter 198

The Unity of the Spirit: Part 3

The lesser excommunication was not yet invented, that is, the “declaring out,” se, stretched as to take in brethren who had no intention of going out: a convenient, but unscriptural, way of getting rid of such as gave umbrage. Surely whatever is done ought to be according to the plain positive teaching of God's word. It is for the Lord to command—the church has only to obey. I take for granted that I address Christians who believe not more in the sufficiency of the written word than in the supreme authority of Him who wrote it for our guidance by the Spirit of God. Development is of man's will, and unbelief. God has left nothing to be added. The church is under the orders of the Lord. If the church recognize any one, it is because the Lord has already received him; and if the church put away, it is simply as doing the Lord's will. The church has no independent authority to legislate, but is called to believe, pronounce, and execute His word. Consequently, in all things the church has to remember that she is subject and He the Lord. He is to order, she to obey—her one place, privilege, and duty. The moment the church lays down an extra-scriptural test, she takes the place of the Lord, and there is a practical assumption, yea, a virtual denial, of His authority. The result is to form a sect in departure from the unity of the Spirit.

The apostles, though set first in the church, were patterns of Christian humility. Who was so remarkable for patience as he who was not a whit behind the very chiefest, to whom a unique place was given by the will of God and the authority of the Lord Jesus? How much then should every true servant of Christ cultivate lowliness in these days! If a man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things written are the commandments of the Lord. Let his very subjection to the word of the Lord prove the reality of his mission from Him. This is of the last moment for our souls now; for perils and perplexities are constantly springing up, which affect the saints wherever they may be, and not least those who are gathered to the name of Christ.

Let none fancy this is to disparage those admirable men whom the Lord used in days gone by. Cherish unfeigned respect for such as Luther, Calvin, Farel, and Zwingle, though quite allowing the infirmities of every one of them. It is childish to find fault with Tyndale and Cranmer, whilst idolizing Melancthou or John Knox. They were all of like passions as ourselves; and if disposed to study their lives and labors, there are ample materials not far to seek for criticism; and so with other men of God in our day. But is it of Christ to be on the watch for that which may not be of Christ? Faults are easily seen; it needs to-day the power of the Spirit to walk, not in their traditions, but in the like faith. Rarely has there been a time when faith has sunk to a lower ebb among those who might be supposed long inured to it than the present. It is most common to find saints who groan over a course as utterly wrong, and yet persevere in it for the sake of company, &c. How often they have to others insisted on the ancient oracle: “Cease to do evil; learn to do well.” They believe it doubtless: why not, giving all diligence, add to their faith virtue? Have they lost all courage in Christ and for Christ? I speak of what is now going on to our common shame all over the world. The compromise which you would hardly expect in new-born babes of God characterizes men who have long known the Lord, and even suffered not a little at one time or another for the truth's sake.

Beloved friends, it is of the greatest moment that we should try our ways, whether we deceive ourselves, or are in deed and in truth keeping the unity of the Spirit. Do not set against that duty the sad fact that the church is now a ruin. The question is, Are we not always to be obedient? It is not the point, how many or how few of Christ's members may act together according to the word of the Lord. Do we own, ourselves, the obligation to be thus faithful? The unity of the Spirit is a constant responsibility for the children of God to keep with diligence as long as they are upon the earth. He abides with us forever. To keep it therefore is always a paramount duty.

Take a practical illustration. There is assembled in this room a company of members of Christ's body, who can allow neither the broad ways of nationalism nor the narrow alleys of sectarianism. They desire above all things to walk together so as to please the Lord Christ. What then must be their stand? What position ecclesiastically ought they to take, if they would act with spiritual intelligence and fidelity?

If any in this city be already gathered to His name on the ground of the one body, they should not be ignored. It would be independence, not the unity of the Spirit, to take no account of such a gathering. The member of Christ's body who sought fellowship would ask, as he ought, if and where saints were gathered to His name. He finds, we will suppose, there are some meeting in this room, and prefers his desire to be with them on the same blessed ground of Christ. If they challenge his faith, it is not from lack of love to him, but from care for Christ's glory. They do not receive him because he says that he is a member of Christ's body. They require adequate testimony, where they have no personal knowledge. Nobody ought to be recognized on his own bare word; even the apostle Paul was not at the first. God took care to give an extraordinary witness through a certain disciple named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews that dwelt in Damascus; as in Jerusalem subsequently through Barnabas. The word is so plainly thus, and the danger so great otherwise, that no saint, who duly reflects with a heart and conscience true towards God, would wish to be accredited merely on his own word. Souls may deceive themselves, even if upright; but if you or I were to be so accredited, where is it to end?

Again, a Christian is brought before them, who desires to remember the Lord along with them. Perhaps he belongs, as they say, to the national establishment, or to a dissenting society. But he is well known as a child of God, walking according to the measure of light already possessed. What is to be done? To refuse this member of Christ, without the strongest ground of known sin, would put shame not on him only but on the Lord. It were to deny our title, nay, the true center of gathering. Membership of Christ attested by a godly life is the sufficient and only right ground on which a Christian should ask to be received. If one understood all mysteries and all knowledge,—if one had all faith so as to remove mountains, one ought to plead His name alone.

