BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 16

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 16, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

199 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Bible Treasury Volume 16

1 Corinthians 14:26

1 Cor. 14:26 is a witness of the principle, but of the principle abused. In the denominations from Romanism to the Ranters there might be irregularities of all kinds, but they never take such a shape as this at Corinth, because the true principle is ignored in all the religious societies.

Chapter 2

1 Peter 1:10-12

We have here three stages. First, the prophetic Spirit is foretelling the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow; next is the accomplishment of Christ's sufferings; and then comes the Holy Ghost down from heaven to report the things that are now ministered unto us, and this according to the hope, and the power of communion with the love that gives us this hope.

Chapter 3

On 2 Timothy: Introduction

This Epistle is the admirable complement of the earlier communication. Mon have discussed largely the interval between them; but even if it were briefer than many suppose, the change of circumstances and consequently of aim, treatment, and tone is immense: yet we know, from all scripture and experience also, that great revolutions may occur within a little while. It is the last written word of the apostle, which imparts peculiar earnestness, gravity, and tenderness to all he has to say. No other form so good for suitable exhortation, and this from one who was made “minister of the church” (Col. 1:24, 25) in a fuller sense than any other.

Order in the assembly, moral weight and worth in all, especially in those who govern or administer publicly, was urged in the first Epistle with the seriousness proper to the theme. Here the soon-departing apostle, whilst longing for Timothy's presence (1:4, 4:9,11, 13, 21), lays on the heart of his beloved fellow-laborer his final injunctions and personal call in view of deep and growing disorder. Such a ruin-state however (and it is incomparably worse now), he implies, would only give the better occasion to manifest those who abide true to Christ and cleave to His grace in the midst of the prevailing generally fatal declension which he could not but describe. It would furnish no doubt every facility for the flesh and the world in possession of the Lord's name; but all the more energy, endurance and courage are due to the Lord from the devoted and godly.

Hence the more than wonted sublimity and tender solicitude of the apostle, the remembrance of Timothy's tears, the reminiscences of conscientious fidelity in the past, the cordial recognition of real faith, even where the surroundings might be untoward. Hence too he reminds Timothy of that gift of God which was in him through the imposition of his own hands. He, therefore, was peculiarly required at so critical a moment to serve boldly in faith, conscious of that special grace which deigned to use him and work by him to the glory of Christ. Indeed, peculiar as might be the power and place thus given to Timothy, it was in full accord with the character of the gift of the Holy Ghost to every Christian; for “God gave us not a spirit of fear (of cowardice), but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” What all therefore have and should manifest, Timothy was to carry out in his own prominent position, and to suffer evil (or hardships) with the gospel, hateful as it was to the pride and religiousness of the world which persecuted its heralds. How vain to endure thus except with and according to the power of God!

Hence, he of all men was not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of Paul His prisoner. To those who merely look on from a distance, to readers in a drawing-room or students in a library, such shame might seem impossible save for the most cowardly and base. But the enemy knows how to bring about a state of feeling, even among Christians, where it demands the most simple and steadfast faith to stand by those who suffer for Christ and the gospel as Paul then did. This tide had been setting in for a long while and was now, as far as the apostle was concerned, arrived at its height. A thousand excuses might be made, a variety of seemingly good reasons might be pleaded, the result was that the mass of his brethren were ashamed of Paul! and, what was, if possible, sadder still, of the testimony of our Lord, which he takes care to place before himself, as

they, doubtless, quite ignored and forgot it in the pressure of peril and disgrace.

And how deep though blessed is that testimony, an already possessed salvation from God, and a holy calling, “not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has been made manifest now by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, Who annulled death and brought to light life and incorruption through the gospel, whereunto I was appointed a preacher, an apostle and a teacher [of the Gentiles]!” It was for this cause Paul was also suffering these things. Never was there a more worthy reason. Certainly he was not ashamed: how terrible to think that any Christian could be, how humbling that even such as had once known Paul were! For if ever there was a servant whose life and labors, whose spirit, ways, and speech harmonized with the gospel, was it not Paul? Yet were brethren ashamed of the testimony of our Lord and of him His prisoner, when zeal and affection ought to have been most drawn out. Many a faithful servant proved utterly weak in the hour of trial, not a few were painfully inconsistent in detail, though sincere and honored of God in the main. Paul stands well nigh alone, according to his earnest expectation and hope that in nothing he should be ashamed, but that with all boldness as always, so even to the end, Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life, or by death (Phil. 1) Then it was his first imprisonment; and his desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better, was not yet to be gratified. To abide in the flesh was more needful to the saints; and, having this confidence, he knew that he was to abide and continue with all. Now it was his second imprisonment; and Christ was to be magnified by his death, but in nothing was he put to shame, least of all was he ashamed of the gospel or of the hardship in prison and in death which the gospel entailed.

With the gospel, with the testimony of our Lord in every part, with Christ Himself, was he bound up. He knew Him Whom he had believed and was persuaded of His ability to guard that which he had committed to Him against that day. Therefore did he exhort Timothy to have an outline of sound words which he had heard from him in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; and to keep, by the Holy Spirit Who dwelleth in us, the good thing that is entrusted. This refers to no unwritten tradition, nor to any humanly drawn up formula, but to the written word since Christ. It was the more important because Timothy knew how all in Asia (the Roman province where he had labored so long and diligently) had turned away from Paul, not from Christ or the gospel of course, but from him who had beyond all presented its distinctive and unadulterated truth, and best represented its unwearied labors and its sufferings. And, if more than one brought such a pang to the apostle's heart, how touchingly he recalls the faithfulness of one, Onesiphorus, or whose house he beseeches mercy of the Lord; “for he oft refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain, but when he was in Rome, he sought me diligently and found me (the Lord grant unto him to find mercy of the Lord in that day).” It was indeed just in keeping with the habitual love of Onesiphorus where he ordinarily dwelt; for the apostle adds “and in how many things he administered at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.” If we love the truth, we shall not fail in affection toward those that are identified with it. Party-zeal is the flesh's parody of it. God will have love and faith to be a living reality here below; and, in the world as it is, one must increasingly suffer. But He will be sanctified in those that are nigh Him, ever noticing both what He values and what He hates.

The apostle calls his child to be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ, with relation to others (ch. 2.), not only in holding the truth fast, but in transmitting it duly—a work no less delicate than important. “And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same

commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.” The communication of the truth is here in question, not the conferring of authority as on elders and deacons locally. Faithful men were to be the objects of his care for that; but they needed to be taught by such an one as Timothy, himself taught of the apostle, in order that they might be able to teach others. Here, too, the apostle summons him to take his share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus: for what things demand, within as well as without greater self-denial or expose to greater trials? In three figures the apostle sets forth what is needed by those who would thus serve the Lord aright. “No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of life, that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier.” The servant must make up his mind to refuse all distraction. Next, “if a man also contend in the games, he is not crowned except he have contended lawfully.” The manner in which he serves is of the highest moment and claims entire submission to the will of the Lord Who is served; so the athlete was bound by the rules of the games. Lastly “the laboring husbandman must first partake of the fruits.” If love leads to toil, certainly labor must precede the fruits. All this the apostle would have Timothy to consider, and assures him of the Lord's grace in giving understanding in all things. Faith should be intelligent.

From him that labors in teaching the transition is easy to the truth taught, and happily (for God thinks of the simplest) its sum is sot forth in few but profound words, and in that one Person, Who is the object of our faith, the wonder of angels, the satisfying delight of God. “Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel.” It is not so that theologians would present it, nor even as had the prophets; it is as God would have the apostle impress Timothy and us. The historic order would have, begun with His relation after the flesh, His Messianic position, the fulfillment as far as His person went of promise and prophecy; but Paul's gospel, which faithfully asserts this foundation truth, gave the emphasis to that resurrection from the dead which supposes the work of redemption already done and man in Him entered on the new estate according to God's heavenly counsels. And this enlarges the character of Christ's suffering, which above all the workman should not shirk, as the blessed apostle so deeply tasted of it in his gospel service: “In which I suffer evil unto bonds as an evildoer; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with everlasting glory. Faithful [is] the saying; for if we died with [Him], we shall also live with [Him]; if we endure, we shall also reign with [Him]; if we shall deny [Him], He also will deny us; if we are faithless, He abideth faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”

On this he makes personal appeal to the end of the chapter, that Timothy would not only urge truth fundamental and practical, but avoid word-fights and profane babblings of even more destructive tendency, specifying the unholy dream of the resurrection so past as to make the present an enjoyable scene. Thus some of the fathers taught, and worldly religion prospered then as now. This leads to a development as instructive in itself as characteristic of the Epistle. The false teaching is met by the apostle's pointing out both sides of the seal as God's sure foundation: [The] Lord knoweth those that are His; and Let every one that nameth the name of [the] Lord depart from unrighteousness. Whatever come, He is sovereign, and His confessor is responsible. Here very suggestively the state of the church is anticipated: “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some unto honor and some unto dishonor. If therefore one purge himself from these [the vessels to dishonor], he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work.” Zeal as a good

workman would not suffice. Timothy must flee youthful lusts (not carnal or worldly ones only), and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Isolation is never right as an object, though sin must never be sanctioned. But foolish questions must, be eschewed, gentleness cultivated, and not least in setting right opposers, if God might give them repentance and waking up from the devil's snare for His will.

But in ch. 3 an awful picture is displayed: not merely some erring here and there, but a far more prevailing condition of decay where they could no longer be spoken of as disciples or faithful but mere “men,” not of course heathen or Jews, but alas! calling themselves Christians, for they are said to have a form of piety but denying its power: the morally awful fact of men, with the external light and privileges of Christendom, no better at bottom though less gross than the heathen, whose picture is drawn by the same hand in the latter part of Rom. 1. They may and do loudly claim to be the church in unbroken succession; but the word is “from these also turn away.” Doubtless all are not equally mischievous: there are weak victims, not without moral faults, and chiefs like those that withstood Moses. But Timothy had intimate familiarity with a life of godly and suffering and patient devotedness, as well as with truth in divinely given form and power; and all that would live godly in Christ would suffer persecutions, as surely as evil men and impostors grow worse and worse.

Hence the inestimable value of whom he had learned from, and of the written word known from childhood, which gives the apostle the occasion to predicate of every scripture (be it Old or New Testament) qualities that constitute it the only abiding rule of faith, not only the fullest source, but the sole unfailing and perfect standard of truth. That they were “God-inspired” implies this in one word to the mind that knows God.

Even then (chap. 4.) the apostle charges Timothy most solemnly before God and Jesus Christ Who shall judge quick and dead, and this therefore by His appearing and His kingdom; for it is no question of heavenly grace, but of responsible service: a powerful motive to stimulate and strengthen his beloved child, both in preaching and in reproving, rebuking and exhorting, with all long-suffering and doctrine. For a time shall be when they will not hear sound doctrine, but according to their own lusts will heap teachers to themselves, having itching ears, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will have turned aside unto fables. It may not be the apostacy, nor the revelation of the man of sin; but it seems the worst development of the last days before that future crisis, and it has long since arrived. Yet more to impress Timothy, the apostle speaks of his own departure as a time close at hand. His course was run. He was awaiting the Lord's appearing to crown him, and not him only but all who love His appearing.

With a variety of personal notices deeply interesting in many ways the letter closes. He would hasten Timothy's joining him before winter, and it would seem that the sending of Tychicus to Ephesus may have been to facilitate this, only Luke being with the apostle. Of Demas' departure he speaks with pain, of others simply as a fact. But he begs his cloak, left at Troas, the books, and especially the parchments: death before his eyes in no way hinders duty, the Lord's appearing demands it. A dangerous man is not forgotten; nor the fact that not one stood with him in the hour of danger, but the Lord did Who would to the end, preserving him for His heavenly kingdom. Salutation from himself and others follows, and the wish for His presence with Timothy's spirit Who had delivered him, and Whose grace he would have with them.

Chapter 4

On 2 Timothy 1:1-2

The opening salutation of the Epistle as usual is instinct with the spirit of all that is to follow. Deep seriousness and tender affection pervades the whole. It is no longer a question of order in the house of God on the earth, when the apostle is obliged to speak of a great house where are not only gold and silver vessels, but also wooden and earthen, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Then not discipline only, but purifying oneself from these at all cost becomes a paramount duty, if one is to be personally a vessel to honor, sanctified, meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work. It is a question in short of the firm foundation of God with its unfailing comfort on one side and its inalienable responsibility on the other. But, thank God, come what may, that foundation stands, whatever the disorder of the house; and the consequent obligation of the faithful abides, the more peremptory for His glory because of general defection. Faith never despairs of good, never slights evil, and is free only to please God, instead of easing self by the choice of the lesser wrong.

It could not be, however, in these circumstances, but that a tone of importunate earnestness should prevail. Therefore is the need urged more than ever of courage and endurance, as well as of high jealousy, for the will of God and detestation of the evil way of man—of man now alas! associating the Lord's name with the worst wickedness of Satan. The modest but apparently timid character of Timothy called forth the apostle's heart under the power of the Holy Ghost to prepare him for the arduous labor and conflict which lay before him on the speedy departure of his spiritual father. Even more thoroughly and with less exception do its exhortations apply to the faithful now, than those of the first Epistle, because there was more of the official element in the first, whereas what is moral predominates in the second. Be it ours therefore to profit fully from this consideration. For unquestionably the difficult times of the last days have long since come, and the darkness of the closing scenes of lawlessness are already casting their shadows before.

“Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus, by God's will, according to promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timotheus [my] beloved child: Grace, mercy, peace, from God [the] Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (ver. 1, 2).

It is observable that here, as in the first Epistle, Paul puts forward his great commission. Intimacy was never meant to enfeeble that divinely given place and authority. Sometimes the apostle might merge it; as we see with gracious beauty in his Epistle to Philemon, where authority would have jarred with the chord he wished to strike in that valued believer's heart. Here apostleship was demanded, not only by the nature of the first Epistle, but in order to give weight to the moral directions of the second. The path of Christ which lay through the perilous dilemmas of the last days required the highest expression of divine authority. Without this sanction even the most necessary step of righteousness must expose the man of God who took it in faith to the charge of innovation, of presumption, and specially of disorder because the general state of Christendom was itself one of fixed, traditional, and all but universal departure, from God's word.

But in the first Epistle it is “apostle according to the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope.” This is evidently more in relation to mankind, as much to the saints is external as compared with the terms of the second Epistle. “By God's will” is here as in 1 and 2 Corinthians Ephesians and Colossians It was requisite or wise at first, and abides to the last. The “will” of God admits of a far larger and deeper application than His “commandment,” however important this may be in its place. Many, who would shrink from insubjection to a commandment of God, might be comparatively little exercised about His will, which takes in a vast variety of spiritual life exercised outside the range of a formal injunction. We may observe a kindred distinction which our Lord draws in John 14 between His commandments and His word. (verses 21, 23, 24). This addition in the Second Epistle quite falls in with its broad and deep character.

But there is more difference still. Paul was apostle “according to promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus.” This clearly connects the closing Epistle of Paul with the opening one of John, where eternal life in all its fullness in Christ is the characteristic doctrine. Not that this was ever absent from the Pauline Epistles. We see it in those to the Romans and the Corinthians, to the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, if possible still more brightly and in practical power. But here it is in the most prominent way bound up with his apostleship and of course, therefore, with the entire bearing of this, his last written, communication. The Spirit of God for the first time puts it undoubtedly in the fore-ground.

But the method employed has not been, I think, at all rightly apprehended. The preposition (κατ■) holds its more ordinary sense, “according to,” in conformity with, rather than in pursuance of, or with a view, to the fulfillment etc. Not the object and intention of the apostleship is expressed thereby, but its character. Undoubtedly Paul's apostleship did further and made known the promises of eternal life; but the truth revealed here is that he was thus called of God according to, or in keeping with, this promise of life. His office was not merely to be minister of the gospel in the whole creation under heaven; nor yet only to be also minister of the church which is Christ's body. He now for the first time describes himself as by God's will apostle “according to promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus.” Never did Timothy, never do the faithful, need so much the comforting strengthening knowledge of that life as in view of the horrors and dangers which this Epistle contemplates. If aught be real in a world of vain show, the life is which is in Christ; it is eternal, as it is meant to overcome by faith. Without that life even the power of the Holy Ghost might work in a son of perdition. “Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many powers? And then will I avow unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, workers of lawlessness.” Power without life is most ominous and fatal; with life, most blessed and eminently characteristic of Christianity. We shall see this carefully put forward for our consolation in this very chapter of this Epistle. But life has indisputably the prime, place in the character here given of Paul's apostleship. No one had prophecy as he had; none knew all mysteries and all knowledge like him; and who, as he, had all faith, so as to remove mountains? But he had also that love which is of God, surpassed perhaps by none; for he lived the life which is in Christ Jesus. We can but admire, therefore, as we here read of, his apostleship characterized, not by display of spiritual energy, but “according to promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.”

Life, like faith, is individual, yet obedient and therefore valuing, next to Christ, the walking with those who are His to His glory. But do any walk well together, who have not faith to stand alone if

His will required it? Life therefore is thus brought forward in this capital place. If ever its value was felt more than before, it was now: the strait of times called for all that is of Christ. Glory on earth had been the idol of the Jew at his best; heavenly glory in and with Christ is the Christian hope; but one has now life in Christ, a “promise” incomparably beyond those to Abraham, David, and any other worthy. We have it in Him now, and with Him shall manifestly have it when glorified. The earth, the world, was the theater of God's dealings and will be of His kingdom in power and glory when Christ appears and reigns. But as Paul was apostle according to promise of the life that is in Christ, so we having Him have that eternal life which will enjoy its own proper sphere at His coming, above the world of which its nature is wholly independent.

“To Timotheus, [my] beloved child.” In the first Epistle he was designated “true” (γνησ■ω) child. It might have seemed impossible to have missed the intended difference. For the words necessarily intimate in the latter case that Timothy was no spurious son but his genuine child, and this not merely in “the” faith as an objective possession but in “faith” as a real living principle in the soul. In the former case there is the express declaration of the apostle's positive and personal affection, which was apparently no formal or unmeaning phrase. Yet a German annotator of some repute asks, “Can it be accidental that instead of γνησ■ω τ■κνω, as Timotheus is called in the first Epistle 1:2, and Titus 1:4, here we find ■γαπητ■? Or may a reason for the change be found in this that it now behooved Timotheus to stir up afresh the faith and the grace in him, before he could again be worthy of the name γνησ■ον τ■κνον in its full sense?” And this shallow remark, which misses the true inference from the use of the designation in Titus (who never draws out the strong feelings of the apostle as Timothy does in both Epistles, and yet is styled no less γν. τ.), has had the most deleterious influence on Dean Alford's general comparison of the two Epistles, and misled him on not a few details of importance. Bengel, Ellicott, and others are much more correct in this; so that the regret expressed for their misapprehension might have been well spared. The failure in discernment really belongs to those who affect to see loss of confidence in the Second Epistle; and it is only made conspicuous by allowing more love. “More of mere love!” is a strange phrase, and unworthy of a saint, who ought better to know its real and inestimable worth. “Grace, mercy, peace from God [the] Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” Here we have the same words precisely as in the First; and as to both so famous an expositor as Calvin dares to apologize for the apostle, if it be not to censure him. “He does not observe the exact order; for he places first what ought to have been last, namely, the grace which flows from mercy. For the reason why God at first receives us into favor and why He loves is, that He is merciful. But it is not unusual to mention the cause after the effect for the sake of explanation." Such is his comment, which is on the first occasion, repeated substantially on the second. It is plain that the scope of the blessed wish of the apostle has escaped him. For grace is the general term for that energy and outflow of divine goodness which rises above men's evil and ruin, and loves notwithstanding all; and so is most correctly, as it is uniformly, in the first place in the salutation, whether to assemblies or to individual saints. “Mercy” most appropriately finds its place in the desire of God's pitiful consideration for individual weakness, need, or danger, and so is found not only in 1 and 2 Timothy but also exceptionally in Jude, of special purpose, as it disappears from Philemon where the assembly in his house rightly modifies the formula. But mercy being thus subordinate, however sweet individually, with unquestionably good reason holds the second place. By none is it doubted that “peace,” as being an effect rather than a spring, is found where it should be, as indeed each and all have been shown to be. Yet how sorrowful and humiliating that such apparently unconscious

but real disrespect to scripture should stand unchallenged in the final shape as well as in a modern translation of his writings, who is generally allowed to be in nothing behind the very chiefest Reformers! If reverence for God be attested by trembling at His word, may we be warned by such an example.

Chapter 5

On 2 Timothy 1:3-7

It is interesting to note how often in the last words of an old man one hears the recall of earlier facts in his life or recollections. Inspiration does not set this aside. The apostle speaks now of his “forefathers,” as he reminds Timothy of the faithful predecessors in his family. “I thank God whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience how unceasingly I have the remembrance of thee in my supplications, night and day longing to see thee, remembering thy tears that I may be filled with joy, calling to mind the unfeigned faith that [is] in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and, I am persuaded, in thee also” (ver. 3-5). There is a difference in the way in which Paul speaks of his forefathers as compared with the female line of believers before Timothy. He does not affirm that his ancestors were faithful in the same sense as those of his child in the faith. It would not seem to be more than what he predicates of “our whole twelve tribes” in Acts 26:7. He however assuredly served God with pure conscience and could speak of giving Him thanks in the remembrance of Timothy. It was not merely a gracious affection for his sorrowing and anxious fellow-laborer; but he had the remembrance of Timothy in his supplications unceasingly, whilst night and day he longed to see him. Both were true. One cannot conceive a grosser delusion than that faith destroys affection. There is no life so influential as Christ's, no bond equal to that of the Spirit.

But there is more to be observed here: Paul remembered Timothy's tears, without particularly telling us why he shed them. The context implies however that it was the bitterness of parting from his revered leader; for the joy, with which the apostle desired to be. filled, would be in seeing one another again. No doubt there was the added feeling for Timothy, but the Spirit of prophecy had over and over again predicted the bonds and imprisonment, if not death, that awaited Paul.