Are there then no exceptions? May there not be valid reasons to forbid even an accredited member of Christ's body? Certainly there are, as Scripture shows. Leaven of malice and wickedness is intolerable (1 Cor. 5); leaven of heterodoxy as to the foundations (Gal. 5) is yet worse; and the word is, “Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump.” Here are unquestionable barriers reared in the word of God, and due to the Lord Jesus. If any man that is named a brother be unclean in deed or in word, in ways or in manifested spirit, we are commanded not so much as to eat with him. And it were a far graver sin, if one did not bring the

doctrine of Christ, or even denied everlasting punishment for the lost. God assuredly will never allow the profession of Christ to be a passport for him that dishonors Christ. Here, and here most of all, is the Holy Ghost jealous, if the word of God is to be our rule.

All truth is no doubt important in its place and season; but it is worse than ignorance to put the body on the same level as the Head. Ecclesiastical error, even if real and grave, never approaches the denial of the doctrine of Christ. Weigh how the apostle of love, the elder, solemnly warns us to be on our guard in such a case. We are not free to receive even privately, much less publicly, those who bring not the doctrine of Christ. We are unequivocally bound not only to disallow heterodoxy in general, but in particular to reject that which is, and those who are, a lie against Christ, yea, to treat those who receive such as partakers of the same evil deeds. But we are not entitled to equalize the church with Christ, like a Romanist, or to put ecclesiastical error along with evil against Christ's person. This is not faith, but fanaticism: what can we think of such as conceive, or of those that circulate, this trash as the truth?

Still, in keeping the unity of the Spirit, we must accept the scriptural responsibility of purging out leaven. And, as we have seen, the Spirit of God writes direct to an elect lady and her children, because on such a question as Christ the duty is immediate and peremptory. Years ago, in having to do with such an one, that Epistle stood us in good stead. For on her pleading that she was but a sister, and it was not her responsibility to do this or that, she was at once reminded that it was not to an assembly, nor even to a Timothy or Titus, but to a lady and her children that the Holy Ghost wrote, insisting on her own personal and unavoidable responsibility. We may be sure that the Spirit of God did not thus inspire a letter to a lady and her children, without the most urgent necessity, and in order to meet lust such an excuse for shirking what is due to Christ at any time.

All know that women are liable to err on the side of their affections, being naturally more disposed to act through feeling than with calm judgment. The word of God recognizes this in repressing them ordinarily (1 Timothy and in the special warning of 2 John. Their activity is always to be dreaded in cases short of Christ, a dishonor to themselves and to the men whom they mislead. The truth may not be always pleasant, though ever wholesome and good; and it is the truth that one desires to press upon souls, and that we ought to welcome. We are bound to see to it that the church of God be not made a cover for any known evil, and above all not to admit or screen knowingly that which sullies Christ's glory. But women are bad leaders, or even instruments save as Scripture warrants.

Let us distinguish things that differ. The English Establishment, in spite of many and grave drawbacks, had a holy object in its rise, turning its back as it did on an abominable and over swelling imposture. Though much hindered, especially by the king, in its work of clearing itself from many inveterate superstitions, it honestly set its face against what was known to be evil. But it retrograded afterward, until its ritualistic observances being made a test forced out many pious nonconformists, whose origin thus was morally respectable and godly. For it was no mean struggle in those days to keep a good conscience, and to stand opposed to those who were dragging them down into formalism. We need not speak of the Wesley and Whitfield movement, which was in main missionary, not ecclesiastical. We know later on, how powerfully God wrought in awakening His children fifty years ago to a sense of the departure that had taken place from the original ground of keeping the unity of the Spirit. In such days it was no small thing to recognize

that there is such a reality on earth as the presence of the Holy Ghost, and consequently the body of Christ. Hence, if members of that body, it is our inalienable duty to keep that unity in its true character, whilst subject to the conditions which the Lord has laid down in His word, and to none other. The Spirit has created that unity, a unity which takes in all members of Christ's body, excepting those whom discipline according to the word requires us to reject.

It may interest all to know that not the least weighty testimony that was ever given of late on this momentous subject was written in the year 1828 (“Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ"). The point was to show how impossible it is for saints who would honor the Lord to go on with the world, instead of walking (were they but two or three) in that unity which is of God; that in denominations the bond is not their unity but in fact their differences, and in no case therefore the communion of God's church at all, in faith contemplating, as every true assembly does and must, all God's children. Those who call this looseness do not know divine ground, and have unwittingly slipped into a seat.

Far from looking for or valuing ecclesiastical intelligence before souls take their place at the Lord's table, it is quite a mistake for us to expect it, and a shame rather than an honor to the few who may possess it. For how did they as members of Christ acquire such knowledge? In manifest unfaithfulness; either still continuing in their denominational enclosures and activities with a bad conscience; or in the anomalous state of mere hearers outside, seeking to attain a more familiar acquaintance with that truth in which their outside position declared them to have neither part nor lot, as if their heart were not right with God. Yet all the while they were members of the body of Christ; and as such they should have been within, learning more soundly and happily the truth they were acting on in their simplicity, a truer and better sort of intelligence than that intellectual insight into the church, which has been so erroneously over-rated by some in our midst.

The fact is that we are apt to forget our own beginnings and the gracious dealings of the Lord with us when we ourselves first broke bread, knowing as little perhaps as any. How many brethren are now among the firmest and most intelligent in fellowship, who saw but dimly not the church only but even the gospel of salvation, and revealed truth in general, when they found in the Lord's name an immediate passport to His supper! They were by no means clear as to their future course, though attracted by the grace which saluted them as brethren, and enjoying the simple faith which bowed to the word of the Lord in a way and measure beyond their previous experience. How unwise and unbecoming for such now to exact from inquiring brethren a knowledge of the church far beyond their own standard at their start, and in fact not to be got save within the assembly, and in the path of obedience where the Spirit guides into all the truth! To those thus growing up and led, catholicism or denominationalism is judged by the word, and felt to be altogether unsatisfying and distateful, as being evidently of man and not of God. What gives these new and strong convictions? Neither influence nor prejudice, neither argument nor imagination, but the truth appreciated by the power of God's Spirit.