Again, we may notice there was this further for which the apostle was thankful to God, “calling to mind the unfeigned faith which [is] in thee” —faith deeply called for in the increasing perplexities of God's people here below.

It is indeed great joy to think of a beloved soul here and there, thus marked out by the Spirit, not only in time but for eternity; to think of such as an object of God's love, and in the nearest relation to Christ. It is a sweet comfort in shame and sorrow to look on a friend who is witness for God by “unfeigned faith” in an unbelieving world. Such was Timothy in the apostle's eyes, which, if they were soon about to close on that world, looked back at the faith which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and in his mother Eunice, as he emphatically adds, “and, I am persuaded, in thee also.” Timothy was not the less but the more dear to the apostle, because he had been deeply exercised and severely sifted. But he could not leave him under possible, discouragement, nor simply bring before him those who had preceded him in faith, nor cheer himself in a merely general way. He adds, “For which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (ver. 6).

This gift (χ■ρισμα) was the special energy of the Holy Ghost imparted to Timothy. There is no reasonable doubt that it is the gift spoken of in 1 Tim. 4:14. Only there it is said to have been given

through prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the elderhood; here, through the laying on of Paul's hands. The presbyters were associated with Paul; but the power was solely in the apostle. He only was the divinely employed channel of so great a gift. And this is indicated by the difference of the prepositions “with” and “by.”

But the apostle takes occasion to speak of that which, thank God, is not special and in no way calls for prophecy. Rather is it the abiding spring of power for the church of God, the standing privilege guaranteed by the Lord (John 14, 16.) to every believer in the Lord resting on redemption during this present interval since Pentecost. Hence the change of language: “for God gave us not a spirit of cowardice, but of power and love and sobriety of mind” (ver. 7).

What can be more comforting now in the utter ruin of the outward character of the church, which caused the apostle such intense grief when he descried its beginnings. Signs and wonders, if they could be in consistency with God's will and glory, had been no such source of joy and blessing. They were most important in their season and for their end. They attested the victory of the risen Man over Satan; they proclaimed the beneficent power of God just vested in the hands of those that were His, and in the midst of a ruined creation. They were calculated, as they were used, to arouse the attention of a dark and slumbering race to the new ways of a God active in goodness, Who was putting honor on Him Whom man had rejected to his own shame and irreparable loss.

But there is a still deeper grace in the permanence of the Holy Ghost given to the Christian as also to the church. And the more so as we learn how every truth has been enfeebled, every principle corrupted, all the ways of God not only misunderstood, but misinterpreted, so that His testimony as a whole is wrecked in Christendom. Nevertheless, as the firm foundation of God stands, and as the Head of the church is exalted at His right hand infallibly to love, cherish, and nourish His body, so is His great gift to us unrevoked, and not a spirit of cowardice. To supplant it alas! might well seem to become us, when one realizes the present ruin of all that bears the name of the Lord here below. On the contrary, He is given to abide in and with us forever, and His gift is that of power and of love and of a sound mind. This was meant to cheer Timothy; and we have yet deeper need. So much the more therefore ought it to cheer us as nothing else can.

For we must remember that the Spirit of God is given us for present enjoyment and service. It becomes us therefore neither to sit down helplessly in dust and ashes, nor to show how unbroken we are, if not profane, in saying, while we go on with wrong, that Christ will set all to rights when He appears in glory. The more we are led of Him, we shall feel the more deeply that, as the evil around is irreparable, we must now cleave to His name, separate from evil and associated godlily. We shall not give ourselves up to despair, but rise in faith and faithfulness. We shall be strengthened in obedience, and filled with the divine cheer of the Lord's presence, as we keep His words and look for Him from heaven.

The consciousness of the Holy Ghost in us will be power, not to work miracles, but to do the will of God, as it will draw us out in the love of God, and impart a sober judgment of all that becomes His saints in the midst of ruin. This is worthy of Christ in an evil day; and what can we desire more till He Himself comes, the crown of divine goodness and glory?

Chapter 6

On 2 Timothy 1:8-11

In the path of Christ the time surely comes when faith is put to the proof. It is one thing in the confidence of grace and at the summons of the truth to turn one's back on the fairest pretension opposed to His name; it is quite another to stand firm and unabashed when not only the world turns from us, but desertion sets in among those that confessed Him How few can stand the loss of valued associations, not to speak of their taunts and persecutions! This abnormal state was dawning on the sensitive and distressed spirit of Timothy. It has long been the ordinary experience for the faithful in Christendom. What a frightful illustration the last few years have furnished!

“Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but suffer hardship with the gospel, according to, the power of God, Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before everlasting ages, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, Who abolished death brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel, whereunto I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher” (ver. 8-11).

It is only ignorance of self which makes it to many difficult to understand why Timothy Should be thus ashamed. When the tide of blessing is at the full there is little or no room for shame. It is far otherwise when the ingathering is small and when the love of the many waxes cold, when the world becomes more hardened and contemptuous and the saints cower under its reproaches. Faith alone keeps the eye upon Christ and the heart warmed with His love, in an atmosphere so chilling. His reproach (for it is Christ's assuredly) becomes then glorious in our eyes; and “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” For the testimony though it may seem to fail is none the less the testimony of our Lord, and the suffering witness under the unjust hand of human authority is His prisoner. “Be not therefore ashamed” is the word. Grace identified the witness who may not be perfect, with His testimony which is absolutely so. Why should we ever stand for that which is less than divine? We are not called to suffer or bear shame for anything but Christ. He has still His objects, precious in His eyes here below. Be it ours to final our lot only there, and let us not be ashamed in a day of grievous departure.

But more; Timothy was called to “suffer evil along with the gospel” as an object assailed and involved in all possible trial here below. It is a grievous blank where a servant of God has only the gospel before his soul, lacks heart for the glory of Christ as Head of the church, fails in faith to enter into the mystery of Christ and His body and takes the scantiest interest in the joys and sorrows which those blessed relationships entail here below. It is wrong to be absorbed even with the gospel, so as to abnegate our part in these high and heavenly privileges, and consequent duties, so near to Christ and inseparable from God's counsels and Christ's love. But there is the opposite error, which though more rare is at least as dangerous and even more dishonoring to Christ because it is more pretentious and seductive—the danger of occupying the mind and life with the truth of the church and its wondrous associations to the depreciation of the gospel and the despising of those who faithfully addict themselves to that work. The apostle to whom we are

indebted more than to any other inspired instrument for the revelation of the church not less strenuously insists on the all-importance of the gospel. Christ is most actively and supremely concerned with both, and so should His servants, though one might be neither a teacher on the one hand nor an evangelist on the other. Still more responsible, because of the grace given to him, was Timothy, being both an evangelist and a teacher. He is here enjoined to suffer evil with the gospel, but according to the power of God. Nothing can show more forcibly the deep interest in it to which he was called. When worldliness enters, suffering hardship disappears. When the church becomes worldly, one gains honor, ease, emolument, and so it is with the gospel become popular. When the gospel and the church engage the heart and testimony according to Christ, suffering and rejection cannot but ensue. Timothy, therefore; was called to take Christ's part in the gospel; and God's power would not be lacking, however he might suffer.

The gospel is well worth the while, “for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes,” entirely above the distinction which the law or circumcision made. It is of the Spirit, not of the flesh, not national now but personal. God “saved us.” It is the fruit of His work in Christ; and that work was finished on earth, and accepted in heaven, and abides forever, complete and unchanging. Men may be moved away from the hope of the gospel by ordinances on the one hand or by philosophy on the other. Both are of the world, and almost equally worthless; both absolutely inefficacious to save, though one be a sign, the other purely human. But God “saved us and called us with a holy calling.” Here “holy” is emphatic and most suitable to the Epistle and the state of things contemplated. Always true, it was urgent now to press its “holy” character. It is a calling on high or upward as we read in Phil. 3:14, in contrast with the earthly things in which men find their glory to their shame. It is a heavenly calling, as we see in Heb. 3:1, which those needed especially to consider who were used to the external calling of Israel in the land. It is God's calling with its hope in and with Christ where the creature disappears from view and His eternal counsels for the glory of His Son are developed for the soul as in Eph. 1 and 4. But now in the growing declension of such as bore the name of the Lord the apostle binds together God's salvation with His holy calling. An evil time is not at all one for lowering the standard but for unveiling and pressing its importance.

Further, being divine, God's salvation and call are not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace. Even the saint was to pray, “enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.” There are good works in every saint: “For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before prepared that we should walk in them;” they are not only fair morally but they ought to be such as suit those on earth who are united to Christ in heaven, responsible to reflect heavenly grace—no longer earthly righteousness merely. Such works alone are properly Christian. “Against such there is no law.” But they are quite distinct from those of legal obedience, were it ever so exact. Nevertheless God's salvation is according to Christ's work, not ours. Nor is it of him that willeth nor of him that runneth but, of God that showeth mercy, according to His own purpose and grace, Who would thus perfectly honor the Son as we do in our measure by our faith.

This, again, was given us in Christ Jesus before everlasting time, a most weighty and blessed truth. It is not merely security assured without end, but grace given in Christ Jesus before time began. It was not so with Israel: they were called in time. God's purpose about us, Christians, was in eternity before any creature existed. To make it only endless security in the future is to lose this

wondrous fact of the divine will about the saints who are now called in Christ to His glory. Their blessing was a counsel bound up with Christ before the world was or any question of creature responsibility entered: God purposed to justify His love and glorify Himself in having us with Christ in His presence and like Him of His own sovereign grace, so much the more bound to walk, now and here, as He walked, in righteousness and holiness of truth, as the new man after God was created.

But the manifestation of this purposed grace to us came in with Him Who was manifested in flesh and justified in the Spirit. Even so, though all depended on the dignity of His person, and awaited the completion of His work, and His return as man into that glory whence He had come as God, the Son, that thus it might be the Son of man Who had glorified God in Himself, and this straightway. Manhood, now that the infinite work of suffering for sin was accomplished, was in His person at least raised from among the dead and glorified on high according to the fullest counsel of God. His purpose and grace was no longer a question of gift only as before the ages of time, but manifested now through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, having annulled death and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel. This helps to the more distinct understanding of ver. 1; for it is the promise of life, that which is in Christ Jesus, fulfilled. Grace was thus distributing its incomparable stores. Death was brought to naught as Satan's empire over sinful man, and Jesus was manifestly Lord of all and Conqueror over all hostile power and Giver of infinite blessing in communion with God His Father, and this in all truth and righteousness. For sin had been borne and borne away, as the gospel declares to all men in itself and applies the good news to ourselves by faith individually.

Where is man's wisdom then? Forever put to shame in His cross of which it was ashamed. Where is the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us? Effaced forever and taken out of the way by Him who nailed it to the cross, as the resurrection cast its glorious light on the incorruption of the body pledged to us in Him risen. No wonder the apostle told the Roman saints long before that be was not ashamed of the gospel, destined to be imprisoned and slain and cast out in the person of its witnesses in that city more than in any other that professed it, not to speak of the loathsome imposture and harlotry which supplanted and still supplants it there. No wonder the apostle there imprisoned for its sake, and anticipating the speedy pouring out of his blood as a drink-offering (4: 6), adds with triumphant thankfulness, “unto which [gospel] I [emphatically] was appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher [of Gentiles].” Some few high and varied authorities omit “of Gentiles,” which from the character of the Epistle seems to me probably right; and the rather as the copyists were profoundly insensible of snob a trait but disposed to assimilate the second letter to the first, where “of Gentiles” has its suited and certain place.

Chapter 7

On 2 Timothy 1:12-14

The apostle no sooner introduces himself and his appointed place in service than he names those sufferings of his which were at least as wonderful as his labors.

“For which cause also I suffer these things; yet I am not ashamed; for I know Whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have entrusted [or, my deposit] against that day. Have an outline of sound [words] which, thou heardest from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. The good thing entrusted [or, the good deposit] keep through the Holy Spirit that dwelleth in us” (ver. 12-14).

No one was more remote from superstitious penalties or self-righteous pains; yet where was ever such a life-long endurance in the most varied ways for the testimony of Christ? “In stripes beyond measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Five times from Jews I received the forty stripes save one thrice I was scourged with rods; once I was stoned: thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I spent in the deep; in journeyings often; in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from Gentiles, in perils in town, in perils in wilderness, in perils at sea, in perils among false brethren; in labor and toil, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” And this is but the mere external part in what he calls his “folly,” that is, speaking of himself instead of Christ, extorted from him as it was by the detractors at Corinth. But what a life of love such sufferings indicate, what devotedness to Him Who had appointed him a herald and apostle and teacher!

Was he “ashamed” then? Rather did he boast of what humanly speaking is a humiliation. If it is needful to boast, says he, “I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity,” “most gladly therefore will I rather boast of my infirmities [not faults or sins assuredly], that the power of the Christ may dwell upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in straits, for Christ; for when I am weak, then am I strong.” As that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God, so to the spiritual mind there is nothing so glorious for a saint here below as reproach, rejection, and suffering for Christ's sake and His testimony. This was the cause for which Paul was suffering then as all through his course, since the Lord said, “I will show him how much he must suffer for My name” (Acts 9:16). But it was also great grace that, instead of complaining like Jeremiah, he should abound in courage, joy, and triumph, NOT shame. Was he then a man of iron constitution, a heart of oak, which threw off all blows and wounds, as if unfelt? “Ye know,” said he to some who should have known him well, “that in weakness of the flesh I preached the gospel to you at the first; and my temptation which was in my flesh ye did not slight nor reject with contempt; but ye received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.” His circumstances were as trying as his health was infirm; yet went he on for years, night and day, admonishing each with tears, coveting no one's silver or gold or clothing, but his hands ministering to the wants of others as well as his own. Truly in nothing was he ashamed; but with all boldness of grace, as always, so now also magnifying Christ in his body whether by life or by death.

What sustained him? “For I know Whom I have believed.” It is faith, but it is the person believed, and a real inward knowledge thereby formed. No other knowledge has such sterling value for eternity; yet there is communion with God in it now, as now the Holy Spirit communicates it through the word. The voice of Christ is heard and believed and known; for there is, though the channels may be many, but that One, and the voice of any other is only the voice of a stranger. His words are spirit, and they are life; and that life depends on Him Who is its source; Who draws out confidence the more He is known without enfeebling dependence. In Him we have redemption through His blood; and as He is, so we are in this world: acceptance is complete and perfect, according to the glory of His person and the efficacy of His work.

Hence the apostle adds, “and I am persuaded that He is able to keep my deposit—that which I have entrusted unto Him—against that day.” By “my deposit” is to be understood all that I as a believer entrust to the safe-keeping of God, not only the security but the blessedness of the soul and the body, of the walk and the work, with every question conceivable to be raised in the past, present, or future. As responsibility is clearly in question, the reference is as usual to “that day,” which will declare the measure of every saint's fidelity when each shall have his praise from God. The coming or “presence of the Lord,” as is well-known, is the aspect of pure grace when all shall be caught up in the likeness of the Lord to be with Him forever.

This leads the apostle to impress on his fellow-laborer an all-important exhortation for his own service of Christ with others. “Have an outline of sound words which thou heardest from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (ver. 13). “Hold fast” goes far beyond the force of the first word, as “the” form is also unwarranted. Timothy had been used to hear the things which are freely given us by God spoken in words, not which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the spirit teacheth, or, as they are here described, “sound words.” But there had been no formula which he was called and bound to keep; simply the truth conveyed in divinely taught expressions, which, heard before from Paul, he was to heed jealously now that the end of that mighty testifying was near.

For man is not competent to set the truth in new forms without trenching on it and thus impairing if not corrupting the testimony of God. It is not enough to have the things of the Spirit; the words in which they are conveyed need to be of the Spirit also, in order to communicate God's mind in perfection; and hence, to be a rule of faith, we must have God's word. Now that the inspired authorities no longer exist, scripture only is this; and it is as distinct from ministry on the one hand as from the assembly on the other.

Ministry is the regular service of Christ by gift to communicate the truth, whether to the world in the gospel, or to the saints in the truth generally. But even if not a word were amiss (which is rarely the case—indeed far otherwise), it is not inspiration and in no way therefore a rule of faith.

Still less can the assembly be rightly so viewed. It is responsible to receive and reflect the word of God. It is the pillar and stay of the truth, the responsible keeper and corporate witness of holy writ; as Israel of old was of the law and the prophets, the living oracles committed to them. But itself scripture abides the rule of faith.

And hence in this last Epistle of Paul the reiterated forms in which the urgent duty of taking heed to the sound words heard from the apostle. Outline or sample of such words he was to have the authority of which was imprinted on them from God; for Timothy was no such authority, and less if

possible the saints who were to profit by them. But Timothy's state of soul was much for their happy use with others; and therefore “with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” has its importance. Memory, however exact, would not suffice. Faith and love, which have their power in Jesus Christ, would make them so much the more impressive.

The verse that follows appears to me to summarize that which its predecessor exhorts to in detail: “Keep the good deposit through the Holy Spirit that dwelleth in us” (ver. 14), but this, not without a sort of antithetical reference to ver. 12. There it was the apostle resting with holy satisfaction on God's keeping what he had entrusted to Him. Here is the other side, in which Timothy is called to keep what he was entrusted with, for which God provides in the Holy Spirit that dwells in us. For the Spirit given abides with us forever. He may be grieved by our sins and folly; but He does not abandon the saint since redemption. He is there, when self-judgment corrects the hindrance, to act in His own gracious power to the glory of Christ Who sent Him down for this very purpose.

It will be noticed that it is not said “in thee,” but “in us.” So it is in scripture habitually, and incomparably better than if predicated of Timothy alone, On him had been conferred by apostolic prerogative a special gift; but he or any other saint shared the unspeakable boon, for which it was expedient that even Jesus should go away. This is the common and characteristic power of the Christian; and therefore it was fitting that, while Timothy should be reminded of One so competent to help our infirmity, he should have it clearly before his soul that the saints at large have the divine Spirit no less truly dwelling in them. It was well for both him and them to have the comfort and the stimulus of so blessed, yet solemn, a fact indelibly before them. We cannot too strongly urge that the precious privileges with which God's grace in Christ has invested believers are standing facts, and not mere ideas or transient feelings. They are indeed calculated to exercise the mind and fill the mind to the full; and wretched is his state, who, possessing what so transcends human thought or affection, seems to estimate them less than the passing things of the day or the trifling objects on which man spends his care. But the life of Christ, His death and resurrection, redemption through His blood, union with Him on high, His intercession at God's right hand, are facts on which the soul can rest, no less than His Deity and His humanity in one person. Just so is it with the presence of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, and His varied operations in the assembly and the individual. The believer stands in living present relationship with them all, which are as certain and infinitely more important than the links of natural kin or country, which nobody in his senses disbelieves. What a reproof to the thoughtless saint! and what solid cheer to the trembling heart! We have only to reflect on what grace has made ours in Christ to run over with thanksgiving and praise.

Chapter 8

On 2 Timothy 1:15-18

There is more, however, than hardship or suffering to be faced in the testimony of our Lord and no one proved it more than the apostle. To be persecuted by foes may be bitter, though glorious for His sake Who really entails it as the world now is. But what is this to compare with desertion by friends? Here, the life that is in Christ finds fresh scope. For glorifying the Lord in such an experience how deep the value of the Word, and how energetic the power of the Holy Ghost which dwells in us. A single eye to Christ alone can sustain in it and as the apostle was then feeling it to the uttermost so does he not hesitate to bring it before the tender spirit of his beloved child.

“Thou knowest this, that all that are in Asia turned away from me; of whom is Phygelus and Hermogenes” (ver. 15). Of these two we may be wholly ignorant. Not so Timothy any more than Paul, who singles out their names as the most painful examples of the abandonment which cat the apostle to the heart. Timothy knew well what made their heartlessness such a distress to the servant, such a dishonor to the Master. It is not Christian to treat such a thing with contempt any more than with resentment. We can afford to hear all, however humbling as well as grievous. For we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. It would prepare Timothy and countless others for that which might be similar in its kind and time. Scripture records nothing in vain. It is true that we are nerved and strengthened for the conflict by looking not to deserters but to the Captain of salvation. But it is well to be prepared for that which has been, for what might be, not to say for what from the same causes is sure to be, from time to time. And it was the more important to speak of it to Timothy at this time, because he was so soon to lose the cheering presence and burning exhortations of the one who was writing to him, at least from his voice as a living man, ever to be heard, ever to abide as the word of the living God.

Let us consider more precisely what appears to be meant by these affecting words. Asia, pro-consular Asia, had been the scene of signal triumph for the gospel. It was there that the word of the Lord mightily grew and prevailed, and this in its capital city Ephesus. To the saints there the apostle had written his most elevated and richest Epistle, with the singular feature of no occasion to occupy himself or them with faults or dangers as then existing in their midst, though not without warning against the worst and lowest evils into which Satan might betray, and betray so much the more surely if that height of grace and truth were departed from or despised. And Timothy knew Asia well, especially Ephesus. There the apostle would have him remain when he himself Was going to Macedonia, that he might keep up the testimony which had been planted there and guard the saints against all the trash of man which Satan would use to supplant it.

But now, the apostle can assume that Timothy knew that desertion of himself which filled his heart, not with dismay but with grief. Such is the effect of divine love shed abroad in the heart and Paul would have Timothy to feel it according to Christ. This, undoubtedly, adds to the anguish but it delivers from selfishness as well as from acrimony. And Timothy needed to have it brought before him thus even though he knew the fact. The language supposes, it would seem, a definite act,

rather than a general state, though no doubt there was an antecedent state which prepared the way for that act to affect them so unworthily. It is true that turning away from Paul is very different from forsaking the gospel or the church, from giving up this truth or that. But where the Lord was giving His most honored servant to suffer, not for any failure of his own, but for the divine deposit, for His testimony here below, that any should desert such a servant at such a time would be lamentable: how much more so that the desertion should be general and in a moral sense universal where the truth was best known and grace could be brought out in all its height and depth and breadth as nowhere else. I should judge from the context that the fact which brought out this most deplorable and guilty desertion was the apostle's imprisonment. The enemy took advantage of human shame put upon the greatest servant of the church and of the gospel. And those who had been the abundant fruit of his labors in divine power did in effect join the world in spirit, cowering under its shame where faith and love ought to have given them identification with the apostle's suffering as glory to the name of Jesus.