Are we then to play fast and loose with divine truth? Nay, but it is a question of the Lord's way with those who are His and have yet to learn: is it to be in liberty or in bondage? Doubtless every Christian ought to keep the unity of the Spirit, as gathered to the name of the Lord and to none other. A saint cannot legitimately have two communions. Is not the communion of Christ's body in principle exclusive? Follow with all your soul the Lord Jesus, own the one body and one Spirit,

receive every godly member of His in His name. In this there is neither looseness nor sectarianism. As the word of God is plain, so does the presence of the Spirit abide; nor do I allow that keeping the unity of that Spirit is a vain show. As He abides, so does His unity; and those who have received the Holy Spirit are bound to walk in that unity, and in none other. They are added of the Lord together, members of the assembly which God has formed for Himself in this world; and I deny the title of anyone to set up either rival or substitute. If you have His Spirit, you already belong to this one body, and are called to carry it out to the exclusion of all others.

Thus it is no voluntary society we have to do with. It is no question of framing something better than either nationalism or dissent, nor an alliance which really condemns, while ostensibly it sanctions, the existing institutions of orthodox Protestantism. The truth however is that, before all these essays, God had Himself formed. His church on earth; and such as have His Spirit are thereby constituted members, responsible to act accordingly. In His church leaven of doctrine or of practice is intolerable, if we bow to Scripture. Every Christian is bound to reject falsehood and unholiness, and this corporately as well as individually. For the ruin of the church does not shut us up to individuality. If we follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, it may and should be with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Isolation it is a sin to seek, as being a denial of fellowship. The church of God means the assembly of those that are His. But if over so many, we are one bread, one body. As the Lord's Supper is the outward expression of this unity, it is unworthy of believers to complain that too much is made of His Supper and Table; for it is God who calls them His, not we who only cleave to His word and confide in His will. Doubtless we need to keep Christ in this before our eyes; if not, we are in danger of molding His Supper according to our will or caprice. If by the grace of God we have the Lord Jesus before us, our hearts will go out towards all that are His walking after a godly sort.

For a long time Satan has been endeavoring to falsify the testimony of Christ amongst those professedly gathered to His name. One of his wiles has been, under pretense of light and righteousness, to undermine grace and truth in recognizing freely the members of Christ's body. Utterly misconceiving the stand against neutrality, they would make no Christian welcome to the Lord's Table who did not judge his old position by more or less intelligence of the one body and one Spirit; that is, without a virtual pledge never again to enter their so-called church or chapel. This is, to my mind, not unbelief only but a bad and base principle. It is in an underhand way to make a sect of those that know the church, but really to prove how little they themselves appreciate the one body: else they could not let knowledge override relationship to Christ, as they do. Never is the church rightly or truly learned save within, according to the word, where you must leave room for growth in the truth by faith and God's grace.

There is then the danger of virtually denying Christ's membership by looking for an antecedent intelligence about His body which it is as unscriptural as unwise to expect, and the more wrong as it exists but feebly in many who have for years been in fellowship. But besides, there may be no less difficulty and danger among those already received, where the claim of truth or righteousness is pressed without grace. And those who are most wrong are apt to talk most loudly of that which they really imperil or unwittingly annul.

There are not many who remember the Plymouth division in 1845-6. Moral charges were not wanting either, but it mainly turned on an effort of a large and influential party which lost faith in the

Lord's presence and the Holy Spirit's free action in the assembly, seeking independency with its leaders. It is needless to say that the heavenly character and the unity of the church had faded away, as well as waiting for the Lord Jesus as an immediate hope. God would not suffer in our midst such lack of faith and of faithfulness. But the mass of the saints were beguiled by the error, and deaf to the warning; and but few separated, branded as schismatics by those who boasted of their numbers, gifts, and happiness.

What was the relation of those who for the Lord's and the truth's sake were forced in conscience to stand apart? The high-minded majority utterly refused humiliation and rejoiced that those were outside from whom they had been long and with increasing bitterness alienated. The then minority met at first in private houses only to humble themselves and pray, as after a little to break bread. But they never thought of rejecting the poor famished sheep who occasionally sought to break bread with them, without severing their connection with Ebrington Street. For indeed they were not only bound there by many ties, but under great fear through the swelling words and persecuting deeds of their old leaders and friends, not least of sisters who played an unenviable, part in that sad history. They had of course this moral safeguard that none committed in will to the Plymouth defection, especially no chief, but scorned the seceders. Only the simple came, and, because they came, were cut off by the Ebrington Street party. But we received them freely in the Lord's name, even though they might be weak enough to wish fellowship still with their old friends.

But the moment that the blasphemous heterodoxy as to Christ appeared, there was an end of all this forbearance. The door was closed on all that continued with an anti-Christian faction. As long as it was an ecclesiastical error, however firmly we refused it and came out from it, there was patience with those who failed to discern it or to judge it practically. Such known saints of Ebrington Street as came were cordially received; and who ever heard of even one in these circumstances refused? But on the contrary, when the false doctrine against Christ was known, an uncompromising stand was made from the first; and no soul was received thenceforward who did not clear himself from association with so deadly an insult to the Father and the Son. With partisans of that evil Bethesda identified itself, and necessitated the world-wide division which ensued in 1848.