But the turning away from Paul was not absolutely complete even there. There was at least a bright, exception, as a time of general evil is ever used in the grace of God to bring out singular fidelity and devotedness. “The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus; for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain; but being in Rome he sought me out diligently and found [me]; (the Lord grant him to find mercy from [the] Lord in that day). And in how many things he ministered at Ephesus thou knowest very well.” The contrast helps much and definitely to show us where the general defection lay; and the Lord repaid “the house of Onesiphorus” with compound interest the grace He had bestowed on its head. “He often refreshed me,” says the gracious apostle: how like the Master Who could say to the poor disciples, “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even. as My Father appointed unto Me” &c.! But he also singles out the crucial fact, “and was not ashamed of my chain.” Love evinces its truth, character, and power in the hour of need. How was it with “all that were in Asia"? They were evidently ashamed of it. Fleshly prudence blamed the zeal for Christ which gave the occasion; and worldly spirit shrank from all solidarity with the imprisoned apostle. How did the Lord regard such selfish timorousness? The Holy Spirit marks its baseness indelibly on the everlasting page of scripture. But he singles out the blessed exception of one whose heart clave the more to the apostle, not merely in the province of Asia, but in the proud metropolis where the apostle was bound. “But being in Rome he sought me very diligently;" and not in vain. He found the deserted apostle: “the Lord grant him to find mercy from [the] Lord in that day”! This, it is true, we are all awaiting in faith (Jude 21); but none the less sweet or comforting the apostle's prayer, surely not less efficacious than that of an Abraham of old for the present government of God. Nor is this all that is said; but he appeals to Timothy as knowing very well how much service Onesiphorus rendered in Ephesus. The Apostle does not limit it, as the Authorized Version does with others, to ministering to himself: the general phrase leaves room for what was personal of course, but implies much more, as the apostle carefully states. None knew this “better" than Timothy who needed no further explanation.

On 2 Timothy 2:1-2

In strong contrast with that desertion of the apostle which had overspread the saints of proconsular Asia is the call to Timothy with which chapter 2 opens.

“Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men, such as shall be able to teach others also” (ver. 1, 2).

There only is the source of all real strengthening of the soul from God— “the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” The apostle's presence and teaching wrought invaluably for the blessing of saints; but he could tell the dear Philippians, “even as ye always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” At all events, whatever might disappear of the highest authorities or of the lower dependent on their appointment, God was there abidingly to work in the saints both to will and to work according to, or for, His good pleasure. And as the saints in Philippi give us the proof of the power of the grace in Christ to keep and strengthen to all obedience, so the turning away from him that called them in the grace of Christ, unto a different gospel which is not another found its sad but sure warning in the Galatians. They were equally as the Philippians the fruit of the apostle's labor, and in spite of the infirmity in which Paul at the first preached to them; no small trial to him or them, instead of slighting or spurning received him as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. Now so weakened were they by the legal zeal of those who desired to shut them out from the apostle that he needed to ask, if he, for whom they would have plucked out if possible their own eyes and given them to him—if he was become their enemy in speaking the truth to them. It is good, he adds gravely, to be zealously sought in a good thing at all times, and not only when I am present with you.

This then is the secret at all times and under every change of circumstance; but it is most appropriately urged on a confidential fellow-laborer of timid character and not of the highest rank, when the apostle had in full view the ruin of the church's testimony and his own speedy departure. None need wonder at the emphatic terms in which he exhorts his child to draw on the rich and ever-flowing stream. Faith in the grace of Christ alone drinks freely and has within that living fountain springing up to eternal life; faith in Him, Who is now glorified, alone has rivers of living water flowing out from within. Whatever the want, His fullness is the same, undiminished, accessible, and free; whatever the danger, He has overcome the world and the devil, He Who suffered for us, yea, for our sins once for all, and He knows all and has all power and authority Who hears our every appeal and loves ourselves unchangingly. Timothy needed this grace to strengthen him. It is revealed to us and as true for us who need it no less in our place. It is equally open to us and sure for us. Oh! that we may look to Him confidingly in our wants for ourselves and for others.

But there is more than encouraging ourselves in the Lord when distress abounds and difficulties press and dangers impend or affright. If the truth in Christ is needed to deal with and quicken dead souls, no less is it requisite and valid for the saints. Here it is a question of farming and furnishing

those who are to instruct others. We must distinguish the uses of divine revelation. The word of God is the standard of truth: nothing else is or can be such a test, and in its wondrous fullness, not one word of which is in vain there is the special touchstone of Jesus Christ come in the flesh, Whom the Holy Spirit always leads a true witness to con fess, as the spirit of error ever shirks or denies. But in a general way we may say that the apostolic deposit puts faith or unbelief to the proof. A Jew now would own perhaps, sincerely all the ancient oracles called the O.T. Is he therefore a believer? Assuredly not, because he does not hear, he rejects, the apostles (1 John 4:6). Ye are of God, says the beloved disciple to the little children, the actual family of faith, and have overcome the many false prophets that are gone out into the world or the evil spirit animating each: because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they [as] of the world, and the world heareth them. But this does not finish what he lad to say and they to weigh and hold fast: We are of God; not “ye” only as born of Him, being begotten by the word of truth; but we as His inspired witnesses in communicating that truth which beyond all, tests souls since the rejection of Christ. He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth us not. Hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Here however it is the means of communicating the truth rather than the word acting or employed as a standard. As it is a question of edifying, there is no call for such trenchant and solemn appeal. Scripture is no doubt the fullest, most exact, and absolutely reliable means of conveying the mind of God; but His grace uses many other things from the nursery to the dying bed. Among these sound, competent, gracious and intelligent ministry has a capital place. And the apostle's present charge to his beloved associate is really with the view of providing for efficient service in this kind. No man on earth, we may presume, had enjoyed so largely as Timothy, the privilege of hearing the greatest of the apostles. Here he is admonished to bear in mind that what he had received was not for himself only but for others, and in order that the best results should be attained by grace, through such as had capacity to teach faithfully. In ministry or service of the word it is only fanaticism, not, faith, to deny the importance of competency; as we hear the Lord (Matt. 25) in the parable of His own dealing with His servants, giving talents, sovereignly indeed (to one five, to another two, to another one), yet to each according to his several ability. It is not that ability is gift, or that the talents (His goods) are to be confounded, as in popular parlance and even in vain-glorious theology, with the several ability of each servant. Not only does every scripture that treats of the theme speak of “gifts” as wholly differing in source and character from any one's ability, but even in the parable, which learned ignorance regards as abounding in loose drapery, they are distinguished in the clearest way.

We have also to take note of another prevalent misconception of this verse. By many excellent and erudite persons the apostle is supposed here to lay on Timothy the responsibility of ordaining to ecclesiastical office. Now of this there is absolutely nothing said. 1 Tim. 3 does present the qualities requisite for an overseer, or bishop; and undoubtedly the bishop must be apt to teach (διδακτικ■ς, though not necessarily a διδασκαλ■ς, or teacher). But ruling was characteristically their duty; and so it is said in 1 Tim. 5:17, Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those that labor in the word and teaching. The fallacy is that others might and did not teach who were not elders; which is at direct issue with the facts, words, and principles of the New Testament on this head. Not an expression in our ver. 2 enunciates eldership or implies it. The full meaning of the whole and of every part is satisfied by not going beyond faithful men

instructed by Timothy as the apostle directs, so that they might be competent to teach others also.

Let us weigh a little the nice phraseology of the apostle that we may the better appreciate its wisdom as well as consistency with the truth revealed elsewhere. The apostle had kept back nothing that was profitable from so confidential a companion. He had nearly accomplished his course and the ministry which he received from the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. He shrank not from declaring to others not so near nor honored as Timothy the whole counsel of God. So here the things which Timothy had heard from him among many witnesses, these he was to commit to faithful men. As the matter testified was not done in a corner, so the apostle had openly brought out the precious truth in the presence of many witnesses. The Lord had already pointed out that men do not put a light in secret, nor under the corn-measure, nor under the bed; the apostle was an unwearied and whole-hearted witness for Christ unto all men of what he had seen and heard, yea and of the things wherein the Lord was to appear to him. And the “many witnesses” among whom Timothy had heard these things from Paul would not only encourage to the greater spread of the truth but confirm the communications made. For here not inspiration is predicated of the many witnesses, but exact information in order to the confirmation and propagation of the truth. If Christ is the true Light, His own also are the light of the world. To be the salt of the earth is not enough, however good: activity in grace is called for, light diffusing itself and dispelling darkness. For this suited vessels are requisite; not learned, nor even educated, but “faithful men.” To them was Timothy to entrust what was revealed of God, in order to build souls up and give them an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. Nor is it assumed as a simple fact that faithful men are necessarily men who are able to teach. It is rather “such as” shall be competent to teach others also. All is as simple as beautifully precise.

On 2 Timothy 2:3-6

The apostle now resumes what is rather personal than relative, though he gradually enlarges into what is comprehensive as well as of the deepest importance for the servants of Christ.

“Take thy share of suffering hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one on service entangleth himself with the businesses of life, that he may please him that enlisted [him]. But if one also contend [in the games], he is not crowned unless he have contended lawfully. The laboring husbandman must first partake of the fruits” (ver. 3-6).

It will be noticed that the words “thou therefore” disappear. They were in all probability an importation, perhaps inadvertently, from verse 1, where the emphasis is of intention and moment. Here such an emphasis is not only uncalled for but would be improper. The timid sensitiveness of Timothy wanted the personal appeal to cast him upon the grace in Christ Jesus for inward strengthening; and this very especially in communicating the truth to faithful men such as should be qualified to teach others also. This is ever a delicate task; and one that demands much moral courage and tact which His grace alone can supply, let the competency be what it may. It was therefore emphatically to Timothy.

Here too, but without any such prominency, Timothy is exhorted to take his share in suffering hardship, but not “with me” as many understand besides the Revised Version. Really it narrows and spoils the force. The Greek warrants only the general thought of sharing ill with his comrades, Paul or any other. It is left purposely large. This association is lost by the false reading of the received text, followed by the Authorized version, as already alluded to. Not personal emphasis but general share is the thought rather than with Paul in particular. Nor does the particular passage in chapter 1:8 warrant “with me,” but expressly “with the gospel” which is personified by the great apostle. There is the difference however that our verse does not express with whom he was called to share affliction, nor should we supply it. The construction evidently differs from that in the preceding chapter and the sense is best left in the vague of the original.

But Timothy's share of suffering is defined. It was to be as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. The “fellow-soldier” of the Clermont M.S. goes too far, if it be not also irreverent. In an enemy's land who could wonder that Timothy was called to take his share in suffering?

This naturally leads to the more generally applied figure of verse 4. “No one when on campaign entangleth himself in the businesses of life that he may please him that enrolled him.” The force of the allusion is as evident as its universal truth. Who in the Roman empire was ignorant of the fact? No doubt furlough might allow of relaxation, and completed service, of perfect liberty; but to Christ's servant here below is no furlough and no discharge from his duty. Hence the apostle does not speak simply of a “man that warreth” as in the Authorized Version, but of one on actual service, and therefore can stamp the truth with an absolute negative. “No one when serving entangleth himself with the affairs (or businesses) of life.” It is surprising that the Revised Version follows the Authorized alone of all the English versions in the needless qualification of “this life.” It

is the more improper, because Scripture had already appropriated the demonstrative pronoun not to β■ος but to ζω■, in Acts 5:20. It would however be a gross error to think that this for the servant of Christ excludes occupation, if he judge under any circumstances that he is called to provide things honest with his hands or his head. The apostle himself is its best refutation. The workman whether in the gospel or in the church is worthy of his hire. But many a valued man may serve Christ either way or in both, who does not give up his so-called secular employment. He might be assured even that the measure of his gift did not create such a claim on the assembly as to warrant it. And even the greatest of laborers felt it his joy and would not have his boast made vain in declining to use his power in the gospel for himself: so penetrated and filled was he with the spirit of that grace in God which is the source of the gospel itself. To entangle oneself in the businesses of life means really to give up separation from the world by taking one's part in outward affairs as a bona-fide partner in it. The servant of Christ is bound whatever he does to do it unto the Lord and therefore in conformity with His word. In everything he serves the Lord Christ; nor is this bondage of the law but liberty in the Spirit, though he be the Lord's bondman. As the soldier on campaign has to please him that enrolled his name, so evermore has the Christian servant to please the Lord. He Himself has said, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

But there is a second illustration of great moment. “And if also one contend in the games, he is not crowned unless he have contended lawfully.” What can be conceived more needed or weightier in practice? The servant of Christ is called to be as careful as an athlete; but if so, he is bound to observe the revealed will of the Lord, no less rigorously than those who took their part in the games of Greece. General fidelity ought never to be sought or allowed as a cover for delinquency. Nor can the highest excellence in the highest objects excuse a departure even in small things from truth or righteousness; as he who infringed in any way the law of the games was therefore excluded from the chaplet of victory.

There is a third maxim which has been singularly misunderstood by truly spiritual minds. Yet the structure of the sentence is not really obscure. The difficulty is due rather to a certain prejudice as to the sense or its application. The figure is taken from agriculture, not from military service nor from the well-known games. The stress is on the “laboring husbandman.” The love of Christ must constrain and brotherly love must continue, in order that the servant of Christ persevere unintermittingly in his labors. Hence we find in the former epistle (chap. 5:17) that, while the elders that rule well were to be counted worthy of double honor, those are distinguished “especially” that labor in the word and in teaching. So here, where the general service of Christ is in question, the laboring husbandman ought first to partake of the fruits. Impossible that God could deign to be a debtor to any. “Each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor,” whether the planter or the waterer or any other (1 Corinthians For God is not unrighteous in any case to forget our work and the love shown to His name. But the labor of love has especial value in His sight. This may be in very young saints (1 Thess. 1), no less than the work of faith and the patience of hope. It is most blessed where the servant of Christ is sustained in such labor. “The laboring husbandman ought first (whatever others may, and before all) to partake of the fruits.” It is rather a truism that he must labor before partaking of the fruits, or “laboring first must be partaker of the fruits” as the margin of the Authorized Version says. But this is not the sense of the phrase in any grammatical construction of it possible, nor, if it were, could it afford so grave or so cheering a call to the laborer.

Thus in the three maxims of ver. 4-6 we have first the object or starting-point; then the ways or means guarded, as well as the end; and lastly encouragement along the road for him who labors in love, as faith does.

On 2 Timothy 2:7-13

The bearing of that which the apostle had just inculcated was of deep meaning and great value, but by no means obvious. Hence it would appear he adds, “Apprehend what I say; for the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things” (ver. 7). Such is the true text, not “the things which” (5) in detail, as the Text Rec., but “what” (5) as a whole. This makes all the more pertinent the assurance, not prayer merely, which follows, “And the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things,” as large in its range as minute in its ramifications. On this he can count who has an unction from the Holy One; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

“Remember Jesus Christ raised out of the dead, of David's seed, according to my gospel, in which I suffer unto bonds as an evil-doer: but the word of God is not bound. For this cause I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation, that [is] in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Faithful [is] the word: for if we died together with [Him], we shall also live together; if we endure, we shall also reign together; if we shall deny [Him], He also will deny us; if we are unfaithful, He abideth faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.” (ver. 8-13.)

The apostle in these verses recalls to the person of Christ, the touch-stone, and substance of the truth, but His person according to Paul's gospel bound up indissolubly with His work. “Remember Jesus Christ, of David's seed, raised out of the dead according to my gospel.” Christ is at once the object and the fulfillment of the promises; but He is incalculably more. He is raised from among the dead, the Beginning, the First-born of the new creation. He is as thus risen the head of an entirely new system. From first to last this is the teaching of Paul. He affirms of Jesus, the Son of God, that He was born of David's seed according to the flesh, but that He was marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of dead men, as in the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans.

But here is there not a practical rather than a dogmatic aim before the Spirit of God? Even as Messiah, the Lord Jesus must be risen from the dead. If any one was entitled to earthly honor and glory, it was the Son of David; but, according to Paul's gospel, He passes through death into resurrection. Such is the only mold of blessing, the world and man being as they are. No statement can be stronger. As Head of the church there would be no wonder; but for the Seed of David, it is surprising, yet most true. For the church itself has no existence, save on the ground of His being the Risen Head, and in heavenly places. In heaven only could the Head be, in order to give a heavenly character to those who are united to Him by the Holy Ghost on earth. But Paul's gospel insists on the great fact of resurrection from among the dead—even for the Messiah. And this alone is true of Him, in that character now He is risen, but not reigning. Much less is the Christian reigning as yet. On the contrary, after that gospel the apostle says, “I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor.” Things in the world are wholly out of course. Nothing is settled in order according to God, though His providence governs, and every soul is called to be subject to the powers that be. They may reign, and we are commanded to honor the king, habitually, as indeed to honor all men passingly; but we are called to forego all thought of honor now for ourselves. We are called to

the communion of Christ: it is our proper honor to share in our measure what the apostle suffered so largely. All thought of present ease, of establishment here below, of a constitution settled and stable in the sight of men, violates the truth before us, as indeed every other presentation of it to the saint now, or to the church as a whole. He that had most of true honor as a Christian in the gospel, declares that he suffers as a malefactor unto bonds.

In plain contrast with this, we read of the Corinthian saints reigning without the apostle, who speaks there also of God's setting forth “us the apostles,” last of all, as men doomed to death. Christ knew the death of the cross as none ever did or could; and Paul was yet to know death, as His faithful martyr. All for him was true. With the Corinthians alas! how much was false. They had slipped in heart from sharing His rejection. Indeed as yet they had scarcely known it. They had received Christ for eternal life and redemption; they knew nothing as yet of dying daily.

So here the apostle solemnly anticipates the danger, for Christians generally, of settling down here below. This is incomparably more serious. Levity of thought and feeling, the power of nature, the activity of the flesh, may be sad in young saints; but immeasurably worse is it, when old saints depart from the high and heavenly standard they have learned. Such was the danger now, and the apostle is here awakening Timothy to his own anxiety about it. We see the evil in a gross form when the Christian body acquired power and honor, and earthly glory, in the days of Constantine and his successors; but the mischief was at work extensively, it would appear from this epistle, at the time the apostle was writing. The power of the resurrection from among the dead meets the evil for all that have ears to hear. It is wholly past as a living thing for those who accept earthly grandeur as a right estate for the Christian now. He who is most right before God, must be content to suffer most before men, as the apostle was seen doing unto bonds.

But suffering wrongfully, even unto bonds as a malefactor, did not hinder blessing. “The word of God is not bound.” On the contrary, such circumstances attract fresh notice. A class wholly new have their attention drawn to the revelation of God. The name of the Lord comes before magistrates, officials of the law, soldiers, seamen, governors, and perhaps even crowned heads. It may be the world's shame that so it should be, but rejection is the path of the Christian, the true glory of the church, till Jesus reigns. The preacher himself may be a prisoner; “but the word of God is not bound.”

“Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain salvation, that [is] in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.” Here was a most dauntless heart, and the eye undimmed, by present sorrow, for it was single, and his whole body full of light. If Christ loved the elect—Christ who suffered for their sins, Paul could use language boldly, yet truly, for He shared His love, though it was Christ's alone to “bear our sins in His own body on the tree.” No man, no saint, no apostle, shares that atoning work; yet it is not presumption for the feeblest saint to suffer with Him, any more than to hope for glorification with Him. If we are 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, But the apostle goes farther here; “I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain salvation that [is] in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.” How few would venture to say these words as their own souls' experience from that day to this! Nevertheless we may earnestly desire it in our measure; but it supposes in the believer not merely a good conscience, and a heart burning in love, but himself thoroughly self-judged, and Christ dwelling in his heart by faith. The apostle

openly declares it to Timothy; and surely it was meant to act powerfully on his fellow-laborer's soul, as also on ours. It is not that the salvation of the elect is uncertain: the Lord Jesus will surely guard that according to all His gracious power, and the unfailing counsels of God. But as another apostle says, If the righteous is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and sinner appear? It is indeed with difficulty that the elect are saved, though saved they assuredly will be; but as it needs all the resources of divine grace, so it calls for all the love of Christ in laborious service, and, what is also most effective, it hails the endurance of all things for their sake.

Nor is this all that the apostle has to urge on this theme. “Faithful is the word; for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign together.” He does not add as to this word worthy of all acceptation “; for it is a saying for saints rather than for sinners as such; but the saying, beyond a doubt, is faithful; for “if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.” There is no Christian who died not with Christ: It is the very truth which every baptized soul confesses in his baptism, even were he dumb. And it is lack of faith, not lack of speech, which makes it untrue of any.