What then can be judged of those who confound these two things so fundamentally distinct? the ecclesiastical error, and the false doctrine as to Christ's person and relationship to God? or the ways to be pursued in each case?

The divisionist party of today seems to me as guilty of independency and clericalism as that of Ebrington Street in 1845. And, believing them to be thus false to the truth of the one Spirit and one body, I cannot but feel thankful for God's overruling grace in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. For their intolerance of others has taken the initiative; and they have either gone out from, or driven out (too often by unworthy maneuvers), their brethren whose one desire is to abide gathered, as we have so long been, to Christ's name But they have proved their ignorance in the plainest way and to a surprising degree by prating malicious words about Bethesdaism, when they might know, if not blinded by haste and ill-feeling, that there is not allowed a shade of that evil for which Bethesda and the so-called neutrals were judged.

Let them beware lest, beginning with ecclesiastical error like Ebrington Street, they themselves fall ere long into like heterodoxy. I pray that in God's mercy our brethren may be spared such further

sin and dishonor of the Lord. But detraction and neglect of Scripture and of facts, as well as inconsistency with all we have hitherto learned and done before God, are a slippery by-path; from which it would be joy indeed and great grace from the Lord to see them recede.

Chapter 199

Unsuitable for God and the Christian

Whatever does not suit the presence of God does not suit a Christian. The first effect of the presence of God is to annihilate a man in his own eyes. Hence in Eph. 4:2, in connection with walking worthy of the “high vocation,” it is to be with all lowliness, &c. Then another thing follows: there must be no hurry with our brethren, but “long-suffering and forbearance.”

In Eph. 4 up to verse 6 we have all alike addressed. Afterward it is according to the sovereign will of God given to individuals.

Chapter 200

Washing and Sprinkling

My dear Brother, For some time past my mind has been occupied with the subject of washing and sprinkling, and the doctrines connected with these acts respectively, and as inculcated in Scripture. How far a similar condition may have existed in other minds I cannot say, but in my own I have long been conscious of a sort of vagueness of apprehension on this point, which has caused me to look minutely and attentively into Scripture about it. The difficulty perhaps may not have occurred to many, either because they have throughout been more clear than I have been on the subject, or because it may not have presented itself as distinctly to their minds. In either case there can, I trust, be no objection to my submitting to you, and through the pages of “The Bible Treasury” to Brethren generally, what my difficulty has, been, and the way in which, as I venture to think, the Lord has graciously removed it. If what is here said commends itself to their consciences. I shall be very thankful.

Doubtless many others besides myself have, in days gone by and in the systems around us, heard such teaching as that the believer was washed from his sins in the blood of Christ at his conversion, but that the daily and constant sprinkling of the blood is needed to cleanse us from our sins, as they are daily committed. No habitual readers of “The Bible Treasury” are in the least likely to hold such a doctrine as this. We all hold, and hold rightly, that the application of the precious blood of Christ occurs but once, once for all, and forever; but that it is the “washing of water by the word,” which meets the defilement (as unfitting for communion) caused by our sins, as they are committed. However the very action above related gave rise to the following question in my own mind. If Scripture speaks both of our being washed from our sins in the blood of Christ, and of the application of His blood to us by sprinkling, what is the difference in meaning between them? For that washing and sprinkling, have mutually distinctive meanings in Scripture, is indisputable.

Moreover, that Scripture in both its parts speaks of the latter is clear and distinct, the New Testament giving antitypical meaning of the collateral passages in the Old. Expiation is by the blood, as moral cleansing is by the water, and the application of the blood (in the power of the Spirit) is the application of this fact to the individual believer. The act is, according to Scripture, significative of the remission of his sins, Heb. 9:13—14;—by it his conscience is purged (cleansed); his heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, Heb. 10:22. This being so, what could be the distinction in meaning between washing in the blood, and sprinkling with the blood? This has been the root of the vagueness of apprehension I have spoken of. The question is, does the teaching of Scripture as a whole, sustain the notion that there are two washings, one with the blood, and one with water? It appears to me that it does not.

In searching Scripture for an answer to this question, I was struck with the utter absence in the types or teaching of the Old Testament (so clearly referred to by the terms “washing” and “sprinkling") of anything resembling a washing in or with blood. Invariably the washing is with water. Continuing the search into the New Testament the same thing struck me; allusions to the washing with water frequent;—to washing in blood never here, till we came to Rev. 1:5, and Rev.

7:14. The latter however is not exactly a question of persons, but of robes. It will be observed that the construction in both these cases is et, with the dative. In what sense then could the believer be said to wash his robes in the blood of the Lamb? No doubt in a sense similar to that in which it is said “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” It is not precisely, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean: from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” The exhortation is to effort based on the known value of the blood of Christ to make good in practical life the efficacy and power of the precious blood of Christ which has removed the guilt and judgment of our sins. For we are justified from sins by blood, from sin by death. We are to do this in the power of the blood of Christ, its power as to the conscience, its power as to right feeling and right motive. Compare Matt. 17:21 as to prayer. But Rev. 1:5 had long been a very familiar text with me, and for some time it held its ground in my mind even after I saw that its effect is in Scripture attributed to something else, viz. to sprinkling, and that it stands absolutely alone in seeming to attribute remission of sins to washing. For the figure of washing is in Scripture significative of the new nature; but sins have to do with the conscience and involve guilt, and this is in Scripture connected with the sprinkling of blood. No one of the inspired writers makes such frequent use of the figure of water, and of washing, as does the apostle John; yet Rev. 1:5 stands alone in his writings in making blood the element in or with which the believer is washed. Everywhere else it is water.