Accordingly the apostle is urging, not what is beyond almost any to say, lest it might be presumptuous and vain, but what all that are true must join as the confession of grace and truth from the starting point. It is the hypothetical clause, which is decisive, yet no Christians ought to shrink, or can truly shrink, from it; for Christ it was Who, having suffered all, gave all freely. And “if we died with Him,” which is indisputable for the believer now, “we shall also live with Him.” It is of the bright and blessed future he here assures us, though it is equally true that we live now because He lives, or, as it is vat elsewhere, Christ lives in us. But here the living with Him remains before us as a hope. Here, and now, we are to bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus; by and by it will be nothing but living with Him. So, “if we endure, we shall also reign together.” Here need be no question, it is suffering now, not yet reigning with Him. The reading in some ancient authorities of Rev. 5 or 20 (that the saints reign now) is unequivocal error. It is wrong morally as well as dogmatically. We shall reign with Christ; but even He sits on the Father's throne as yet. He waits to receive His own throne; and so do we much more. Were our hearts right, we should not wish to reign without Him; as we should have a sounder faith, if we held, that He is not reigning yet, but gone to receive a kingdom, and to return. He will come in His kingdom, which He has not yet received. Till then we are called to endure, not to reign; when He shall appear, we shall appear with Him; when He reigns, so shall we with Him. But there is solemn caution, as well as sure expectation of glory. “If we shall deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are faithless, He Abideth faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.” There was danger in a day of declension particularly, of departure not only from this or that divine principle but from Himself, and this permanently. Nor does the apostle bolster up the saints in that most dangerous of delusions, that there is no danger. For dangers abound on all sides; and we ought to know that grievous times were to come in the last times. Denying the Lord, so far from being impossible for a servant of His, is exactly what scripture shows us to have been the fact in one most honored, who had thought that for him, of all men, it was impossible; yet was he on the eve of it. No doubt this was but a passing act, however shameful and deplorable, however repeated then, and with aggravation; yet the all-overcoming, all-forgiving, grace of Christ rose above and effaced it, turning it even to never-to-be-forgotten profit, and fruitful blessing. But where it is a course of life, as here, (“if we shall,” not merely if we should as an act), the consequence is, as it ought to be, the necessary vindication on God's part of

His injured majesty: “He also will deny us.” God would cease to be God, if He acquiesced in the dishonor of His Son. The believer bows and believes, adores and serves. The unbeliever, and the denier if possible yet more, may insult now, but they must ere long honor Him in judgment, “that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father.” There is a closing sentence of great weight, “if we are unfaithful, He abideth faithful;” and this for the most convincing and glorious of reasons, “for He cannot deny Himself.” It may at first hearing seem to take from the ease and flow of the sentence to read “for,” as we ought on good and ancient authority. But on reflection it really adds not a little, to its force because it is not a mere independent addition to confirm the foregoing: the ground or proof of His abiding fidelity lies in the blessed fact of His unchanging truth.

Chapter 12

On 2 Timothy 2:14-18

Now he turns to another class of dangers, not so common, but rising from verbal disputes to profanity and impious daring and corruption of fundamental truth. Some shrink from the least consideration of such snares; but nothing is gained by shrinking from what we ought to face, if our delight be in what is holy, good, and true, instead of curiously prying into evil. It is the light which makes everything manifest; and light we are in the Lord. It is the congenial element of the new man, as love is its activity.

“Of these things put in remembrance, testifying earnestly before the Lord that they fight not about words, to no profit, for subversion of those that hear. Be diligent to present thyself approved to God, a workman not to be ashamed, cutting straightly the word of truth. But shun profane babblings, for they will advance unto greater ungodliness, and their word will eat up as a gangrene: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, [men] who concerning the truth went astray, saying that the resurrection hath already taken place, and overthrow the faith of some” (ver. 14-18)

Here Timothy is called not to understand merely, but to put others in remembrance of the great vital truths the apostle has laid down. He is also charged in the sight of the Lord, to warn against word-fights, profitable for nothing, and calculated to subvert the hearers. This is a most wholesome caution needed widely and in all ages. There are real differences even among Christians, more or less serious in disguising or perverting the truth. But those who value the truth, especially if there be no aggressive zeal, are particularly apt to fall into distinctions without a difference. Zeal of this sort makes them doughty word-warriors. How true that this is useful for nothing, while it is readily available for subverting those who hear! For the word-warrior knows when to stop, the simple who hear pass on and are punished. There is much vanity, and little, if any, sincerity in such disputes; they tend not to edification, but to real and very grave mischief. The charge to Timothy is no less a duty for those who have moral influence in the assembly and seek the Lord's glory there at any time.

But there is also a more positive call in ver. 15: “Be diligent to present thyself approved to God a workman not to be ashamed, cutting straightly the word of truth.” Example sways more than precept, and those who teach others have especial reason to dread failure or carelessness in themselves. Further every pious man knows that the first of all obligations is to stand right with God. Timothy therefore was to use diligence to present himself approved to God in the first instance. Where this is not true, his words might be right enough in themselves, but his work would lack blessing, and himself be ever liable to shame. In fact his course would be more or less hypocritical. There could be no courage before the enemy, where the conscience was not good before God. One must seek to be approved alike in conduct and service, approved to God if shame is to be avoided even now. Again, what confidence can there be in drawing out and applying the word of truth with an unwavering heart and hand? The scripture needed might otherwise condemn oneself. A man without conscience might sneak out boldly: he that feared God must tremble in blaming another for a wrong which he knew in himself. It is of all importance

therefore, that the workman should present himself approved to God: otherwise his testimony cannot but be timid, feeble, and uncertain. But there may be a further duty as regards the profane babblings of pretentious men, never so self-satisfied as when they err most. This evil had already set in, as the article appears to show. They were not unknown but existing follies among those who bore the name, of the Lord. Timothy was not called to occupy himself, still less to controversy, with them. The apostle's word is “avoid” or shun. This again is an exhortation of divine wisdom. Some conscious of ability to dissect and oppose evil, are prone to meddle with these vain profanities. It is not wholesome for themselves; it may injure the saints, who valuing the laborers may saturate their minds with these dreary efforts, which as a general rule inflate instead of convincing the guilty parties. To Titus (3: 9) a very similar exhortation is given by our apostle for an analogous evil. Time is too precious save for that which edifies; and he who undertakes to contend with every evil dreamer may succeed in vanquishing them, but is in imminent danger of getting serious harm to himself. It is a good thing to be zealously affected in good always; it is not well to turn aside and deal with evil, unless it be the sternest duty.

The apostle adds another reason in this case, “For they will advance unto a greater degree of impiety, and their word will eat up as a gangrene.” This statement clearly proves the uselessness of meddling with what is not only vain but profane. There was no fear of God in those who so indulged, and the fear of God is the beginning of all that is good for fallen man. Till conscience is reached, it is useless to expect that the precious revelations of God will not be misused; and this is especially true of such as profess to believe the gospel. Guilty of profanity they need not arguments but repentance. Nor was anything more likely to touch their conscience than that so gentle and gracious a laborer as Timothy should avoid their words. They will advance to further ungodliness, “and their words will eat up as a gangrene.” Discussion would rather flatter their self-importance, and could not possibly stay so destructive an evil.

Again the apostle points out that this frightful evil in the bosom of the saints once, if not any longer, was no imaginary evil to haunt souls, but a fact for salutary fear and horror. “Of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, who as to the truth went astray,” or literally missed the mark, saying that “the resurrection had taken place already, and overthrow the faith of some.”

It is of deep interest to weigh the character of this error. It was not ignorance of the truth so much as exaggeration. It was the exalting of present privilege to the denial of our hope at Christ's coming. No doubt they piqued themselves on higher truth than others taught, and on superior intelligence. This is an extreme danger for those who have a real thirst and value for the truth of God; if not watchful, they are the most liable to be ensnared.

But the remedy is simple and sure when men cry up their wares as above all precious, and therefore depreciate the tried and faithful servants of the Lord, as teaching, on altogether lower ground. The saints will find it invaluable to cleave to the truth they have always received since they knew God, or rather were known of Him. These pretentious claims, will sooner or later prove subversive of foundation truth and plain duty. The saints may not be able quickly to discern the worthless or evil character of what vaunts itself; but they do know the treasure they already possess, of which these new views would deprive them. They have only to hold fast the faith, the common faith, which the high teachers despised; and as they thus resist the devil, he will flee from them.

But those by grace endowed with a more discerning eye are permitted to see more. That the resurrection is past already, though put forth as the expression of the highest present privilege, does in fact undermine the truth set forth pre-eminently for help and guidance throughout this Epistle. God saved us with a holy calling according to His own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before time began. Christ annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruption by the gospel. This we believe and know, not to speak of the mystery of Christ and of the assembly. But those true and blessed privileges are given us, so much the more to suffer with joy and endure in faith and patience now, and wait for Christ and His appearing to bring in His kingdom, where we shall also reign together. But the error of the resurrection already past is fatal to this endurance meanwhile. It would, if true, entitle us now to reign as kings, to take our ease, to enjoy present honor and glory; and thus it is directly framed and calculated by the enemy to thwart the will of our Lord, Who calls us to share His sufferings till we are glorified together. Hence it is false as a doctrine, it is ruinous for practice, and it destroys all communion with Christ, as sharing His affections in separation from the world. It would be hardly possible to discover any delusion more opposed to the truth in its character and consequences for the soul and the walk, as well as in counteraction of the moral glory of the Lord. Well can we understand therefore that its teachers “overthrow the faith of some.” And if then it were so, how much more widely extended and settled do we find the mischief now, when Christ's coming is no longer before the saints as a constant living hope, and the resurrection of the body is practically nothing to them, satisfied that after death their souls go to heaven! The world becomes then a scene of present enjoyment. Association with a once dead and rejected Christ is unthought of. They flatter themselves that they have attained to a wisdom higher than was known by the apostles in these earlier days, now that they have learned to enjoy the best of both worlds.

On 2 Timothy 2:19-22

The truth cannot be undermined without the most withering consequences, both morally and ecclesiastically. It: is not only communion interrupted between Christ and His own, but divergence from and opposition to His mind, more or less distinctly. Those who undermine may be of course themselves deceived; they may flatter themselves as contributing a higher testimony. But truth is never at issue with truth: in Christ all is in harmony. To say that the resurrection is past already, is both the index of the grave heterodoxy at work destructive of our proper hope, while professing to give advance of privilege, and the ready instrument of deep and rapid progress in evil. For when the resurrection comes; no more need of watching unto prayer, no more endurance of affliction, no more the good fight of faith: all will be settled in power, glory, rest, and enjoyment. That we are dead and risen with Christ is true and holy, and cannot be too urgently pressed on the believer, from first to last of his career; but we, groaning within ourselves, as having the first-fruits of the Spirit, await the adoption, the redemption of our body. It will only be at Christ's coming, which the enemy would also conceal and rob us of, the most influential of all hopes for such as love Him and would know the fellowship of His sufferings. How crafty and pernicious then the device which, turning our hope into an expression of high privilege now, would thus annul our heavenly hope, destroy communion and walk, hide Christ from our heart's longing, and make rest in present things a wise and right thing!

Such was the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus: profane babblings truly, and sure to proceed farther in ungodliness, and a very gangrene in its devouring corruption. It is the overthrow of faith wherever it is accepted.

“Nevertheless the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth those that are His; and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness. Now in a great house there are vessels not only of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earthenware, and some unto honor, and some unto dishonor. If one therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, serviceable for the master, prepared unto every good work. But flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (ver. 19-22).

It may be well that the reader should know how much speculation has wrought about “the foundation of God.” Some have conjectured that it is the doctrine of the resurrection, others the promises, some again election. Further, it has been supposed to be the church, or again, with better reason, Christ Himself. But there seems no sufficient ground for defining the foundation in this place. if the Holy Spirit has left it general, why should any seek to limit the thought? The object clearly is to mark what abides firm and of God, in the midst of confusion and ruin; and to use that immutable foundation for the comfort and good courage of, all who desire to, do His will. Doctrines, promises, election, are out of the question; and the ‘church,' or the believer, is rather that for which provision is made in the midst of the existing disorder. On the face of it the house cannot be the foundation; and it seems unreasonable to argue that Christ Himself should be said to have this

seal: “The Lord knoweth them that are His;” and “Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”

Nothing more simple or important if the firm foundation of God be taken, in the abstract; those who stand upon it are on the one side comforted, on the other solemnly admonished. The state of things was such that one could no longer suppose all who composed the church to be members of Christ's body. Carelessness had allowed a harvest of weakness and shame; the godly were compelled to fall back on the assurance that the Lord knoweth them that are His, but along with that they could not but press Christian responsibility— “Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”

It will be noticed that here it is no question of “Christ,” but of “the Lord.” “Christ” is the proper expression where grace known and enjoyed is before the heart; “the Lord” as properly comes into use where profession and responsibility hold good. Even if there be no real communion, there can be no doubt that such is the case in the clause before us; and such is the reading of the best and most ancient authorities followed by all modern critics, even though they may have no notion of the difference in the truth intended.

There is, however, a great deal more, and of paramount importance, in that which the apostle adds, “'But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earthenware, and some unto honor, and some unto dishonor.” There we have a living picture of what the church was becoming. How different from the view given in the First Epistle 3:15! There the house of God is said to be the church of the living God, the pillar and stay of the truth. It is the church on earth, God's habitation in the Spirit, as that which alone here below presents and maintains the truth before all men. The Jews had not the truth, but the law; the Gentiles had only vanities, and corruptions, and dreams of men. The assembly of the living God held forth the truth before all eyes. But now, in the Second Epistle, the influx, not only of ease, instead of suffering, and of timidity, instead of courage, and of false doctrines, even in fundamentals, gave occasion for the Spirit of God to represent a far different condition. It is not that the Spirit of God has abandoned His seat, but He no longer characterizes the house as that of the living God. It may assume a greater appearance but there is far more unreality. “In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earthenware.” Long before the apostle (1 Cor. 3:5) had prepared us for that which might be built even upon Christ Himself. Who among even true servants is like Paul, a wise master-builder? Every one therefore should take heed how he builds thereon. One might build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones; another, on the contrary, might build upon it wood, hay, stubble too many, a mixture of both. And the day shall declare as the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. That which abides is proved to be acceptable to God; that which cannot stand the fire will be so far loss to the workman, even though he himself shall be saved. Here in the second Epistle to Timothy the apostle is looking not at the process but at the result. In a great house there are not only precious vessels but the commonest, “and some unto honor, and some unto dishonor.” God's house therefore is here regarded as reduced to a human comparison. It was becoming just like what we find among men on the earth, it has no longer that exclusively divine stamp which one used to expect in God's house. Failure in many ways has vitiated the testimony; and the result is that mixture which is so abhorrent to God and to those who love His will and Himself.

What is to be done then? Are we to accept His dishonor, and to lie down in despair? Or must one be bound hand or foot to unity, and shut one's eyes to all the sin and shame? A lowly-minded saint would feel bitterly the dilemma, and could not satisfy his soul by verbal protests against the evil he was sanctioning by his actual life and ways. In such a state it is well to humble one's self, and like Daniel to confess the sins of all one is associated with, as well as one's own sins. But is this all? Thank God, it is not; the apostle immediately gives precise and authoritative direction. The most timid need not fear to follow; the heart most oppressed is entitled to be of good cheer; and those who cleave to the allowance of evil, under the plea of not breaking unity, are rebuked and confounded by the apostle's call, “If one therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, &c.”

When the assembly is in its normal condition, and an evil-doer, however gross, is among the saints, the word is, “'Put away from among yourselves the wicked person.” But here it is the converse. Evil may prevail in an assembly, and the moral sensibility be so low that the mass refuse to purge out the old leaven: the vessels unto dishonor have influence enough to remain in spite of all efforts for their removal. What then? The apostle commands that the God-fearing man should purge himself from them. This meets the conscience if it were of only one; but the self-same principle, it is plain, applies to all who discern the evil, after patient waiting on the assembly and every scriptural means also employed in vain to rouse the conscience. At bottom it is evidently the same principle of separation from evil, which in 1 Cor. 5 is applied to put the evil-doer out. In 2 Tim. 2 it is a far more developed case where the well-doer, having striven without effect to correct the evils sustained within, is bound to purge himself out. Impossible that the Spirit of God would seal evil under the name of the Lord Jesus. We are unleavened as surely as Christ our passover was sanctified for us. “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” The assembly which professes to be of God cannot bind Christ and known evil together. If any therefore hear the Lord's name, who, under the plea of unity, in the love of ease, or through partiality for their friends, tolerate the evil which scripture shows to be hateful to God, a godly man has no option, but is bound to hear the divine word and to purge himself from these vessels to dishonor.

Doubtless this application of God's immutable holiness to guide the saint in these sad and difficult circumstances is a novel one. The apostle only gave it in the last Epistle he ever wrote. The reason is manifest: no occasion as yet had risen to call for so serious a word. Disorders had often been, and some of extreme character; but hitherto the saints, however faulty, had broken down, and obedience at last had prevailed. No need had ever existed for a just abandonment of those who had walked together in the assembly. But here the Spirit of God brings before the apostle's eyes a new and still more appalling result of the increasing power of evil. Whenever vessels to dishonor are forced on our acceptance, we have no choice: the honor of the Lord is above all other considerations; and, whether it be the most valiant, or the most timid, we are alike called to obey the apostle's command which applies to this state. Let us only be sure that the evil does really call for absolute separation; and, further, that patient and godly remonstrance are duly applied to get the evil judged, rather than to separate. But if it be sheltered and sustained to the dishonor of the Lord and His word, there is no alternative but to purge one's self out.

In these circumstances to give up conscience is in effect to give up God and His Christ; humbly but firmly to purge one's self from the vessels of dishonor is to be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, serviceable for the Master, prepared unto every good work. So it is ever found in experience: godly separation costs much but gains more. He that separates lightly for a mere idea or reasons of his own, is but sounding brass, and gathers profit for neither himself nor anyone else; yea, he is a standing reproach against the Lord and His word where it truly applies. But the saint who purges himself out with the deepest pain to himself and godly sorrow for others, and the rather because he believes them to be the Lord's, enters into fresh blessing, and renews, as it were, all that is proper to a saint, with fresh power to his own soul. “He shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, serviceable for the Master, prepared unto every good work.” Such an assurance is the more comforting, because he must make up his mind for the keenest shafts from those he has left behind, as well as from all who confound easy indifference with love for the, church of God. Besides, he might dread a narrow circle for his affections, and a contracted sphere for his work. How gracious that the Lord should forestall all these apprehensions and give him the promise, if he have gone through the great trial with God, of enlargement of heart in all that is for His glory.

It may be noticed that there is no such thought as quitting the house, though some have fallen into the misconception in their zeal for holiness. But we could not, and would not, so long as we bear the Lord's name. An apostate no doubt has abandoned His name. But to purge one's self from vessels to dishonor is here laid down as a positive duty, and, so far from being presumption, is simple obedience to the word of the Lord if done rightly: It is therefore the path of true and divinely given humility, whatever be the terrorism sought to be exercised by those who seek dominion over the faith of the saints. Purging one's self from evil-doers within the house is not to leave the house, but to walk there as one ought according to scripture:

So it was at the Reformation. Luther, Calvin, Zwingle, Crammer, did not leave the house of God when they rejected the mass, the worship of the saints, the authority of the pope, and other evil doctrines and practices. On the contrary, they were learning, however slowly and imperfectly to renounce what disfigured that house, and was most antagonistic to Him Who dwelt there. It was only the gross bigoted ignorance of Romanists which taxed them with leaving the house of God. The papal party assumed, as other pretenders are apt to do, that they exclusively form that house; whereas, as far as the Reformation went, the godly among the Protestants sought to purge themselves from vessels to dishonor, while the Romanists clave only the more pertinaciously to the evil, and thus became increasingly guilty. But both were in the house all the same; only some more acceptably to God, others more offensively, than before.

The principle applies no less when the godly amongst Protestants, and Romanists began to discern the true character of the church, and the wrong done by prevalent error and evil practice, not merely to the members, but to the Head of the body. This led, through a better knowledge of the written word, to the distinct conviction of the injured rights of the Holy Ghost in the assembly as well as in ministry. And those who were thus taught of God clearly saw that they must carry out the truth in faith practically, and so seek to glorify the Lord. It were wretched and ungrateful to grieve the Spirit by treating all they had learned as mere ideas for discussion or criticism of existing thoughts and ways. But by thus acting faithfully as far as they knew, did they thereby leave the house? The very reverse; they were only striving, in deference to scripture and in dependence on the Lord, to behave themselves better in that house. Christendom is not given up by walking more

according to God's will in the true path for Christians, whether individually or corporately. And the self-same principle is no less valid at any time, no matter how truly gathered the saints may once have seen. Vessels to dishonor cannot enjoy Christ's sanction, and ought to be intolerable to the faithful. “If one purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel to honor.”

But the tendency is great to press this searching truth on others, and to claim, without saying so, an immunity for ourselves: so readily does the assembly slip away, from the faithfulness of the Lord when really leaned on, to set up a gradually growing plea of indefectibility. For faith degenerates into superstition the more rapidly as spirituality declines, love decays, knowledge becomes more self-complacent, and forms displace reality. A new and pettier Rome soon develops and is cried up as the only right thing. Yet the truth abides for the Spirit to use for Christ's glory, whenever the eye is, or is made, single. We are bound, if we would please Him, to sift ourselves by His word even more rigidly than others.

Nor does the apostle forget personal dangers when one might be pre-occupied with public evils. “But flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (ver. 22). It is of high moment, especially in the circumstances of clearing ourselves from what ensnares many a saint, and perhaps had ourselves too more or less in times past, that we should not give occasion to them that seek it. In vain do you testify against that which is ecclesiastically offensive to God, if you fail in conduct plainly enough to be seen by those virtually censured. Hence the care of Paul to urge earnestly on Timothy to beware of that which might hinder or trouble, and the rather then and thus. Lusts youthful must be shunned, not only worldly or carnal but “youthful,” such as impetuosity, self-confidence, levity, impatience, or the like. Nor is it enough to watch against what elders might chiefly resent: he was to pursue practical consistency or righteousness, to walk in faith, not mere human prudence or policy, to hold fast love, not selfish interests and to maintain peace, not allow strife or push for his own will.

But more; he is encouraged to do all this in personal association and mutual action with those that call on the Lord oat of a pure heart. I cannot agree with a German's suggestion (followed by Alford, Ellicott, &c.) to remove the comma after “peace,” so as to separate “with those that call,” &c. from the verb, and connect it only with the substantive immediately preceding. Heb. 12:14 has no real analogy with the clause; for to limit the pursuance of peace to those that so call on the Lord would give the poorest possible sense, as being such as presented the least strain. Not so: the faithful man, if he purged himself from vessels to dishonor, and walked in self-judgment and cultivation of ways pleasing to the Lord, is cheered with the prospect of companionship in his path. He need not fear isolation, as he loves the communion of saints. God will not fail to work in those whose hearts are cleansed by faith. Let him then pursue that path, not doubting but with good cheer. He will not be alone, he is to follow after the way that is acceptable to God, “with those that call on the Lord with a pure heart,” i.e. true-hearted saints, in contrast with the promoters or defenders of pravity in word or deed.

Thus is the will of the Lord made plain for a day of ruin. It is not for the faithful to abide in evil with empty protests, after the resources of patience are exhausted. It would be presumption in the face of scripture to stay in the vain hope of mending that which is publicly maintained and justified. The unmistakeable call of God is to purge one's self old, and, carefully watching against one's own dangers, to follow the path of righteousness, faith, love, peace, not in pride or carelessness of

isolation, but in the fellowship of the like-minded that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Chapter 14

On 2 Timothy 2:23-26

From instruction on a large scale so impressive and opportune from that time and ever after, the apostle returns to exhortations of a more personal kind which none the less abide in all their value.

“But foolish and ignorant questionings avoid, knowing that they beget contentions. And a bondman of [the] Lord must not contend, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness instructing those that oppose, if haply God may give them repentance unto acknowledgment of truth, and they may wake up out of the snare of the devil, taken as they are by him, for His will” (ver. 23-26).

Earlier disputes, as in Romans, were very different and far more respectable morally. For they arose chiefly from respect for O. T. revelation in souls long familiar with the habits formed by it, and more or less jealous of that liberty which the Gentiles had entered with joy from their debasing servitude to idols. But the Greek mind used to the frivolous discussions of philosophy, when not fully emancipated from mere intellectual activity, or not really kept in subjection to God's word, proved a fertile source of danger and evil, even if not beguiled by such heterodoxy as had been exposed in vers. 14-18. The grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ feeds the soul, lets in the bright light of God, draws out worship, and issues in fruitful ways of goodness and righteousness. Not so “the foolish and ignorant (or uninstructed) questionings,” which Timothy is here enjoined to eschew. Nor could any words characterize these debaters more truly in themselves, or more cuttingly for such as indulged in or admired this mischievous trifling in the things of God; just as infidels wince under the proofs of their irrationalism, and skeptics smart when their credulity is made manifest. The article is here apparent, though it cannot well stand in an idiomatic English version; it supposes the well-known custom of those alluded to, fruit of their will and self-confidence.

But the apostle appends a consequence greatly to be reprobated by one who loves the peace of the saints, and seeks their edification. Such questionings “beget contentions,” or fights. This is natural enough among men: human will breaks out in this way, yea takes pleasure in strife for the mastery. Whence come wars, and whence fightings among you, says James (iv.)? Is it not thence—from your pleasures which war in your members? At bottom, it is the spirit of the world at enmity with God. Among those that bear the Lord's name it is deplorable, a witness really against Him instead of to Him and of Him. Yet the very earnestness of conviction may expose to the danger, where Christ is not before the eye, and we hang not on His grace. Let us never forget that grace and truth came by Him, not one or other only, but both. If grace is a snare divorced from truth, truth fails to win apart from grace; it may even repel and harden: how much more the foolish and ignorant questionings which beget contention! They promote Satan's aims, not the interests of Christ.

“But,” further, “a bondman of the Lord must not contend [or fight], but be gentle towards all.” So the Lord had taught and practiced; and the disciple is not above his teacher, but every one that is perfected shall be as his teacher, and must expect, not return, similar ways in word and deed. But

are not some so trying as to deserve snubbing, at the least? He ought to be “gentle towards all;” for it is not a question of human disagreeables, but of presenting Christ duly. It is easy enough to wound or overthrow a man; but what if it grieves the Holy Spirit of God and dishonors Christ? Are we resolved to bear and to win in the irresistible might of, meekness?

Again, he is to be “apt to teach.” Many saints are dull of heart to receive fresh truth, and to distinguish things that differ. It is natural to censure, and for some even to ridicule. Aptness to teach supposes not ability in the word only, but love to the saints, and faith in the Lord Jesus who is served. This one has to cultivate; for the trials and the difficulties are enough to make one weary. The Lord before us encourages the heart. How much He has had to bear with in the most faithful!

“Forbearing” therefore most appropriately follows. For it is sad to think of the uppishness of some, of the ingratitude of others, not to speak of positive evil returned for good in the service of the saints. But is not the service of the Master well worth all trouble even now? And what unexpected blessing He gives by the way? And what joy and glory at His coming?

Accordingly it is well to seek grace that one be found “in meekness instructing those that oppose.” For none other was the path of Christ, and in this way only can one hope to correct those that set themselves as antagonists. This alone may disarm them; grace is pleased so to work. And the apostle puts this as a possible and desired contingency, “if haply God may give them repentance unto acknowledgment of truth.”

This last phrase occurs in the First Epistle (2:4) as in the Second more than once (3:7), and always in this anarthrous form. The reason is not that the preposition (ε■ς or any other) gives license to omit the article where otherwise it would be required, which is a most unreasonable and even a barbarous notion, though we all know laid down by Bp. Middleton in his able “Doctrine of the Greek article,” and endorsed by commentators so respectable as the late Dean Alford and Bp. Ellicott, to say nothing of one so loose on this as Winer. It is an error, notwithstanding, which every portion of the New Testament and Septuagint, and all Greek literature refute, as any scholar may discover by bringing a single chapter closely to the test. The omission of the article depends on a principle wholly independent of the preposition: only the absence of the Greek article in such a construction is more frequent than elsewhere, because prepositions are used very often where character is intended, rather than a definite object is set before the mind. Where the latter is meant with or without a preposition, the article must appear; where the aim is characteristic, it disappears; and such is the case in the phrase before us.

But it may be profitable to speak briefly of “repentance;” for it goes far more deeply than many think It is rather a moral question than a mental one, though no doubt there is a change of mind of the utmost gravity. But in repentance the soul is subject to God. His word judges, instead of being judged. There is therefore a moral revolution in the heart which takes God's side against itself, and condemns not only the acts of evil which rise before the conscience, but the entire ground, and state of being, which gave rise to them. Repentance, therefore, is as distinctly towards God, as faith is towards our Lord Jesus Christ, who is in fact exalted by God's right hand to give repentance as well as remission of sins. Acknowledgment of truth follows as the fruit of repentance, without which neither truth is divinely received, nor has its acknowledgment any value in God's sight. Life, eternal life, is from God, and in His Son.

This, then, the Lord's servant was to seek “in Meekness,” not setting down, which quick wit and stubborn will would naturally effect, but setting right, as grace loves to do, if it may be with those who oppose themselves; to get rid of persons, even though troublesome, does not occur to his patient mind Nevertheless such opposition is most serious; and the apostle lets us see this by that which he subjoins immediately, “and they may awake up out of the snare of the devil, taken captive as they are by him, for His will.”

This is a remarkably complicated sentence, and saints eminent in godliness and scholarship have understood it very differently. Thus the Authorized Version stands by no means alone in treating the words as referring only to the enemy; so the Syrr. and Vulgate, followed by Wiclif, Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Rhemish. The Revised Version on the other hand, with Wetstein, Bengel, Wakefield, and Mack, though slightly differing otherwise, supposes not one agent to be in question, but three, the devil, the Lord's servant, and God. Their version accordingly of ver. 26 is, “And they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him (the Lord's servant) unto the will of God.” In their margin they give that which appears to be the truer sense, “by the devil” (not the Lord's servant) unto the will of God; and so the Geneva V., Ellicott, Alford, Hammond, Wells, &c. The two pronouns in the Greek, being different, naturally, though not necessarily, point to two parties: but to bring in “the Lord's servant” here seems as forced as the reference to the enemy is simple and consistent, though Dr. Bloomfield, I see, thinks “so violent a construction is utterly inadmissible” So Beza prefers (in his note to the fourth edition, 1588), though he translated as others, lest he might seem somewhat bold in a matter so sacred, “ne videri possem in re tam sacra audaculus.” In his fifth edition, 1598, he corrects his translation thus, “et sanitate mentis recepta ex diaboli lupus:), ab eo captivi facti, convertantar ad Mins voluntatem.” All doubt henceforward disappears from his note.

Chapter 15

On 2 Timothy 3:1

The word disputes the profane babblings, with greater impiety in the vista, the heterodoxy of some who said that the resurrection had taken place already, the great house becoming more and more characterized by vessels to dishonor, which made separation from them imperative, the foolish and uninstructed questionings which begat contentions, and whatever betrayed the snare of the devil, gave occasion to the solemn announcement with which our chapter iii, opens— “But this know, that in [the] last days grievous times shall be there” (ver. 1). Let us weigh a little at length its import and bearing, as well as the general testimony of the N. T.; for as, on the one hand, no statement, can well be more at issue with the prevalent judgment of mankind, and even with the cherished expectations of God's children in our days, so, on the other hand, next to fundamental truth individual and corporate, the just and true estimate of what is going on, and how it is to end—whether in progress toward triumphant blessing, or in course of the most humiliating and guilty declension from God to meet His unsparing judgment—is most momentous. Nor does scripture leave the least solid ground for doubt on the question. The difference morally is complete; for it affects the habitual aim of our labor and testimony, as well as the character of our intercourse with God, whether in or out of communion with His mind. Faith in our Lord and His work is no doubt the essential thing; but a mistaken expectation damages the soul indefinitely in proportion to its influence. It is the hope of a man which mainly determines his practical life. He is what His heart is set on.

Now the scripture before us is most explicit. Difficult or grievous times were to set in not “perilous” merely, as in the Authorized and all the older English versions, as well as the Rhemish (faithful to the Vulgate). They are so characterized because of iniquity abounding under a fair Christian show, “a form of godliness,” with a real denial of its power. Can one conceive of a state more repugnant to Him who dwells in the assembly? or more pregnant with difficulty for a godly man to judge and act aright? He hates presumption, he seeks humility, he loves his brethren, he is bound to be faithful to Christ, and he cannot go on with evil, individual or collective. It is a strait of times truly for heart and conscience.

And this trying condition for the Christian is declared to ensue “in [the] last days.” Winer (Gr. Gr. N. T. xix.) attempted to account for the omission of the article as, usual, by setting it down as one of a most miscellaneous class of words which dispense with its insertion. One is surprised to see how easily men like Dean Alford and Bp. Ellicott are satisfied with an evasion so irrational and transparent. For that long list of words comes under the invariable principles of the language; and insertions of the article in each instance can be shown no less than omission; so that the statement of the case is not only partial, but misleading. The true solution is that Greek regularly, far more than English, exhibits the anarthrous form when the design is to designate a characteristic state rather than a positive fact, place, condition, person, or date. The article here would have made the period too restricted; its absence enlarges the sphere, as the Holy Spirit intended, who knew the end from the beginning. We in our tongue can hardly avoid saying, “The last days;” but the Greek could express himself more accurately than those who are compelled to

use the same expression for what may be less or more definite.

The phrase plainly covers the closing days of the Christian economy, however long God might be pleased to protract them; the time generally which precedes the coming of the Lord, when an end will be put to the present ways of God, and the kingdom will come in displayed power and glory. Waterland's suggestion of “at the end of the Jewish state” is as he puts it a mistake; for it is at the approaching end of the Christian profession, as well as of the Jewish. If the Jews believe not yet, Christians ought to be expecting the return of the kingdom to Israel in God's due time, when our Lord appears to receive the homage and blessing of the godly remnant, about to become thenceforth a strong as well as holy notion, His first-born son elect here below. But as there were incipient workings of the evil already apparent to Him who inspired Paul to write thus to Timothy, we can the better feel how much more correct is the anarthrous construction employed, than if the insertion had fixed it exclusively to the days immediately preceding our Lord's future advent.

In the preceding epistle (4:1-3) a prophetic warning had been given, but of evil quite distinct in time, character, and extent, from what we have here. Instead of “last days,” the Spirit spoke expressly of later, or after, times, i.e., times subsequent to the apostle's writing. Instead of a widespread condition of “men” in Christendom, he spoke of “some” only. The language suits and supposes but few comparatively; which only controversial zeal could have overlooked or converted into a prediction of the vast if not worse inroad of Romanism. It is a description of certain ones to depart from the faith into fleshly asceticism, paying heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons, in the hypocrisy of liars branded in their own conscience, forbidding to marry, [bidding] to abstain from meats which God created, &c. This was a high-flown abuse of grace to deny the creature, and to dislocate the God of grace from the God of creation and law; but the followers are carefully discriminated from the more daring and corrupt misleaders. Gnosticism is the real evil aimed at, even then beginning to work as we may gather from ch. 6:20, in the same communication to Timothy. But limited as it stands in the word, and as it became in fact, it discloses how the Spirit of God guards us, if we heed scripture, from anticipating victory for the gospel, how he rather prepares us for defection to God's dishonor.

But in 2 Tim. 3:1 it is a larger field, not of course to the exclusion of faithful and godly souls, where the eye traverses a general state of decadence from the power of grace and truth, where, as we shall see when we come to the scrutiny of details, those that bear the name of the Lord, and are therefore responsible to walk as dead unto sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord, return as a general description to what the Gentiles were before they heard and professed to believe the gospel. It is the counterpart of the great house in ch. 2, wherein are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also wooden and earthenware, and some to honor, and some to dishonor. Here we have, not a symbolic figure, but a plain matter-of-fact account of a return to heathenism practically. Even the Corinthians, low as they had sunk, are reproached by the apostle with carnality and walking “as men, instead of as children of God in the power of the Spirit who dwelt in them. Here those spoken of are “men,” with the guilt of indifference to, and repudiation of, all the savor of Christianity, while still retaining its form. From such, however little developed then, Timothy was called to turn away: how much more, when all is out in the full display of evil, should a faithful man turn away now?

Yet 2 Thess. 2 gives us to descry very far worse at hand. We ought not to be deceived in any manner, whatever the success of false teachers with some of the Thessalonian saints so young in the faith as they were. We know that the Lord is coming Who will gather us together, sleeping or alive, unto Himself, and therefore need not be quickly shaken in mind, not, yet troubled by any power or means, to the effect that the day of the Lord is present. We know that it cannot be unless there have come “the apostasy” first—not a falling away, as substantially all the well-known English Versions as well as the Authorized. It is not “discencioun” (Wiclif), nor “a departynge” (Tyndale), as Cranmer's Bible repeats in 1539, and the Geneva in 1557, nor “a revolt,” as in the Rhemish of 1582. It is “the apostasy,” and nothing else: worse there cannot be, unless the person who is its final head in direct antagonism to God and His anointed, the man of sin, the son of perdition, whom the Lord Jesus will consume with the Spirit of His mouth and destroy with the manifestation of His presence. “The apostasy” is a general state, though one is far from denying that there will be even then godly ones, some to suffer unto death, and acquire a heavenly degree, and others to escape for ulterior purposes of divine blessing and glory here below. But the apostasy means Christianity abandoned, and witness for God put down all but universally, in the sphere of Christian profession. Now this is the state, issuing in the boldest claim, ever to be made on earth, of Messianic place and divine glory, which immediately precedes the shining forth of the Lord Jesus from heaven, allotting vengeance to those who know not God (Gentiles), and to those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus (Jews).

Here we carry on the clear, harmonious, and ever accumulating proof that the Holy Spirit thus far bears witness, not of increasing good and ultimate earthly triumph for the gospel and the church here below, but (whatever the gracious and active work of God ordinarily, and especially at certain great epochs of blessing) of evil growing and irremediable generally; till at last it sinks so low that the mass abandon even the name and form of Christian profession in the apostasy; and the Antichrist, the last head of towering hostility to God, rises so high, that the Lord appears from heaven with the angels of His power, and in flaming fire—to exact as penalty everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His might. The expectation of good prevailing over the world, as the result of human means before the Lord appears, is not only a dream of vanity, but that which reverses the awful picture which scripture presents of things becoming worse beyond example and imperatively calling for divine judgment; after which only is the knowledge of Jehovah to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The Lord indeed had already decided the question both parabolically and prophetically. For what is the instruction as to this of the Wheat Field in Matt. 13? While men slept, the enemy of him who sowed good seed in his field sowed darnel there; and the mischief done from early days was irremediable by man: only divine judgment can deal with it aright. Now the field is the world, under the kingdom of the heavens, the Son of Man being exalted, and the devil his enemy, who insinuates fatal mischief, legality, ritualism, gnosticism, asceticism, heresy, antichrists, Romanism or Babylon, &c., through his sons; all which causes of stumbling or offense cannot be got rid of till the Son of Man shall send His angels in the completion of the age (not “the end of the world,” which altogether misleads, for “the age” closes more than 1000 years before “the world"). Hence it irresistibly follows, that the Lord predicts the continuance of hopelessly, prevalent evil within the sphere of Christian profession till He employ His angels, in the consummation of the age, to execute judgment on the quick, and diabolical and all other evils are thus cleared out of His

kingdom, while the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father. For all things are to be headed or summed up in Christ the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth—in Him in Whom also we obtained an inheritance, being heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (not His mere inheritance like Israel here below). The notion of good reigning in the world at any time under the gospel or the church is as false as that righteousness shall not reign when He takes the kingdom in manifest glory over the earth, and the new age begins long before eternity in the full sense of a new heaven and a new earth. No wonder therefore that we read of grievous times in the last days which precede wrath from heaven.

And what again did the Lord intimate of the moral state before the Son of man comes in His day, to speak only of His prophecy in Luke 17:22-37? “And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but in the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all: after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed.” It is clear that the Lord compares the state of men (careless, selfish, godless, guilty, dead also to what He, the rejected Messiah, had suffered for their sake) to that which brought on the two most solemn judgments which Genesis records, at the deluge, and at the destruction of Sodom by fire. Will the revelation of the Son of man in His day be less righteously called for? No; the last days of the Christian era are to be times of excessive, abounding, and audacious lawlessness as well as impiety, when longer patience on God's part is impossible, and the time is arrived in His counsels for displacing the first man of sin, weakness, and shame, by the Second exalted over all creation in visible power and glory on His own throne, as He is now in heaven on the Father's throne.

It is notorious that theologians are not found wanting—indeed their name is Legion—to parry the sword in their hands by misapplying our Savior's words, some to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, others to the end of the world, when the Lord sits on the great white throne. One representative man, who need not be named, as remarkable for the splendor of his oratory as alas! for the deadly error against Christ's person into which he was betrayed, sought to comprehend with these two events the Lord's appearing in the judgment of the quick. But scripture is not thus limber and indefinite, as falsehood loves to make it, but living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword. It cuts on one side and guards on the other, as is evident in this instance, where the nice discrimination between the two men (34) and the two women (35) respectively is incompatible with either the ruthless slaughter of the Romans, or the universal standing of all the dead to be judged at the end, The judgment of the quick at the Lord's appearing will be in truth as sudden and vivid “as the lightning, when it lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven.” This applies in no way to Titus' invasion, which notoriously allowed the believing—Jews to escape, as even Luke 21:20-24 distinguishes it carefully from the Son of man coming on a cloud afterward with power and great glory. To confound the latter, like Luke 17, with Titus' sack, is no true exegesis, but abject and unmistakable confusion; and so it is with the wholly contrasted circumstances of Rev. 20:11-15, when there will be no question. of returning to home or field, no difference at the bed or the mill. The Lord refers here exclusively to the day of His appearing to judge living man on the earth, and the Jews

especially; and His words leave no room for progress in good but in evil before that day.

The personal followers and inspired servants of our Lord speak not differently. Because of prevalent evil, corruption and violence, James exhorts, Have patience therefore, brethren, till the coming of the Lord. “Behold, the Judge standeth before the door” (Chapter 5:7, 9). They were therefore to take, as an example of suffering and having patience, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. It was not to be a time of triumph for right outwardly till the Lord come. The days were evil, the last days grievous times. Those we call blessed who endured. It is the very reverse of righteousness at ease and in present honor.

Peter, in his Second Epistle especially, is still more explicit. “There arose false prophets also among the people, as there shall be also among you false teachers, who shall privily bring in heresies of destruction, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” The evil characteristics, with solemn warning, are set forth at length throughout chapter and in 3, 4, he adds that “in the last of the days, mockers Shall come with mockery, walking according to their own lusts; and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” Even now, materialism and mockery prevail among men of the world surprisingly: still more according to the apostle will they be stamped just before the day of the Lord. There is wondrous long-suffering of God in saving even such; but the day will surely come with condign vengeance on Christendom, thus drinking itself drunk on the basest dregs of positivism and impious raillery. Grievous times then in the last days!

Jude, brother of James, depicts the evil in colors darker, if possible than Peter; for he in the Spirit fastens his eyes, not merely on the unrighteousness to prevail as the time of the world's judgment draws near, but on thankless apostasy from the highest privileges of divine goodness, “turning the grace of our God into dissoluteness, and denying our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.” Nothing can be more tremendous than this short Epistle as a whole; nothing plainer thane his identifying those before the eyes of the saints as just the class of whom Enoch prophesied as objects of the Lord's judgment. “But ye, beloved, remember the words spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they said to you, that at the end of the time there should be mockers walking according to their own lusts of, ungodliness.” Can anything be more certain than that this holy witness warns of grievous times in the last days? To be set with exultation blameless before the divine glory at Christ's coming is the hope, not the church or the gospel triumphing on the earth previously.

There remains but one more to cite; and “the disciple whom Jesus loved” writes with at least equal plainness of speech. “Little children, it is the last hour, and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have come many antichrists, whence we know that it is the last hour.” This is assuredly incontrovertible. The antichrist will be the chief object of the Lord's consuming and annulling judgment when He shines forth in His day; but the many, antichrists even then doing their destructive and malignant work proceed without a break, till the judgment He will execute clears the scene for the reign of righteousness and peace. It is not that grace meanwhile does not save and associate with Christ on high. For “as is the Heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly.” The cross morally closed the hope and history of the earth in relation to God, the Holy Ghost sent down

from heaven giving a final appeal: this rejected, all henceforth is bound up with Christ in and for heaven, to which the gospel calls all who now believe. And the world, and especially the world-church Babylon, becomes the object of God's judgment to be executed by the Lord when He appears, as we have shown by overflowing but not yet exhausted testimony. It is when the iniquity is fall that the blow falls. The times are grievous now; how much more so before that day?