After weighing all this in my mind, I was at length forced to the conclusion that the alternative reading Xilaavrt is the correct one in this text, and that the true rendering therefore is “has loosed (or freed) us from our sins by His blood.” Unfortunately, in the authorized version of the Old Testament, different Hebrew words are translated by the same word “sprinkle.” But sprinkling is not the sense or idea in the cases of the Burnt and Peace offerings (Lev. 5; 3:2). It is rather to cast, or throw. The word properly rendered “to sprinkle” is hizzah (ealvetv aspergare). This is the word used in reference to the Sin-offering in Lev. 14; the annual day of atonement, Lev. 16:14, 15; and in the case of the water of separation or of purification, Num. 19 The same Greek verb (or in a slightly modified form) is used in Heb. 9:13, 19, 21; 10:22. The spiritual connection then between these portions of the Divine word is evident. So likewise the Greek word for “sprinkling” in Heb. 13:24; 1 Peter 1:2. is liarrialdn. The last text of course alludes to Ex. 24:8; so does, I suppose, Heb. 12:24. But 1 Peter 1:19 is clearly the redemptive sacrifice of the Passover, whilst in 1 John 1:7 we have, I think, the sprinkled blood of the Scapegoat (substitution), and in 1 John 2:2 the Lord's lot,—God's moral government.

Hoping these few observations may not be otherwise than acceptable to you, and willing thankfully to receive any further light upon this important subject, I am, my dear Brother,

Affectionately yours in Him who suffered for us,

J. B. P.

Chapter 201

What Is Truth?

Little did Pilate realize the momentousness of the question he so lightly put to our Lord. As little did he know the import of the previous words of Christ, “every one that is of the truth heareth My voice,” Solemn, too, is it to think that the truth may be known to a certain extent intellectually, and professed vaguely to a still greater extent, yet be unknown in the heart and to the conscience. To profess the truth is not necessarily to be of the truth in order to this we must be begotten of God by the word of truth (James 1:18) it is an effectual and abiding work of the Spirit. Ordinances have their place, but have nothing to do with the communication of life. As “he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God; “so with true Christianity, and with baptism. Outward rites have nothing whatever to do with the communication or with the sustenance of life; to think so is to mistake their object and use. Life is exclusively by the word of God, in the power of the Spirit; “thy word hath quickened me.” The process is not an external and mechanical one, it is a moral one dealing with the heart and conscience. It is the voice of Christ within, a still small voice, it may be, speaking within and to the conscience, but with a power and effect peculiar to itself; “even so the Son quickeneth whom He will.” It is Christ who quickens the soul, by the word instrumentally, and by the Spirit mediately.

But in order to this the conscience must be aroused, the heart attracted. To ask the question “What is truth?” and forthwith to turn away, is to evince the fatal unconcern and indifference of spiritual death. If the lie of Satan by which he deceived Eve has brought about all the misery which it has, surely this should teach us not only how terrible a thing it is to disobey God, but it should impress us also with the deepest conviction of the value of Divine truth when brought near to us in grace; for “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lasts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Saved by divine grace, good works should be the fruit. But is the precious truth of God our object? Then, “buy the truth and sell it not.” It may cost us something to purchase end to hold it, but it is worth more than its weight in gold: “the law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.” This is the truth as it is in Jesus, for He is the truth personally and absolutely, its dispenser to the individual heart in the measure proportionate to the faith of the believer, and to his fidelity to what he has already received; for “to him that hath shall more be given.” Unless mixed with faith in the heart it is powerless. Do we desire to be set free as to our conscience before God, and as to deliverance from self, the world, and the enemies' power? It is by the truth, for, as our Lord says (John 8:32), “the truth shall make you free;” yet it is His doing, if effective, for “if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

By no power or resources of our own can we emancipate ourselves from sin and Satan. Nor can the Church do this. The Church indeed should be “the pillar and ground of the truth,” the place where the truth can be found; but the ordinary idea and phrase of “the Church teaches” is one alike foreign and opposed to Scripture. In the figurative language of Scripture the Church is the woman, and the woman must not teach nor usurp authority. Christ teaches by His servants, He gives them the understanding and the power (the written word, however, being ever the test), and this constitutes their authority; but when the “Church” teaches or rules, she usurps the authority of her living Lord and Head, and this never can be the case without injury to those who accept her authority. That many good, holy, and devoted men have held the common notion is most true; that many truly gifted members of the body of Christ have also held it, is true; nevertheless it is from the Lord, and that directly and immediately, that their gift and their spiritual power have come. The Church receives, holds fast, and professes the truth; teachers whether public or private (such as parents) are put in that position by the Lord; at the same time it is most important never to confound such channels of communication with a standard of authority. The written word alone is that.