Chapter 16

On 2 Timothy 3:2

We have now to enter the detailed examination of the evil characters which the apostle points out as impressing on the last days the stamp of “grievous times.” The first and last words are remarkably and painfully instructive. It is Christendom which comes before us; yet those bearing the Lord's name can only be designated as “men,” morally as corrupt and violent as the heathen (compare Rom. 1:29-31), if not so gross, yet having a form of godliness while they have denied its power.

“For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, uncontrolled, fierce, haters of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, pleasure-lovers rather than God-lovers, having a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof; and from these turn away” (ver. 2-5).

If the Holy Spirit has thus minutely qualified the evils which render the times grievous, to me it does not seem reverent to pass them over sicco pede, as if His designations were either intelligible on the surface, or unworthy of deep meditation for our better profit. Far more to be admired than this levity of the Genevese Reformer is the spirit of one in our own day who devoted an entire treatise to the laudable endeavor that we should learn what the apostle would have Timothy to know; and the rather, as the days in which we live display in a far more developed degree the dark features, which in the germ were even of old coming to view. The apostle had laid down other things of prime importance; but Timothy was “to know this also;” and assuredly we know imperfectly what we only apprehend in a dim and hazy light. He who writes to us with the utmost precision would have us read and study with attention. The practical duty can be but imperfectly discharged (“and from these turn away,") if we are not clear who and what the characters are whom one is thus called to have done with. We are bound so to discern, not in one case only, but in each and all, that there be no mistake. If charity may plead, holiness and obedience are imperative, and especially with snob as may fairly be charged, in measure like Timothy, with care for sound doctrine, and order, and godliness.

“For men shall be lovers of self.” Such is the opening characteristic, so grievous to the Lord and His own in those bearing His name. Justly does it hold the first place in this list of Christ-dishonoring professors; for it is a very mother of evils, as it directly contravenes the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning His children. Christ died for all indeed; but the moral end was that those who live (whatever do others who remain dead) “should henceforth not live unto themselves, but unto Him Who for them died and rose again.” “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34, 35). For “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; and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:1-3). Thus loving God proves that we truly love His children; as obeying His commands proves that we truly love God. So the first condition of discipleship, if we hear our Lord (Matt. 16;

Mark 8:34), is denying self, the clean contrary of loving it. Oh, what a pattern in Him who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich! Fully do I admit that such love as we are called to is not the original unfallen condition of Adam, still less of course the hateful and hating state of man now; it is what we see and know in the Second Man, the last Adam; it is to be imitators of God, as dear children, and to walk in love as the Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savor. As having put on the new man and sealed with the Holy Spirit of God, no other standard could be set before us; in awful contrast with which stand lovers of self, and so much the more sadly, if baptized to Christ's name and death.

Say not that self reigns only outside among the profane; show me where it does not reign among true believers throughout Christendom. The world loves its own, says the Lord: is this as true of His members scattered as they, are in parties, national and dissenting, each the rival of the other? And this false position with its isolating effect has told powerfully on souls to wither all true sense of unity on earth, and to hold out mere progress of party, or at best labor for individual blessing, instead of the glory of Christ in the church which is His body.

Next, they shall be “lovers of money.” Let believers hear the judgment of one who scanned their ways not untruly, though with no friendly eyes. “As far as we are enabled to discover, they testify no refusal to follow the footsteps of the, worldly in the road to wealth. We look in vain for any distinguishing mark in this respect between the two classes of society, That which is ‘of the world,' and that which is 'not of the world.' All appear to be actuated by the same impulse to push their fortunes in life; all exhibit the same ardent, active, enterprising, zeal in their respective pursuits.”

Can any serious person deny the enormous impetus given to the love of money in our own days? and this, among those who profess the Lord's name as keenly and commonly as in the careless world? Doubtless, as has been remarked, the recent discoveries of fresh sources of wealth, and the remarkable inventions of men, and the habits of far-spread enterprise, not to speak of growing luxury; which have followed in the train, have helped on this eager quest of gain. But the fact is unquestionable, and the effect most mischievous; yet who lays it to heart, or judges it as a sin of the first magnitude? And has it not been accelerated and justified by that new and increasing peculiarity of the last century, those religious and philanthropic institutions, the offspring and the pride of ecclesiastical divisions, which avowedly depend on the collections, and subscriptions, and donations, of money? Certainly our Lord has ruled otherwise in the Sermon on the Mount, and His inspired servants have both acted and written for our admonition in terms meant to make the service of mammon intolerable, and to refuse a place in the church for the covetous.

“Boasters” follow; and who fails to hear its hollow voice to day? It follows as close on the track of money-loving, as this love on self-love. And the materials which furnished the means of gratifying the love of money have built up the pedestal from which the empty vaunts of the boasters are heard on all sides. If you doubt it of religions profession, your ears are assuredly dull of hearing, and your eyes, if seeing, see not. For all is blazoned before the world, whether of religious contributions, or of charity to the poor, or of aught else that occupies men publicly. And then this enlightened age of ours! Who does not sing its achievements? Who does not praise its science physical if not metaphysical, its chemistry if not its learning? Say not again that these boasters are the mere devotees of natural philosophy. Alas! it is from professedly pious theologians that we

hear the hasty and ignorant premises that Geology declares one thing, Genesis another; and the base conclusion is that Genesis must bow down and worship Geology at what time is heard the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music. For the spirit of vain glory has banished all sense of pain and shame when God's word is thus dishonored; and even those who preach it are not ashamed to swell the chorus of the “boasters.”

Can one wonder that we have “haughty” next? They present an evil more deeply seated than the “boasters” though not so loud in its vain expression. They are the proud against whom God ranges Himself; the most akin to Satan's fault; the most alien from the mind which is in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondman, being made in the likeness of men, and, being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, death of the cross. Thus it is that appreciation of Christ is Our only sure and holy deliverance; for pride hides itself under many different veils, which may deceive itself as much as others, and none more than the mere professor or even the real Christian who walks with the world. Grace gives true lowliness, which consists not so much in thinking all the evil we can of ourselves, as in thinking of Christ and not of ourselves at all. When we have seen Him, as He is, we can see ourselves not worth thinking of, save before God to judge our ways when faulty. We can then, readily and without effort, each esteem the other as more excellent than ourselves, regarding each not his own things but each those of others. Is it possible to draw a sketch more unlike what prevails in Christendom? “Proud” or “haughty” is the truest designation of the type that abounds.

Then come “blasphemers” and “disobedient to parents,” which fittingly fall next and in due order and together. For self-exaltation paves the way for unworthy thoughts and slighting words against God; and self-will against parental authority is the natural result. Some greatly to be respected for their spiritual judgment, understood the first of the pair to mean “evil speakers” in general. But this appears to be out of harmony, not only with its companion, but with “Slanderers” in verse 3, which it would thus render an almost needless repetition. “Blasphemers” would therefore seem to be right here, as it is the natural and full force of the word, unless the requirements of the context should tone it down, as is sometimes the unquestionable fact.

Further, it is the liberalism of the day which has given occasion to the unprecedented spread of blasphemy on the one hand, and of disobedience to parents on the other. For it is now more and more accepted, that authority—and above all divine authority—is nothing but the bugbear of unenlightened ages, and that there is no inflexible standard of truth and righteousness. Thus public opinion assumes to decide, and society becomes the supreme power on earth, with its ordinances (i.e. the laws and the commands of magistrates, who act in the name and for the welfare of the society!) binding on all its members, but not authorizing one national society to govern another, still less entitling its officers to rule contrary to the will of the society, or to exercise greater power than it pleases! I have purposely adopted the ideas and words of an able, learned, and pious advocate of this impious scheme, which contradicts all that the godly in the past have gathered from scripture, especially such passages as Rom. 13 and 1 Peter 2. On the texts there is the less reason to dwell as almost all who read these pages reject on principle that wretched fruit of French Revolution, or rather of the infidel philosophy which gave so deep and strong an impulse to it, not only immediately, but from our own land for a century, before. Blasphemers began to assert their lawless will, not without the reproof of public law and to the horror of believing ears.

But gradually restraint gave way, and men have got to think that every form of blasphemous iniquity, which can count so many heads, is entitled to its representation in the high places of the earth. For after all what the Christian calls blasphemy is the religion or school of thought sincerely accepted by others, who are no less entitled to be heard as themselves, and to rule if they can command a majority! For, again says their pious oracle, what human power can pronounce authoritatively upon the truth of a religion, when every nation, or part of a nation, will with equal zeal maintain the truth of its own? Thus God is excluded, where He is most of all needed, and the creature, in all the aberrations of his guilty will, is worshipped rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever. Amen.

As indifference to blasphemers, nay the right to plead the cause of their party, is now the order of the day, so religious men, nationalist and dissenting, seek their support, making common cause with these open enemies of God and His Son, in order to promote their party measures and political ends. All the old hatred of blasphemy, all the, once burning indignation against daring impiety, has well-nigh disappeared from Christendom, yea, is treated by the diabolically spurious charity of our times as no less effete, disreputable, and cruel, than the burning of witches, the prosecution of necromancers, or the denunciation of astrologers. You may not libel a man; his character is sacred and of the utmost importance. Say what you like of God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; if you will, denounce their ways and character; deny their being; defame divine revelation. It is your right as a man to say what you think of God or His word, of Christ or His cross. Never before this nineteenth century has the world seen such unlimited license to blaspheme; and nowhere is it more rampant and shameless than in Christendom, Catholic and Protestant. Who can doubt then that “blasphemers” characterize the grievous times in the last days? or that they are already in a most aggravated form?

And surely the marked and growing lack of reverence to parents, the increasing self-will of the young, cannot have escaped the notice of any observing Christian. So it was to be according to the warning of inspiration. “Disobedient” follows “blasphemers"; and most suitably as to order; for parents stand in a position altogether unique toward their children. As it is written in the epistle to the Hebrews, Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they, verily for a few days chastened as seemed good to them; but He for profit in order to our partaking of His holiness. If not God but forms are in men's thoughts, real obedience of a parent is nowhere; submission is only where it is unavoidable; where then is the conscientious and loving heart to pay honor and obedience? And the most serious element in this general ruin of so primary a relationship is, that the parents are as much or more to blame than the children, the mothers no less than the fathers; and this confined and peculiar to no class, but pervading every grade of the race. The multitude of societies and devices, to care for the young in our day is not the least striking proof of the plague which has set in permanently for the appalling growth of the evil called out the efforts of pious men to stem it, however superficially, by the Sunday Schools, Homes, Reformatories, and such like. And now they would fain forget the frightful root of this evil in their own class and in every other, glorifying their benevolence in so partial a remedy. Relaxation of discipline, or even its abandonment, on the parents' part cannot but breed disobedience in the children; and in the face of such a prevalent snare, all other means of correction are but the feeblest reeds to avert a gathering storm.

Nor should we overlook the next pair of humiliating characters in these last days, “unthankful, unholy,” which appear to be as appropriately set together as their two predecessors were, and indeed all those described hitherto: not, that those who read them unconnectedly do not glean instruction from each and all, but that the observance of them jointly gives, order, and adds to the harvest. Now what an anomaly is a professing Christian who is thankless! He professes to have life in Christ, and the forgiveness of sins; he is baptized to Christ's death whereby he died with Him to sin; he is under grace, not under law, that sin should not have dominion over him; he is in Christ and so freed from condemnation, and has received the Spirit of adoption whereby to cry Abba, Father. For if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. All this individually belongs to the believer. Think next of the precious privileges he enjoys as of the body of Christ, in the worship, in the apostolic doctrine, in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread, in the prayers; not to speak of that holy and wholesome and most needful discipline which attaches inseparably to those But keep the feast on the sacrifice of Christ. But why need one set out these countless blessings which all saints share in His Name and by the Spirit of our God with which scripture teems? To be “unthankful” then, while bearing that Name which ensures all to the believer, is the extreme of ingratitude.

“Unholy,” or impious, naturally and one may say necessarily, follows at once. For thankfulness cannot but be, where the heart dwells ever so little on those precious and exceeding great promises, now made sure in our Lord and enjoyed in the power of the Holy Spirit, whilst we wait for glory unfading and eternal, of which He who has sealed us is earnest. To profess what we believe not, is to play the hypocrite; and if we can speak of natural honesty remaining under a Christian mask, indifference to reality and familiarity with forms both contribute to bring about that contempt of the Holy One, Who is trifled with, and of all that pertains to His service, worship, and will, which forms the character of the “unholy.”

The fact too that the word designating “holy” here is not ■γιος (separate from evil to God), but ■σιος (holy in the sense of gracious and merciful), shows yet more how one is justified in classing “unholy” with “unthankful.” For grace unfelt soon ends in grace despised, scorned, and trampled on the consequence of unthankfulness is unholiness, a profanity in this kind.

Christ is He who concentrates all grace, and is thus designated “chasid” (Psa. 16; Psa. 89 &c.), as men so described are regarded as piously upright. The reverse of this is intended here; and perhaps even these few words suffice to show how true of Christian professors in our day is this apostolic description. It is not merely the lack of gracious affections, proper to those whose profession implies God's mercy in Christ, but the impious presumption that stands in direct opposition. It is a question neither of injustice nor of impurity.

Chapter 17

On 2 Timothy 3:3-5

We have now to examine a still more numerous lint of qualities that follow— “Without natural affection, implacable, slanderous, uncontrolled, fierce, without love of good, traitorous, headstrong, puffed up, pleasure-loving rather than God-loving, having a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof; and from these turn away” (ver. 3-5).

It is singular that the Auth. Version, alone of the old English translations, gives the simple, full, and unambiguous meaning of ■στοργοι.; which in Wiclif's V. and the Rhemish, following the Vulgate as usual, is rendered by the feebler “without affection.” Tyndale, followed by Crammer, has “unkinde,” as the Geneva “without charities” But beyond controversy these representatives lack precision.

Now, as to the characteristic itself, it is hard to exaggerate its gravity even among mere natural men: how much more among those who bear the Lord's name! For there is no human center and safeguard greater than home with its manifold affections and the duties which it involves. The light and the grace of Christ truly known give strength as well as a new object which puts each element in its trap relation to God and man. There may be occasions so peremptory for His glory that all must yield, and then the things that are, become as though they were not, rather than turn to His dishonor but such cases are rare, and His name ordinarily adds beyond measure to all that God has ever owned as His order here below. But here we learn of a dark and ominous change when Christendom in general not only exhibits indifference to all these ties of family life, but tramples them down as contemptible and would rid itself of them as unworthy nuisances. It affects cosmopolitanism as the true ideal, and as this is wholly unreal and inoperative, the issue is unmitigated selfishness, a barren waste without objects given of God for the heart, where self-will can run riot according to its own waywardness.

Very suitably next to this void of natural affection stands the quality “implacable,” which, springing from the same root of selfishness, flows into a far larger circle and indeed without limit. Some few authorities of all kinds invert their relative order; but this would seem strange disorder morally, compared with the true place of each as represented by the best witnesses, though the Sinaitic is not alone in omitting the first of the pair, nor the Peschito Syr. V. in dropping both: all these variations being plain errata. For as the lack of natural affection is a horrible result of spurious Christian profession, so the consequent but wider implacability is next pointed out as its companion, instead of that universal love which is loudest in theory when there is least exercise of it in practice. Nay, the fact is really worse; for ■σπονδοι goes beyond the breaking of trace attributed to the word in the A. V. and other translations, and expresses rather the lawless state which refuses to incur any such obligation. It is bad enough to fail in keeping faith; it is much worse as here when glen's hearts say, “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” In Rom. 1:31 we read that God gave up the heathen to be ■συνθ■τους, ■στ■ργους as the Text. Rec. adds ■σπ■δους against ample authority of the highest character. There the apostle comes from the more external “covenant breakers” or (more generally) “faithless,” to the want of

family affection (■στ) and the more personal “unmerciful,” or pitiless; here as predicting the departure of Christendom he goes from within outwards—only for “covenant-breakers” he gives “implacable” or defiant of, bond. And what spiritual eye can fail to see how this impatience of obligation permeates men, who once were rigidly faithful in the observance not of promise only but of all the implied ties of the Mallet now is? Nothing dissolves more than grace despised; whereas even law is feebleness itself compared with grace reigning through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus, Christ our Lord. Optima corruptio peasima.

Then in joint order comes the character of “slanderous” or “false accusers,” as in the A.V., the same designation as is appropriated to the archenemy, the devil. Is it not a solemn issue that the Holy Spirit should have thus to describe not more heathen, but men bearing the Lord's name in the last days? It is easy to dissipate and whittle away the awfulness of these charges by the plea so natural for ignorance to make and to receive, that these evil characteristics have always been. In a sense it is so. But the word of the Lord cannot be broken; and, though enough rose up while the apostle lived to make it a practical question then, it is certainly true that, as the departure from the word and Spirit of God went on, these evils grew and spread apace; and that our own days look on an enormous increase of this harvest of shame and sorrow, which all the changes wrung on Eccles 7:10 are vain to get rid of. The universality of detraction and evil-speaking is as notorious in our day as is its virulence, and far worse in the religions than in the profane world, the endless divisions or acts giving it an incalculable impulse. Moral worth, Christian character, spiritual intelligence, known service, perhaps forever so long, wholly fail to disarm malicious criticism, if they do not rather furnish the incentive to activity for those moral levelers envious of all superior to themselves. It is the more base in those cases where the assailed would avail themselves of no natural resource, offensive or even defensive, following Him Who, when reviled, reviled not again when suffering, threatened not, but committed Himself to His care Who judges righteously.

“Uncontrolled” we have next, rather than “incontinent,” which usage limits to lack of self-restraint in uncleanliness, whereas the word really takes the fullest range in the indulgence of recklessness of action, as the preceding word in spirit and speech; so that the moral connection is evident.

This again seems the unforced precursor of “fierce,” without gentleness, and despising it, yea, its marked reverse. How heart-breaking to know that so it is, as the Holy Spirit declared it should be, among those who profess His name Who said in the fullness of truth, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart;” or as Isaiah said of Him, “He shall not, cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.” But there alas! they walk, as if to suffer, and above all to suffer wrongfully, were the utmost, evil to be dreaded, and as if Christ, in His path of trial and rejection and all-enduring grace, were a beacon to shun rather than a model, that we should follow in His steps. Civilization boasts of its long and gradual rising up from a savage state, which certainly was not that of primeval man, nor of man under God's government throughout the ages. It is therefore most humbling to note the fall into a truly savage spirit of man after centuries, not of civilization only but, of Christian profession.

None can wonder that this is followed by “without love for good,” which appears more exactly and completely to represent ■φιλ■γαθοι than “despisers of those that are good,” as in the A. V. It is indeed a very decisive advance in evil; for many, whose unbroken will carries them away passionately, are sincerely ashamed of their intemperance and deplore the excesses of these

short fits of madness, as they value and admire those who in patient continuance of good work seek for glory and honor and incorruption, with eternal life—the end. A heathen could say, I see and approve of what is better, I follow the worse; and an apostle gives as the last degree of evil in such that they not only practice things deserving of death, but take pleasure in (or consent with) those who do them. Here in Christian professors it is the kindred enormity of a total disrelish for good. Just as among the Jews, impiety destroys the moral landmarks: “woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” Surely the Lord's name is blasphemed on their account who misrepresent His name.

This introduces another shade of wickedness, the “traitorous,” or “traitors,” that form of malice which betrays others to ruin without scruple. Of this bitter baseness among the twelve the Lord tasted as none ever did or could; and here we are warned of it as a characteristic to prevail in Christendom, existing then here and there when the apostle wrote, but like the rest to spread and deepen as the last days linger out more and more. So it was and will be among the Jews before the end comes; as here among those who corrupt the gospel.

“Heady,” or “headstrong,” again describes those who rush inconsiderately and determinedly in pursuit of their own will, whatever it may cost to gratify it, rather than the habit of abandoning even to destruction others who confide in them. We can easily understand that the gospel, in an unexampled way and measure, imparts knowledge to the, most unlettered; and that this acts as powerfully as injuriously on those who, really ignorant of themselves and of God, have no living sense of grace toward others, any more than they feel the need of it for themselves. From some such source as this appears to flow the “headstrong;” as these are hard by the “puffed-up,” or high-minded souls, besotted with self-conceit: no less cruel than contemptible evils in those who, as ostensible heirs of the kingdom, ought to know the blessedness of being poor in spirit, of mourning, of meekness, of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, of being merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers, as well as counting it all joy when persecuted for righteousness, and above all, for Christ's sake. Alas! headiness and high-mindedness leave no room for any one of those precious qualities which our Lord forms in all that are His. Do not both now prevail wherever you look in Christendom?

And who can deny the manifest and extraordinary development, not now for the first of course, but more than ever in our own day, of “pleasure-loving rather than God-loving,” among those who would be deeply offended if they were not owned as Christians? For when in this world's sad history was ever known such an incessant and wide-spread whirl of excitement, in change and travel, in sweet sounds, pleasant pictures, and sensational tales, to speak of nothing lower in sensuous enjoyment? No doubt, steam and telegraph have circumstantially helped on this eager and universal pursuit of pleasure, rather than care for God and doing His will, but in this closing indifference remarkably confirming His word. Time was when superstition allied to liking for adventure undertook pilgrimages, and organized crusades, neither of these in the least expressing the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, but either of them nobler naturally than pleasure-trips, private or common, to the most renowned, strange, or distant lands, perhaps round the world even, craving after some new and piquant fillip for minds jaded and listless: Need we add the love of gain and even sometimes of gambling brought into bazaars, &c., in aid of avowedly Christian objects, with every natural or worldly attraction, to swell the funds? What shall we say, if

we may say anything, of the pleas for “muscular Christianity,” a phrase which to pious ears may seem a mere worldly, jest, but which others take in sober seriousness as a right thing and commendable, though only to be defended by the sheerest perversion of God's word?

For as the Holy Spirit here says of all these characters of evil, “having a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof.” In this lies the peculiar heinousness of it all. None can wonder that the unrighteous should do unrighteously still, or that the filthy should make himself filthy still. The horror is that those who under the name of the Lord put forth the highest claim should neither practice righteousness, nor be sanctified still. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, A dog turning back to his own vomit, and a washed sow to wallowing in mire. If you wish to find all these unchristian evils in a plain and concentrated form, without a blush, nowhere can they be so readily found as in that which arrogates to itself the name of “Christian.” Yet those who in our own land as well as over the world have the evidence of this before them habitually, can see nothing that defiles, but claim to be undefiled, because both their mind and conscience are defiled.

But God is not mocked, and the apostle exhorts to faithfulness. He had already called Timothy to know what the mass of Christians now refuse to learn. But this is not enough: “And from these turn away.” It was then the duty, when such persons appeared, to have nothing to do with them; now that the evil is incomparably more developed, that duty is still more imperious. Yet I am grieved to notice the strange error of one who has written on the subject with surpassing ability. He will have it that the apostolic injunction, rightly translated, means that Timothy was to— “turn these away.” How any one with any real, however moderate, knowledge of the Greek tongue could so misunderstand a very simple phrase, it is hard to explain or conceive; but such is the fact. No version known to me sustains any such view. The A.V. is substantially, the R.V. quite, correct, unless it be in giving “also” for “and,” ver. 5, as is done here in connection with “know” in ver. 1. It is not authoritative action, still less ecclesiastical dealing, but apostolic direction for the conscience of Timothy (or in principle of any “man of God “.) who would not endorse what is hateful to the Lord and corrupting for souls.

Chapter 18

On 2 Timothy 3:6-9

That the evils of which the apostle forewarned were then at work appears yet more from the description which follows.

“For of these are they that enter into houses and I lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led by various lusts, always learning and never able to tome unto knowledge of truth. And in the manner that Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also withstand the truth, men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall not advance farther; for their folly shall be very manifest to all, as theirs also became” (ver. 6-9).

It is not enough in the ministry of Christ that one should have good and holy ends before one; the means ought to be as unexceptional as the avowed aim: where it is not so, where the measures adopted to attain the object are unworthy of Christ, it is to, be feared that the real end in view is no better. At any rate, and always, the man of God must consider habitually, and with rigor, as before God the ways he pursues, lest the enemy entrap him into the hateful snare of doing evil that good may come, which is sure ere long to emerge into the blindness of unmitigated evil in both, ways and ends, to the deep dishonor of Him whose name is made to cover all Oh! what has not been done “to His greater glory!” The day will declare at least as great wrongs against God and man, as in heathenism, with far greater hypocrisy.

“For of these are they that enter into, houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led by various lusts” (ver. 6). The works of the Christian are not to be ■γαθ■ only, but καλ■, not only animated by kindness and benevolence, but characterized by rectitude and comeliness. Nothing can justify under, hand maneuvers: Christ does not ask such service at the hands of any; He repudiates it. “So let your light shine before men that they may see your good (i.e. honorable) works, and glorify your Father that is in heaven.” It was to be as the lamp on the stand shining for all who are in the house. The evil-doer naturally shuns and hates the light, and comes not to the light lest his works should be reproved or shown as they are. But he that does the truth comes to the light that his works may be made manifest that they have been wrought in God. How sad when those who profess Christ, the only true Light, are actuated by the spirit of darkness in creeping into the houses (of the saints, I presume) and leading captive silly women! The fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, and its ways are well-pleasing to the Lord. But to condescend to the path of intrigue, in order to win the weakest ones of the weaker sex, is beneath the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. Even if those who sought thus to, advance the truth were ever so pure-minded, to get thus into houses is indefensible as being of ill appearance and report: still more if the aim there was to make personal devotees of those so exposed to the snare as those whom the apostle brands as “silly women, laden with sins, led by various lusts” even though not necessarily of a gross character. In all ages religious officials have found a ready ear in females, who become effective in their influence on families: not truth, but the leaven of doctrine thus spreads with the greatest rapidity till all become assimilated. The suited material for this subtle working is that which appeals strongly to nature, while it pretends to be peculiarly

superior to it; and no rank and file are so pliant and persuasive as “silly women,” who thus seek zealously to make up for the sins with which they are laden, whilst they indulge in new lusts differing from those of the past. Thus have been accomplished disastrous changes in primitive times. Has the enemy left off these devices in our day? Some can remember a picture not unlike the original many years ago, when almost all distinctive truth was thus destroyed most extensively. Are we to flatter ourselves that the self-same way of error, so successful in the past, no matter what the circle, will not be reproduced again and again in the present while the Lord tarries?

But their secret and fleshly ways are never those which the Spirit of truth generates; they suit the propagators of tradition and form, in which the sentiment or the intellect of man can find tangible objects by which to distinguish their own set. We can thus understand the divine wisdom in burying and concealing the burial place of Moses, from those who were far from appreciating aright that blessed servant of God when he was alive to speak and act for his Master. And the Lord has Himself warned us that it is the same spirit of unbelief which slew the prophet and the righteous man (who spared not their sins), and yet built and adorned their tombs when they were departed. For this the Jewish scribes and Pharisees gave themselves credit in His day; but the proof of His truth in their hypocrisy soon appeared when He sent unto them apostles and prophets, teachers and preachers, some of whom they killed, as others they persecuted from city to city; so that all righteous blood from Abel downwards might fall on that Christ-rejecting generation, as it will ere long on the still guiltier Babylon, before Jerusalem shall once more, and far more truly and fully, be the holy city; and the house shall be no longer desolate nor theirs only, but the LORD God's; and Israel shall behold their long despised but most gracious and glorious Messiah, blessing Him as He that comes in the name of Jehovah.

But, to return to our painful subject, there is another description of those victims and instruments of evil, which deserves to be weighed— “always learning and never able to come unto knowledge (■πιγνωσιν, full knowledge, or acknowledgment) of truth” (ver. 7). With all their quickness of apprehension such women fail in spiritual mind, confounding things that differ, instead of distinguishing them, without which true progress and real knowledge are impossible. It is Christ before the soul, to Whom the written word answers by the power of the Holy Spirit; this only opens the truth and gives courage in its acknowledgment to God's glory. Without it there might be constant occupation of the mind, proud of its acquisitions, but no growth or separative power through the word, nor joying in God through our Lord Jesus nor ever the ability, as is said here, to come to full knowledge of truth.

The magicians of Egypt are invoked as the pattern of the misleaders; and this remarkably by names otherwise in scripture unknown to us. “And in the manner that Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses; so do these also withstand the truth, men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith” (ver. 8). Now the manner in which these adversaries wrought was by imitating Moses as far as possible. This they could only do within limits till the power of God rising in its display made it hopeless for them to follow. In Christendom imitation is easier, as it is not a question of miracle, but the semblance of truth; and striking it is that the new and withering seductions of the enemy are characteristically imitations of truth, so close as to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect (as with the Jews by and by). The old bodies of Christendom contain the foundations of the faith in a great measure; those more showy deceptions hold out higher promise as to the hope of the saints, and the church, and Christian privilege, but they sink far below

common orthodoxy or fail in ordinary righteousness. And no wonder, if their guides are “men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith.” Soaring far higher and alluring the sanguine and unstable far more in what is less known, they betray ruinously those blessed and vital truths to which all saints cleave, however ignorant or prejudiced they may be otherwise.

Hence God does not fail to raise up a standard against the foe, and His imperiled saints profit by the warning. So the apostle declares here, “But they shall not advance farther; for their folly shall be very manifest to all, as theirs also became” (ver. 9). The comparison tells no less in the dazzling counterfeit, which was calculated to perplex and mislead, than also in the exposure of the snare. This done, its efficacy for mischief is at an end, and the folly of its authors and advocates is too plain to injure more. Have we not known the enemy thus defeating himself under the mighty hand of God? Let us not forget how much we owe to the watchful grace of our Lord, who thus vindicates His word and Spirit after man's misuse of both. If Satan cites scripture evilly or falsely, the Lord does not leave scripture for argument, but answers in a way absolutely and at once convincing, “It is written again."

Chapter 19

On 2 Timothy 3:10-13

From the unmasking of these various forms of evil, then germinating within the sphere of Christian profession, the apostle turns to the very different path and walk of his fellow-laborer.

"'But thou hast followed closely my teaching, course; purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, patience, persecutions, sufferings; what things befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that desire to live piously in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted. But wicked men and impostors shall advance for the worse, deceiving and being deceived" (ver. 10-13).

It was energy of unfeigned faith and love, acting by the Spirit in the life which is in Christ Jesus, which thus drew out Timothy. Unbelief stumbled and made not only difficulties but opposition to that which attracted and sustained the young fellow-laborer, because it was to his soul the living witness to a rejected but glorified Christ. He was not ashamed, as wore many, of the testimony of our Lord or of Paul his prisoner. Whatever might be the timidity of his character naturally, in faith he found strength, giving glory to God. The promise of life was an assured reality, and he too suffered evil along with the gospel according to the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before ages of time, but now manifested by the appearing of our Savior. Christ in short decided and drew him onward in a path otherwise impossible.

Now Paul's "teaching" has justly the first place in that which acted on Timothy: not truth only, but cast in the mold of the apostle's mind, heart, and moral force, where the person and heavenly glory of Christ governed with a power unequaled. And this in the main we have as God was pleased to give it permanence for our instruction, and cheer, and warning, and general blessing in his epistles, to speak of no more, though we cannot have what Timothy enjoyed so largely—speaking "mouth to mouth," as another apostle expresses it who laid great store on such communications, as compared with paper and ink and pen. Yet each has its excellency, and all is surely ordered in its season; so that, while recognizing what Timothy had for the help and furnishing of his soul, we can own the wisdom of the Lord in our portion.

Then the "course" or "conduct" of the apostle had its great value as a practical expression of the truth which swayed his judgments and feelings habitually. There is no better comment on the inspired word than in the walk of those subject to it, whether individually or in the assembly. If this be true generally of all the spiritual and intelligent, so far as they are led in obedience, what a bright illumination of holy writ was there not in one privileged as Timothy was, perhaps beyond all others, with the intimacy of the great apostle so long and so variously!

"Purpose" shone in that life of ceaseless serving the Lord Christ with a splendor which none but the malignant could misinterpret, none but the dark and blind overlook. From the time that there fell from his eyes, as it were, scales, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared to both those of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and

throughout all the country of Judaea, and also the Gentiles, that they should repent and believe the gospel. He preached the kingdom boldly; he shrank not from declaring the whole counsel of God. And in the midst of these labors night and day, he could say, as perhaps no other with equal truth, “One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Practical, present, living “faith” it was that kept alive the holy fire in the heart of the apostle; and this accordingly is here pointed out for fixing its place on Timothy's memory, and stimulating him to perseverance in the like path. For indeed, as there is but one path, even Christ, for all that are His, so it is faith alone that finds and pursues it with patience: we walk by faith, not by sight, as by faith we stand. No other means suits the children of God, and none other glorifies God Himself, who world be owned immediately by them, as they thus derive fresh blessing in the enjoyment of His light and love. If “faith” be then the ever ready, ever needed, means of direction and power for all, how much more for those who have the added and most trying service of the Lord in the word! What did it not recall, to His genuine child in faith, of calm reckoning on God against all appearances? What of gracious answers even beyond expectation? For God will not be outdone even by the truest heart, and grace will ever flow beyond the faith which it creates and exercises.

“Long-suffering” too had Timothy seen in Paul as nowhere else. For in truth it is no fruit ripened in earthly soil but that which comes from Him who was and is its fullness, now on the throne of God. Least of all was it natural to Saul of Tarsus, who speaks of himself as once a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, that is, a man characterized by insolent overbearing. lint boundless mercy was shown, and wondrous “long-suffering” was the fruit.

“Love” wrought there, love seen and known and proved in Jesus our Lord, love reproduced by the Spirit as the energy of that nature which is light in its principle. For if all the godly become by grace partakers of divine nature, in him who was given to write 1 Cor. 13 love wrought mightily. Nor if knowledge spoke haughtily and to the stumbling of the weak, did any man deal so trenchantly with it as he who beyond all his fellows knew all mysteries and all knowledge? Timothy had truly had a rich sample of “love” before his eyes.

“Patience” therefore did not fail, though put to the proof in the utmost variety of form and degree. As we read 2 Cor. 11, we think a little of what Timothy had beheld or known in so many details. The signs of the apostle were wrought among the saints in all patience, by both signs and wonders, and works of power.

This is followed by “persecutions,” and “sufferings,” as the trials in which the “patience” or endurance was manifested. And the same chapter accordingly furnishes in the most unobtrusive way such a roll as no hero of the world could match. Yet the apostle was pained to the quick to say a word about them. “I am become foolish,” he said: “ye have compelled me.” He took no pleasure in recounting what they should have otherwise learned or remembered, though he could add, “I take pleasure in weakness, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in straits, for Christ's sake.”

Timothy was thoroughly acquainted with what things happened to the apostle at Antioch (of Pisidia), and at Iconium, and at Lystra. It was in this order that persecution befell Paul; in the reverse that he and Barnabas made their return journey, establishing the souls of the disciples

converted a little before. In all these sufferings and opposition Jews played the guilty part of inciting the Gentiles against the word of life, and those who preached it. Hence when they came to close quarters, stoning was the method employed. What occupation for the ancient people of God! What anguish for him who so loved them, even when not a blow fell on him! But if the apostle recalled the vivid recollections of Timothy, for he was of Lyeaonia, and brought to the knowledge of Christ through the apostle at this very time, he could say, “What persecutions I endured, and out of all the Lord delivered me.”

A twofold statement concludes this part of the Epistle, which those who look for progress in Christendom as a whole would do well to ponder. For the apostle speaks as generally as he lays down the truth positively. Not a hint does he give of a temporary interruption to be followed by blessing and triumph for the gospel. That the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea, is certain; that the nations shall seek unto the Messiah, and that His resting place shall be glorious, cannot be questioned by the believer; but none of these things shall be before He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips slay the wicked. Till then, however truly the gospel may save individuals here and there, or even affect communities, especially where it is mixed up with law and rendered earthly—till the Lord is revealed in judgment of the quick, those that are in heart godly must suffer, and evil men advance to greater impiety. Partial appearances deceive; the word of God abides forever.

Thus, on the one hand, the apostle declares, “Yea, and all that desire to live piously in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted.” It is wise, and even incumbent on saints to make up their minds thus to suffer for righteousness, and for Christ. They will then think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among them, which comes upon them to prove them, as though a strange thing happened unto them.

On the other hand, they will not be appalled that the world, yea, the professing mass, grows distinctly worse as a whole in the face of every testimony of God's grace and truth. On the contrary, they will cleave the more to the word which the prevalence of evil only confirms, while conversion goes on actively. “But evil men and impostors shall advance for the worse, deceiving and being deceived.” Can words more graphically, as well as accurately, set out the real character of the progress for him who bows to scripture? If we refuse this subjection, a blinding power is already on us, and we are led astray ourselves as we mislead others in the measure of the error and of our influence.

Chapter 20

On 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Timothy was not to be given to change. Truth remains immutable, though the most spiritual have to appropriate it increasingly: not the church, nor an apostle, but Christ is the Truth objectively, and the Spirit as inward power. That wicked men and the jugglers of imposture should shift is to be expected; for all have not faith, which lives and thrives and grows in subjection to the truth. Hence the charge that follows.

“But abide thou in those things which thou didst learn and wast persuaded of, knowing of whom thou didst learn [them]; and that from a babe thou knowest the sacred writings that are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture [is] God-inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction that is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished thoroughly unto every good work” (ver. 14-17).

There is no surer indication of the Holy Spirit's energy than when an active mind (and the revealed truth does give holy freedom and unbounded exercise) abides in the things we are taught of God. Some beyond question are more than others prone to doubt because of difficulties, speculative or practical. Happy the heart which faces every word and fact, without a thought of abandoning those things which it was once persuaded of on divine authority, or, as the apostle puts it here, “Knowing of whom thou didst learn them!” If the plural form be preferred, which certainly rests on very good and ancient witnesses, it was Paul not alone but with the rest of those whom the Lord chose to bear testimony to the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. The inspired men of the N.T. presented an entirely new and deep and heavenly revelation, answering to His displayed person and work, and the relationships dependent on Christ, for which the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven gives energy. Thus the power is to obey. Timothy, like every other, was sanctified by the Spirit to obedience. He had a most honorable position, but no license to act without the word of the Lord, Who sent the Spirit to guide into all truth, what was coming, as well as what concerned more directly Christ and the church in actual testimony. He was thus glorifying Christ, reporting all, as only He could, to the saints, and this by chosen witnesses, so that our prime joy, not to say duty, is to believe and obey. Doubtless God has set in the church, as it has pleased Him: first, these; next, those; and so on, in no small variety of place according to His sovereign will and unerring wisdom; but obedience of faith runs through the life of each, if they walk and serve according to God. And this the apostle is here laying down for Timothy with the utmost care. Can we think that the exhortation was not deeply needed? and the more, because it is given in an Epistle intended for the perpetual remembrance, not only of such as might share Timothy's service, but of all who seek to please the Master.

Nor was it now only that Timothy had reverently listened to the words of God. To thousands of saints, and to many a minister of the word, from among the Gentiles, it was a new thing; and the gospel received into the heart opened the way for valuing and profiting by the ancient oracles of God. But with him it was a different order, though the result may be substantially similar. But, in

fact, the apostle reminds him," That from a babe thou knowest the sacred writings that are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus" (ver. 15).

It is painful to observe the slight done to the scriptures in Christendom, save where Protestant feeling prevails. The importance of the Bible for the poor, many will allow who are far from availing themselves of it on their own account. Not only does Popery proscribe the simple and habitual reading of it (as if the book of God were rank poison for man because it is so sure to undermine and overthrow Romanist dogma and practice), but not a few who count themselves far removed from the Latin church discourage that heed to it from the earliest years, which is here, by the highest authority, commended in Timothy. It is in vain to decry it as "letter," or to discourage the young as unrenewed. He who was inspired to lay down the safeguards against the difficulties of the last days, does not hesitate unqualifiedly to express his satisfaction in that which their wisdom ventures to disparage. This should be enough for faith, if a Coleridge joins hands with sacerdotal pride on one hand, or with rationalistic indifference on the other, in attacking what they dislike as "bibliolatry." The true and humble-hearted have but to go me unmoved in the midst of these changing fashions of hostile opinion, cleaving to God and to the word of His grace, while eschewing every plausible plea of man. For the true ground is not man's right to the scriptures, or man's competency to interpret them, but God's title to deal in the Bible with every heart and conscience, which the Holy Spirit alone can guide into any and all truth. Those who interdict the free reading of scripture are blindly striving to hinder God from addressing Himself to man. Let them judge how great such a sin is against God as well as man. They may reason now, but what will they say another day for their rebellion against His rights? Yet the apostle was as far as possible from rationalism. He did not believe in the power of man to make divine truth his own. Even the sacred writings are only able to make wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. This however they are. Without faith in Christ salvation and wisdom from above are alike impossible.

But we are carried a great deal farther in ver. 16, 17: "Every scripture [is] God-inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction that is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished thoroughly unto every good work." No more suited, valuable, and weighty sentence appears here or in any part of the word of God. There are kindred sentiments of exceeding moment, which do ever fit in most appropriately where they occur; but the one before us is clear, full, and impressive in the highest degree. It gives divine character to every part of the Bible, excluding of course such words or clauses as can be shown on adequate evidence to be interpolations.

First, it is important to observe that the subject of the opening sentence is anarthrous. The sense therefore is not "all," but "every," scripture. If the article had been inserted, the words which follow would have predicated that which is said of the known existing body of holy writ. The absence of it has the effect of so characterizing every part of the inspired word to come, as well as extant. Is it scripture? Then it is God-inspired and profitable, &c. This is affirmed of every atom.

Next, it is known that versions and critics of reputation differ somewhat where the unexpressed but necessarily implied copula should be inserted. It is not always seen that this is a comparatively slight difference. The substantial sense abides. The Revised Version, with several, prefers to render thus: "Every scripture inspired, of God is also profitable," &c. The Authorized Version with

others has it thus: “All scripture i.e. given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,” &c. I have no doubt it is more correctly translated above: “Every scripture [is] God-inspired and profitable,” &c. What is common here to the A.V. and mine, is that the apostle asserts inspiration by God and profitableness about scripture; whereas, according to the Revisers, divine inspiration is assumed, and its profit seems rather awkwardly asserted, “is also,” &c. After all the difference is practically small. In the Revised Version that is assumed for divine inspiration, which in the other is directly affirmed in the first place, with defined and varied profit following after.

Scripture then, everything which comes under the designation of scripture, is inspired of God; not merely holy men of God spoke, borne by—under the power of—the Holy Spirit; but everything written in the Spirit with a view to permanent guidance of the faithful is inspired of God. This simply believed must necessarily exclude error from holy writ; for who would say that God inspires mistakes, great or small? Those who so think cannot really believe that every scripture is inspired of God Time was when God's word was of course inspired but not yet written; now it is in infinite mercy written by His gracious power Who knew the end from the beginning, and would provide an adequate, and perfect, and permanent standard for every need spiritually on earth. Hence it is written, and, to be divinely authoritative, is inspired of God: not the sacred letters of the O. T. only, but the writings of the apostles and prophets of the N. T., the foundation on which the church is built (Ephesians 2).