The Son of God has ever been the quickener of souls, and that by the Word and Spirit. Never have souls been convicted without the expressed word of God. To say that Christ being personally the Word, if He quickens there is thus the application of the word to the soul, is a fallacious argument He never does so quicken (see Rom. 10:13-15). Even when in the world He says, “the words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life.” God's word has ever been the Divine seed, in virtue of which souls have been born again. In the parable of the sower our Lord explains, “the seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11, 15); “that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” The honest and good heart is as it were the good ground in which the seed of the word of God is sown, germinating in the power of the Spirit, and bringing forth the fruit of good works. But it will be said, “how reconcile this with the Sacramental theory of a germ imparted at baptism?” The fact is, we all have so much to unlearn before we can learn. If conventional notions, ecclesiastical traditions, and the prejudices thus engendered, are more precious to us than Divine truth, great indeed is our loss. The two are irreconcilable. The former, however, is the teaching of Scripture; the latter is what the Church teaches, but teaches erroneously.

Reverting to Pilate's question, let us, as deeply interested in the reply, ask with him “What is Truth?” Truth is the expression of what a person or thing is. Even in ordinary matters it is difficult, if not impossible, adequately to define or describe anything, and hence the subtleties and perplexities of metaphysics. If this is true when we attempt to express the relations of things to ourselves, how much more so when the relations of things to God are in question. It is evident that He only could express or manifest them. But as the Infinite and the Absolute, how could He do so suitably to the limited apprehension and capacity of the creature, the finite? To a certain extent God might be known to the creature by His attributes. That God is holy, good, wise, and mighty beyond all comparison or conception was, and is, clear to angels. That He was good, wise, and powerful beyond all conception, our first parents in a state of innocency must have perceived and experienced. That He was the Supreme Being, was perfectly seen and understood by all created intelligences; and if the pride of Satan so blinded him in this respect as to tempt him to put the matter to the test, he was quickly undeceived, and that to his everlasting ruin.

Pride and ambition were vastly more the spring of action in the revolt of Satan, than they were the cause of Adam's disobedience. Moreover, Satan was the first and arch-rebel, but our first parents fell, tempted by him; or at least, such was the case with Eve. To know of God, however, by His attributes or qualities, is not to know God Himself,—God as to His very nature. Nor was it possible that God, as to His nature, could be revealed to the creature otherwise than in the person of a Mediator,—One who, “found, in fashion as a man” (“made in the likeness of flesh of sin”), was yet truly, and in the most absolute sense, the eternal God. Combining in Himself Deity and manhood, and as the God-man possessing fully the holiness of God, so that it could be equally said of Him as of the Father or of the Spirit, and that whether in Incarnation or in Resurrection, “Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty;” He, this wondrous Mediator, revealed God to men, He was the truth, and the Light of the world, whether the world would receive Him or not, and He revealed God to men (to their conscious yet limited knowledge); by making those who believed in Him and received Him partakers of the Divine nature, so that there was that in them, above and beyond mere human nature, which had its fullness in Him, the community of a nature in itself altogether beyond the bounds of creature existence, though as to attribute finite in us, and always dependent on Him. Truth is thus both absolute and relative, inasmuch as the absolute implies the relative. is God's expression of Himself, and of the relation—of everything to Himself. Christ is the eternal Word: in Incarnation He became the expression to men as to angels (1 Tim. 3:16) of what God is. In what He was, in what He said, and in what He did, He was in every respect the manifestation of God; and everything has its character in relation to Him, and as He sees it to be. He is the truth, as to its totality and objective reality, and the truth as to any particular subject is what it is in relation to Him. The written word, given by Divine revelation and by means of Divine inspiration, is the recorded expression of His mind, but in a manner and form adapted to the human understanding; not, however, without the agency of the Holy Spirit to make it spiritually understood. For the attempt to deal with God's word without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit makes a man a rationalist, whilst the pretense—to be taught or led by the Spirit apart from the written word makes a man a visionary or mere enthusiast Hence the Spirit also is called “the truth” (1 John 5:6), being the living power of the written word.

Whilst, then, it is true that the Scriptures are the written word of God, it is also true that the written word would be inoperative in us without the living agency of the Holy Spirit. But the written word is the standard of truth—the rule, and the only rule, of faith. The human mind may revel in fantastic conceits and vagaries, false analogies, or bold attacks,—in mysticism, sacerdotalism, or rationalism; but the truth received into the heart dissipates these errors as the sun dissipates the humid vapors of night. The natural man, however, understandeth not the things of God. If there is any moral elevation to be found in the world, if the tide of evil is in any measure stemmed, if society is able in any degree to hold together, and human life has any security or enjoyment, what is it owing to? It is owing to the measure in which truth is respected, and practical truth and righteousness practiced. Imagine what the world would become, if truth and honesty disappeared, and falsehood and deceit reigned everywhere; morality gone, wickedness triumphant, family and social bonds dissolved. And the world owes it to God's grace, and to God's providence that it is not so. Were the government of God for a brief season to cease, it would quickly be apparent what Satan would make of the world. It would indeed be a hell upon earth. Let us then extend this principle to the whole universe. Imagine that evil was supreme, truth banished, righteousness annihilated. What a fearful state of things! And who is the judge, what is the standard, what power

maintains truth, righteousness, and order? God is the judge, truth, is the standard, and it is the power of God, and that alone, which ensures the maintenance of everything that is good and excellent, and which will ensure the judgment of all evil in due time, and its disappearance from the scene of ordered government. But not till the game is played out, not till the conflict between the powers of good and evil ceases, in its full, final, and everlasting issues. The history of corruption and violence—on the face of this earth, commencing with the lie by which Satan deceived Eve, and sin followed by the crime of fratricide (truly did our Lord characterize Satan as a liar and as a murderer), will, when iniquity is full, God's purposes accomplished, and the game played out, come to an end: the result to the moral agent, whether of blessing, or of judgment, being henceforth in the strictest sense everlasting. Once before, the wickedness of mankind was so great and so universal, that God cleared the earth by the deluge. Some may be “willingly ignorant of this,” or may willfully deny it; but to the Christian it is the most solemn confirmation of those statements of Scripture which assures us of the overwhelming judgment which is coming upon all, who are not found in the true ark, that is Christ. Meanwhile the gospel, God's grand ordinance for the salvation of men, is being proclaimed, and happy are those who fear and accept God's proffered terms of mercy. “Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

As the acorn contains in itself the germ of what will in due time develop into the oak tree, so the few but pregnant words of Gen. 3:15 contain the announcement of God's future purposes of grace overcoming the power of evil God had said unto Adam; “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” No doubt the instant Adam disobeyed he became mortal, i.e. liable to death, through physical necessity, and at the same moment he fell into a state of spiritual death, i.e., the severance of the soul from God, alienation from Him, and enmity to Him in consequence of a nature now in subject to Him. In no, sense does death to a human being mean annihilation;—even though the body returns to the dust, out of which Adam was originally and immediately created, it will he raised again. The breath which God breathed into Adam's nostrils endowed him with a rational and imperishable soul. Nevertheless life and incorruption, as well as the second death and eternal judgment, were brought to light by the gospel, and the expressions in the Old Testament, “Thou shalt surely die,” and “the soul that sinneth it shall die,” seem to speak solely of the death of the body, and with reference to God's government in this world.

As to the temptation, Adam was not deceived, but choosing to follow Eve, gave up God. Nor, as we see from Eve's reply to the serpent, was she deceived as regards ignorance of the divine prohibition, but as to the true character of the tempter, and by the falsity of the serpent's words. The lie by which he deceived Eve was a lie of the worst sort,—that kind of lie which has enough of truth in it, the more effectually to deceive. They did not die physically, on the literal day of twenty-four hours, in which they disobeyed; yet in every other sense they did die, even though they became “as gods, knowing good and evil,” where before they had been simply innocent. This function of conscience they acquired in and by the fall. But what a fearful thing it is to know good and evil as a fallen being! In this respect then Adam and Eve became “as gods, knowing good and evil? It is no attention now of our being restored to what Adam was as innocent, it is now a question of being “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him,” i.e. that created the old man, the first Adam. We are therefore called to holiness, not to innocence.

In His sentence on the serpent God said, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” A double reference seems to run throughout this verse, a literal and a mystical one. The enmity between the serpent and the human race it is well known surpasses that existing between any of the lower creation and mankind, and the sentence is thus perfectly literal. In the mystical sense, the seed of the woman is Christ, and the clause, “between thy seed and her seed” would thus include all that are Christ's on the one hand, and the children of the devil on the other, whether wicked spirits or wicked men. The enmity would not be on the part of the children of God towards their fellow creatures, but it would be on the part of the wicked towards the righteous, as quickly illustrated by Cain's murder of Abel. “It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” The pronoun It, if taken by itself, might no doubt be so pointed in the Hebrew as to be feminine, but the verb being masculine shows that the pronoun is so too, and not, as the Roman Catholics try to make out, feminine in allusion to the Virgin Mary. It is masculine in allusion to Christ, whose sacrifice on the cross accomplished this prediction finally as regards the latter clause, and potentially as regards the former.

The process as regards Satan is more protracted, his actual defeat and degradation being by successive steps and blows, till, his time being up and his work done, he will be cast into hell,—the most miserable being there,—the arch-enemy of God, the opposer of Christ, and the author of evil, of all the evil which has ever existed, even though he found willing accomplices. Never, however, has success more attended his boastful efforts than now, and in fact from the time he succeeded in inducing the Jewish priests to insist on the death of Christ. Whilst that sacrifice is the salvation of believers, it is the judgment of the world, “now is the judgment of this world,” i.e. morally—actual and final judgment is of course outside this world, as it is eternal in its result. But terrible is his success now, as of old, in the perversion of God's words, in the mixture of falsehood with troth. Corrupted religion is the most deceptive and destructive of his arts. The ecclesiastical power when corrupt has ever been his only too successful instrument. Following in the wake of God's dealings with men, he insinuates himself, corrupts, and ruins. Aaron, God's high priest, at the very time when he is setting up idolatry, proclaims “a feast to Jehovah.” The ecclesiastical authorities in Jerusalem, when our Lord was upon earth, were his most subtle and bitter foes, and drove Pilate against his better judgment to desire the death of Christ.

And does it fare better with the Truth at the present day? In no wise. Destroyed if possible, or at least corrupted, he thus effects his deadly purpose, nor will his powers of deception cease till he has set up a man as antichrist, and quickly meets his doom for his daring and impious opposition to Christ. And for this the “religious” world is rapidly ripening, or at least the apostate part of it. Christ was and is “the way, the truth, and the life;” but people will not thus submit to the righteousness of God by faith. They like, as ever, their own way, and in this Satan is always ready to help us. “For the mystery of lawlessness 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 of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the troth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might lie damned who believed not the truth, but had

pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:7-11). God is light, and God is love. These terms express what God is in His nature,—intolerant of evil, yet love. The cross of Christ has vindicated God in both these respects. If we were to be saved, and righteously saved, the judgment of sin must be borne; and He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. At the same time God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoso believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. But we never read that God is truth. God is trace, but Christ is the Truth, the expression and manifestation of the true God. Much may be true in human knowledge: this knowledge however is but partial, and not that of God Himself. Christ is the truth, objectively, absolutely, and in its totality, nor can the creature reach God or apprehend Him, but by Christ, the one Mediator. Truth and Light therefore are not equivalent terms. Light is God's nature, Truth is the expression or manifestation of that nature in its entirety, i.e. whatever may be its attributes; the Psalmist could speak of God as “the living God,” and as “the God of my life.” I see this in Christ that, says John, which we have seen and heard of the Word of Life, for the Life was manifested, and Christ is the Life. In brief He is the expression or manifestation of God, and therefore is “the Truth.”

Most of the Ante-Nicene Fathers held that Christ, though eternal as the word-mind (■νδι■θετος) in God, only became a person (προφορικ■ς) when God was about to create the world, a notion utterly refuted by John 1:2. “He was in the beginning with God,” i.e. distinct personality, and that from eternity. We often hear the earlier period of the Church spoken of as its purer period. No mistake could be more gross; never was heresy and puerile nonsense more rife, or so rife.

John 1:1-5 tell us what the Word was essentially (■ν), He was Life, and He was Light; i. 14 tells us what He became—(■γ■νετο). Nevertheless though ever Light in Himself, He was not the light of men till He came amongst men, i.e. in incarnation; “that was the true light, which coming into the world lighteth every man” (John 1:9, and compare 12:46). Not that every man sees this Light, more than in nature every man sees the sun. In either ease men may be blind—in fact spiritually, and as towards God, men are dead in trespasses and sins, and as spiritually dead, they have no spiritual perception. The notion that all men have divine light is a denial of man's true state and condition, and evinces a perversion of Scripture on the one side, as complete as on the other that which would make the sacramental elements vehicles of life; we might call the former the idealistic error, the latter the materialistic error. Life is by the Word in the power of the Spirit, the process being a moral one i.e. one acting on the conscience and the heart.

It may be said, if Christ was the light of men only in incarnation, what light had men before the incarnation, and what light have they now? In both cases the world as such “lieth in the wicked one,” in general total darkness covers men's minds. It is the condition into which men have got themselves. But in each case a testimony from God has existed in the world. In due time that testimony will overspread the world, at present and hitherto it has been more or less localized. The gospel is indeed addressed to all, its natural scope is universal; but in the first place the church, like Israel in its responsibility, has failed to work deliverance in the earth, and in the next, even where the gospel is preached and known, men will not always bow to it. Even in Christendom, how many have really been converted by the gospel? God knows.

In a certain sense the church, or at least true Christians, in this respect take the place of Christ, for “Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.” “Ye are the light of the world. A city that

is set on an hill cannot be hid." As to the divine nature, true Christians, as partakers of it, necessarily possess its properties, viz., light and love, "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." But how sad and how solemn is it to see now, as when Jesus was in the world, that "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not." It is in contact with spiritual death. In nature light banishes darkness, not so necessarily in moral things, and in the spiritual world; men love darkness rather than light. Their heart is darkened, their mind reprobate (Rom. 1:21-28). Even Christ, who is the Truth and the Light, has been in the world, and when in it was rejected. Equally is the divine record of this, and the light of testimony in His members, rejected. The acme of intellectual conceit is now to boast in knowing nothing—Agnosticism. If that does not please, you have Positivism; science is everything—everything is to be a matter of mathematical demonstration—what cannot thus be proved is to be rejected. Alas for Divine revelation! Man's reason sits in judgment on God's word, declares it no revelation at all, and denies the possibility of revelation altogether. "This then is the positive philosophy; the extension to all investigations of those methods which have been found successful in the physical sciences, the transformation of all knowledge into a homogeneous body of doctrine capable of supplying a Faith, and consequently a polity" (Lewes's History of Philosophy).

Well may the Christian say with Scripture, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." There are many who call themselves truth-seekers, and who profess to be lovers of the truth, yet scarcely seem in earnest in their appreciation of it, or in the pursuit of it. Some there are who are "ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Even in the case of those to whose hearts the Spirit has disclosed hidden treasures under the letter of the inspired Word, how limited is their knowledge! Such would be the first to say, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part." As compared with Truth in its entirety, with Christ as its personal embodiment, how partial and how limited is the knowledge to which we have attained! And how happy would it have been for the church if Christians had acted according to the apostolic injunction, "Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing," — "if in anything ye be differently minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Like-mindedness would thus have been produced, not in consequence of the so-called teaching of the church (which indeed needs to be taught itself), nor by the infallible dictum of the Pope, but because "they shall all be taught of God," because in each one born of God there is the spiritual faculty (the anointing), in virtue of which they "know all things." A divinely qualified teacher—a teacher of the truth—knows very well that he can but hold up the truth as an object: the light, the eye, the understanding are no less the gift of God to the one taught of God. In spiritual things so it ever has been, so it ever will be. The carnal mind ignorant of this may deny and oppose it, but "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."

Chapter 202

What We Do Know

Though we do not know what to pray for as we ought, we do know that all things work together for good to them that love God. God works of and from Himself in our favor, and makes everything work together for our good. We know not what to look for. Perhaps in the present state of things there is no remedy, no direct setting aside of, or remedy for what makes us groan. But this is certain, God makes all things work together for good to them who love Him. The sorrow may not be remedied, but the sorrow is blessed. The believer is called according to God's purpose, and God orders everything for his good.

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