Indeed it is the prophetic character of gift which especially is in exercise for writing scripture. The apostles as such governed as well as began the church. But some were prophets who were not apostles; and the church or assembly was built on the foundation of both. This explains the true source of the authority in the holy writings of Mark and Luke. To attribute it to Peter for the one, and to Paul for the other, betrays the worthless character of early tradition, such as appears in the speculations of Eusebius of Caesarea. For whatever may be the value of his history of his own times, or of those not long before, his account of the apostolic age has more value as a contrast with the inspired record, short as this is, than as a true reflection. It even abounds with plain ignorance and error, and never rises to the spiritual bearings of what he sets before us. The inspired account in what is called The Acts of the Apostles is impressed with the dignity, depth, power, and design of scripture, as decidedly as any other book of the Bible. A similar remark applies to Luke's Gospel, as well as to that of Mark. They are scripture, and inspired of God, each having an aim laid bare by the contents, wholly distinct from that of Matthew and of John, yet no less certainly divine; each therefore contributing its own elements of profit proper to each, and found in none other as in them, though others furnish what is not therein. This is characteristic of inspiration, and is found nowhere but in scripture.

It is full of interest to observe that the apostle quotes Luke as scripture in 1 Tim. 5:18. Some might hastily affirm that the last clause of the verse was drawn from the apostle Matthew, chap. 10:10. But a closer inspection proves that he cites from Luke 10:7, though he who disbelieves in verbal inspiration might cavil and evade its force. He, however, who is assured on God's authority that inspired men spoke, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy. Spirit teacheth, gladly owns that the apostle of the Gentiles cites literally from the Gospel of his own fellow-laborer. It is as if God meant to confirm the principle by Paul's not only quoting Luke, but quoting his Gospel no less than Deut. 25: 4 as “scripture.” He knew and refuted beforehand the skeptical theories which blindly seek to deny the authority of both.

We all know that Peter in his Second Epistle (iii. 16) speaks of all Paul's Epistles as “scripture.” This again is beautiful in that late communication of the great apostle of the circumcision. But it is not so generally seen, though it is no less certain, that in the preceding verse he renders testimony to Paul's having written to the believing Jews, who were the objects of both of his own Epistles. Thus we have it on inspired authority that not Barnabas, nor Silas, nor Apollos, nor any other than Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. A few words of inspiration are decisive against endless argument.

Verses 10, 11 reminded Timothy of his special opportunities, and his personal knowledge of the apostle's teaching, course, and life, individual and ministerial, with a solemn supplement (12,13) as to the godly and the wicked, whether in resemblance or in contrast. Verse 14 is a grave exhortation to Timothy thereon to abide in those things which he thus learned and was assured of, based on his knowledge of their character and authority from whom he learned them, as well as on his familiarity from infancy with the ancient but living oracles of God, which, though of themselves incapable of quickening, or of imparting spiritual power, were able to render him wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus (15). Then comes a dogmatic conclusion of the subject, as plain as it is momentous, in the form of an apothegm in ver. 16, which most naturally conveys what the A.V. reflects, save the opening word which, better translated, enlarges its scope considerably. Every scripture [is] inspired of God, and profitable, &c. It thus covers all that might be added by inspiration of God, as well as what had been so given already. It expels from the field not only the bold cavilers at the divine word, but with no less peremptoriness the unworthy, though professedly orthodox, apologists, who surrender the holy scriptures, either in detail all over the Bible, or, sometimes, in whole books, through a compromise with the adversary.

For what is scripture useful or “profitable”? We must not regard the passage as an exception to the general principle which governs all the Bible.

It lays down only what is in harmony with the context. Nor is any other place to be put beyond this in wisdom as well as power and interest. We are thus compelled to eschew partial search, if we would seek really to understand the mind of God revealed in His written word; we must read and study the scriptures as a whole. With Christ before us we shall not peruse in vain. Beginning at Moses and all the prophets our risen Lord expounded in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself; and this said of the O. T. is yet more evidently true of the New. We err, therefore, when He, the constant object of the inspiring Spirit, is not our object; but the manner is as different as the books which compose the Bible; for each book has its own peculiar design, and all contribute to form a perfect whole. “Profitable,” accordingly, is limited by accordance with the character of this Epistle. Other uses are shown elsewhere.

First in order is the profit of every scripture “for teaching,” or doctrine. Of this there cannot be a finer or richer instance than the Epistle to the Hebrews, wherein the grand truths of the gospel are elicited in a way equally simple and profound from the words and figures of the O. T. Can any means be found so well suited to help the believer to its clearer understanding and application in other parts? One truth rightly apprehended prepares the way for another. For no new truth supersedes that which you have already, but rather confirms and help to more.

Next stands its use “for conviction.” The Epistle to the Galatians may be taken as a salient example. See how admirably the apostle employs “the blessing” and “the curse” in chap. 3 to

illustrate the promise and the law, which these saints were confounding as millions have done yet more since. Take again the Seed, not many but one, in the same chapter; and the principle of a mediator in the law confronted with One God promising and sure to accomplish. Take the still, more evident application of the two sons of Abraham in chap. 4 from the law, with prophecy brought in to illustrate, and the final sentence from Gen. 21 to convince the Judaizers of their ruinous mistake.

Thirdly comes “far correction.” Here we may refer to the frequent and telling use of the O. T. in the Epistles to the Corinthians as a signal illustration. Almost every chapter of the First furnishes samples, of which chap. 10 is brimful.

Fourthly, who can mistake the Epistle to the Romans as the brightest and most palpable specimen of scripture used “for instruction in righteousness,” and this, as in the others, not only the O. T. so applied with divine skill, but its own supplies to the same end?

Thus is the aim distinctly and perfectly met, “that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted unto every good work.” So it was in Timothy's case, so for every other who follows a like path. It is the Holy Spirit's injunction, expressly in view of grievous times in the last days.

Chapter 21

On 2 Timothy 4:1-2

Having thus laid down the sacred deposit, new as well as old, in its divine authority and edifying fullness, the apostle proceeds in the beginning of this chapter to urge the earnest ministration of it with all solemnity.

“I testify earnestly [or, charge] before God and Christ Jesus that is about to judge living and dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; convict, rebuke, encourage, with all long-suffering and doctrine” (ver. 1-2).

Here there is no small discrepancy, not only as to the right reading among the ancient witnesses, but also as to the just reflection of the original text. That which has been vulgarly received accredited a connecting particle with the preceding chapter, or at least its closing topic. This, a more careful examination, or certainly a more spiritual judgment, would have shown to be uncalled for and out of place; as well as the personal emphasis of the subject. Paul on the contrary, desired evidently rather to put forward God Himself and the risen Man, Who is to deal with mankind supremely in the coming day. The order of His name, and the omission of “the Lord,” or, “ours,” here, yet worse (otherwise due and ordinarily given), are sustained by the best authorities of every kind, and fall in admirably with the context. It would seem also that the conjunction before τ■ν ■πιϕ. was not understood, and got supplanted by the preposition in order to ease the construction; which really had for effect to alter the connection of the sentence by severing “His appearing and His kingdom” from the verb at the beginning, and attaching them to the judging of the quick and dead as a date. So it stands in the Authorized and other Versions; but if we connect “His appearing and His kingdom” with the verb, a choice of version lies open to us. For we may regard the accusatives as the complement of διαμ. and translate as in Deut. 4:26, which some prefer, in the sense of calling Christ's appearing and His kingdom to witness against Christendom. But this seems far from a just analogy. Heaven and earth we can easily apprehend as thus invoked; but how about summoning Christ's appearing and His kingdom? It would be harsh indeed. How could Paul call Christ's future appearance and His kingdom to witness then, as Moses invoked heaven and earth that day to witness against Israel? The construction is therefore not really the same. Christ's appearance and His kingdom are therefore suited and most impressive grounds of appeal by which he was solemnly charging Timothy, or others like-minded and responsible, to preach, &c. The aeons. objecti appears thus quite untenable. Hence most prefer, with the Revisers, to understand the apostle to testify earnestly, without specifying Timothy, before God and Christ Jesus, and by His appearing and His kingdom, as that which gave the charge incalculable weight and awe. If κατ■ be read, it is hard to see how it can be connected with the verb; for where is the sense of “I charge [thee] at His appearing and His kingdom?” The preposition compels us to make these words dependent on the participle.

Turning from this brief but dry discussion of text and translation, which nevertheless is a duty owing to the proper clearance of scripture, obscured as it has been by defective knowledge and insight, we may now the more intelligently admire the apostolic appeal. That solemn testimony is

before God and Christ Jesus, Who is about to judge living and dead. It is looked at as ever imminent; or, as another apostle puts it, Christ “is ready to judge living and dead” (1 Peter 4:5). Only our text speaks of the judgment as a continuous process, the other sums it up in its conclusion. The continuous character of our Lord's judging is made if possible more evident in Acts 17:31, where the object is defined clearly as the habitable earth, not the dead (which judgment will follow in its season) but the quick: a truth, which, though owned in the ordinary symbols of Christendom, has practically dropped out of mind even for earnest and sober Christians, who are apt to fasten their eyes exclusively on the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15).

In this solemn matter they, and the Jews, fall into opposite faults. For the Jews were full of the earthly judgment which the Messiah is assuredly to execute over all the earth, when no nation can escape; whilst they in effect thought little or nothing of the everlasting, judgment of the dead. But the Lord Jesus, as Peter solemnly testified to Cornelius, is the One ordained by God as Judge of living and dead (Acts 10:42).

As we know the generality of Christians slur over the judgment of living men on the earth, it is the more important to unfold it somewhat more. Nothing demonstrates the need of this more than the citation of Cor. 15:51, 52, and 1 Thess. 4:16, 17, as bearing on the judgment of living and dead. “We, the living that remain,” we that without having fallen asleep shall be changed, are hot in the least included in the living, and of course not in the dead, of the text before us. “We” are Christian believers, who consequently do not come into judgment as our Lord ruled in John 5:24, but shall be changed without death any more than judgment, and brought up with the dead but risen saints to meet the Lord Jesus at His coming.

There is no such thought in scripture as a future judgment of the spiritually alive, though all must be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. This to “the spiritually dead” will of course be nothing short of coming into judgment; but the saints will be none the less manifested there, that they may know even as they are known, and each may receive the things done in the body, according to those he has done., whether good or bad. Having Christ as their life and His redemption, they were saved even here by grace through faith; they are not to be put on their trial there, as if the salvation of God were a doubtful thing. For such it will simply be manifestation in this solemn but blessed way, and this with special view to the place of each in the kingdom; for there is the revealed certainty among the saved of each receiving his own reward according to his own labor. But judgment by-and-by, for him that has eternal life and is saved, is not only flat contradiction of the express word of Christ, but irreconcilable with all that eternal blessing which the gospel attests as due to Him and His work for the believer.

The passage then does not speak of the heavenly saints, still less of those privileges of grace which are theirs in Christ, but of the judgment to come which awaits quick and dead when He is revealed to this end according to the scriptures. Other passages of holy writ show that the quick are to be judged, not only when Christ appears in glory, but all through. His kingdom, which is said to be “forever,” because it closes only with the dissolution of the heaven and the earth that now are, and the subsequent judgment of the dead, the wicked dead, who small and great stand before the throne. Their manifestation is judgment in the fullest and eternal sense; because, having rejected Christ, or at the least failed to profit by any and every testimony God gave them, it remains only that they be judged each according to his works. And their works were evil on the

one hand, and on the other not one was found written in the book of life; so that all were cast into the lake of fire. Theirs is therefore a resurrection of judgment: so the Savior calls it in John 5; as that of believers is a resurrection of life—life for the bodies of all who through faith had here below received life in Christ for their souls. The apostle however is here treating of judgment, first of the quick on earth at and during the kingdom of Christ, and lastly of the dead before it is given up to Him who is God and Father, that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) may be all in all, in the eternal state.

It will be observed that the contextual language of the apostle is most precise and explicit. When he thus testifies before God and Christ That is about to judge quick and dead, he adds “and by His appearing and His kingdom.” “His coming,” or presence, would not at all have suited; for unless it be specially qualified (as by the term “of the Son of man,” &c.), it has no proper relation to the divine dealings in judgment, but rather to God's counsels of grace. Hence the presence or coming of Christ is connected with the translation of the saints on high. When it is a question of judicial action, “His appearing” is the exactly right expression as here, and either this, or His revelation, or His day, will ever be found in this connection.

Accordingly here “His appearing” is followed by “and His kingdom,” with no less accuracy; for “His appearing” alone would not have sufficed for more than the earlier judgments to fall on the guilty living generation of that day. To cover His judging the world throughout His long reign, and particularly the dead which remain to be raised for judgment at the close, we need and have “His kingdom” also. Every word is written wisely, all is required to complete the full picture of His judging. Hence we see the mistake of those who speak of the “modificated eternity” of His mediatorial kingdom (regnum gratiae) to be succeeded by the kingdom of glory to commence at His ■πιϕ., or appearing. Not so; the reign for a thousand years (Rev. 20) does begin, to speak generally, when Christ is manifested in glory (as the preceding chap. 19 clearly points out). And it may be described as a modificated eternity, because it introduces His kingdom, a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all previous kingdoms, and it shall stand forever, i.e., as long as the earth endures. It is absurd to apply this to the church (or the gospel) now; for the church, if true to its principles, is ever called to suffer, not to reign till He appears in glory. The bride is to bear herself in holy separation from the world, cast out like her crucified Master, till glorified with Him at His coming. The eternal scene which knows neither end nor modification is after the kingdom is given up, the kingdom given Him as man, and shared by Him with the risen saints, reigning together as they suffered together, but given up at the end, when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For Christ must reign till then; throughout eternity God as such, not the exalted Man, will be all in all.

With this in view then, the apostle gives the charge, “Preach the word; be instant in season out of season; convict, rebuke, encourage, with all long-suffering and doctrine.” The structure of each verb implies Prompt action. This of course is quite consistent with persevering continuance; but continuance might be, and often is, without such intensity of devotedness as is here insinuated by the rapid succession of pressures on Timothy, which did not pat even a particle to connect one with another. Proclaiming the word has the first place; urgent heed to the work in season,, out of season, follows up the preaching; convicting in the sense of proving home or reproving is enjoined as a wholesome duty, even though irksome to a tender spirit; rebuke comes afterward as

necessary where fault was plain or out, as on the other hand encouragement or exhortation, where this rather was called for. In every case there was to be all long-suffering and doctrine. Who was sufficient for these things? Timothy's sufficiency, as the apostle's, was from God. So may ours be in our little measure.

Chapter 22

On 2 Timothy 4:3-4

There is a fresh, reason which the apostle now puts forward for urgent and assiduous seal in every possible way, another grievous feature of the grievous times of the last days.

“For the time will be when they will not endure sound teaching; but according to their own lusts they will heap up to themselves teachers, having an itching ear; and from the truth they will turn away their ear, and will be turned aside unto fables”(ver. 3, 4).

It is not here the leaders whose fault is in the foreground, but the people. Elsewhere we see false teachers, and self-willed chiefs, misleading such as put their trust in them. Here, though the time was not yet come for so widespread evil, the Spirit of God speaks of it as imminent. For the time will be when they will not endure the sound teaching.” This is clearly descriptive of the prevalent state to overspread Christendom, not among Jews or heathens. It supposes those who were used to hear the truth. But now the truth becomes unpalatable, and “the sound teaching” of it cannot be endured: a truly frightful time for men bearing the name of the Lord. For it is evident that out of an impure heart they must call on Him. Sound teaching is ever welcome to those whose desire is to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and this that all may issue in a life of increasing obedience and devotedness.

How deep and bold then the enmity of heart when those who have every motive to love the truth, far beyond those of old, will not endure it! “Oh, how I love Thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” “How sweet are Thy words unto my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth.” “It is time for the LORD to work: they have made void Thy law. Therefore I love Thy commandments like gold, yea above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right: I hate every false way.” “Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. The opening of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. I opened wide my mouth and panted, for I longed for Thy commandments.” “Thy word is very pure; therefore Thy servant loveth it. I am small and despised, yet do I not forget Thy precepts. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is truth. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me; yet Thy commandments are my delight. Thy testimonies are righteous forever: give me understanding, and I shall live.” These are but a few extracts from a psalm devoted as a whole to setting forth the characteristic virtues of divine revelation as possessed by the house of Israel before Christ, and therefore very short of the later and yet more profound communications since redemption, and Christ's ascension, and the personal presence of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, all of which incalculably blessed facts enhance what God has revealed since. Yet we can see, and especially as in a composition which by the Spirit expresses the feelings of the heart, how deeply the sound teaching of that early day was valued; as it will be as much or more when God in the latter day stirs the godly remnant to say in heart, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” The full Christian testimony comes between the advents of the Lord, and so yet more after the early days of Jewish enjoyment before the children relish the word beyond what their fathers did. In that interval comes Christianity, as well as the corruption of it in Christendom, one of

the direct symptoms of which is the disgust at, and intolerance of, “the sound teaching” here announced.

But there is positive evil, as well as the dislike of what is divine. And whilst both evils have long verified the solemn warning of the apostle, it is easy to understand that the dark sketch of a time then at hand becomes more and more dismal as the Lord tarries and lawlessness acquires audacity and force. The prevalence of education in modern times leads to a great deal of reading even in the humblest class; so that the desire to hear what pleases the mind, the taste, and the natural aspirations of man, modified as all is by the governing spirit of the age, becomes even more active and pretentious. “According to their own lusts they will heap up to themselves teachers, having an itching ear.” Can there be a more graphic anticipation of what is found everywhere in our day, at least where the Bible is universally circulated? Even this is sometimes openly left out by men calling themselves Christians. But Satan can, and does, sadly neutralize it where it is nominally in use as a mere suggester of themes for the adventuresome and profane wit of man Indeed no other book is so fertile in raising and satisfying the most profound inquiries as to God and man and all things. And the intellect can readily cast aside its authority while it enters on its flight of universal discussion, as doubtful of the divine as credulous of the human. Christ, the center and expression of grace and truth; is practically lost, and the more guiltily because it is in the sphere where He once was all.

What becomes of those who, having once known, turn their back on His glory? First, as we have seen, according to their own lusts they heap up to themselves teachers, having an itching ear. The full revelation of God, though no longer held in faith, leaves a craving to bear something new; and for this end heaps of teachers are resorted to in profound unbelief of the word of God, and the power of the Spirit to guide into all the truth. The efficacy of neither can be enjoyed, where redemption does not purge the conscience, and where Christ Himself is not the object and rest of the heart. God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; because he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life eternal. If openly unrighteous man give himself up to pleasure, religiously unrighteous man occupies himself zealously with teachers, both in default of having Christ. In Him alone can God or man find life, objects, and satisfaction; in Him faith finds all fully. Without this all is a waste for one's own lusts to heap up what can never satisfy; and the less if there be departure in heart from Him known ever so slightly: an itching ear can aggravate but never remedy.

“Heaping up teachers” is but the excessive carrying out of an evil principle which prevails in evangelicals of all sorts, established as well as dissenting. It passes as a maxim among them that one is as free to choose one's teacher, or minister, as one's doctor, lawyer, or any other professional help; and this, on the ground that they are paid for their services. No wonder that superstition revolted from ideas so gross in spiritual things and clothed ministry with mystic rites in order to elevate it above matters of every-day life, and retain it within a strictly clerical enclosure; as others fell back on patronage to redeem it from the vulgar and keep it as much as possible within more refined hands directly or indirectly.

But scripture rises far above these earthly and contending schemes of men, and shows us that Christ is the source of ministry, not merely at the starting-point, when He chose the twelve and the

seventy, sending them forth on their respective missions, but as the risen, glorified, and ever living Head, Who gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ.

It is in vain to argue that this mode of working could only be when He was here upon earth. The remarkable fact is, that the grand revelation just referred to in Eph. 4 ignores all action of this kind on the earth, and speaks only of ministerial gifts conferred on the church by our Lord, since He ascended up on high. Now this is to set them on a ground which cannot change till our Lord comes again. Till then He never ceases to be the unfailing spring of supply; and, as if to make this certain and clear even to reluctant ears, it is added, “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,” &c. Scripture allows of no other source, and assures of this one for every need of saints now on earth. But we must always bear in mind, what the same Epistle distinguishes, that the apostles and prophets constitute the foundation on which we are built; the evangelists, pastors, and teachers, are those gifts which carry on the work. As this is the unforced and unequivocal intimation of God's word, faith reckons on Christ's faithfulness to the wants of souls and love to the church which is His body.

Hence there is no room for men's own lasts in choosing, any more than in rejecting, those whom Christ has given to do ministerial work. The gift is proved by the energy of the Spirit in effecting what it is given for: the evangelist by winning the unconverted to God; the pastor and teacher (not always, though often, united) by leading on and instructing the saints. It is on the same principle as a believer is recognized by his good confession of Christ, not in word only, but in deed and truth. Neither crown nor congregation, neither bishop nor patron, have anything to do with the choice. All such human gifts or calls are wholly irregular, not unscriptural only, but anti-scriptural, whatever pleas good men may have set up for each of them. Those whom Christ gives for spiritual service the Christian is bound to own, as he has to beware of all whom Christ did not so give. The sheep know His voice in His servants; and they know not the voice of strangers. Assuredly the sheep may err in this case or in that; for they are in no sense infallible, and they have to act responsibly by grace. But the Lord's eye is on all, and He honors His own word, as He loves His own sheep. The sad and shameful fact is that for centuries they have let slip looking to Him in this matter, and have accepted one or other of those human ways which ignore His giving the needed supply spiritually. And as some have sinned by the unwarrantable system of one man concentrating all gifts in his person or authority, so others by heaping up to themselves teachers after their own lusts.

The only remedy is looking in faith to Him, and to the word of His grace, which furnishes the true key to the facts, that the gifts still abide, rarely indeed concentrated, as the rule distributed in no small variety and measure of spiritual power. In the present state of God's church they are, like the saints, painfully scattered as well as shrouded and hindered. But no change of circumstances alters the vital constitution of the church, any more than the principle of those members of it, so important for its extension and well-being, the gifts before us. What the faithful ought to do is to judge themselves by God's word; how far they have departed, and in order to submit themselves to His will, knowing that he who does it abides forever. None but Christ's gifts have His title and competency in the Spirit; and no saint can justify himself in refusing such or in accepting other

men whom He has not so given; for either way is to deny His rights and to prefer man's will against Him. But heaping up to themselves teachers (and is it conceivable that these could be His gifts consenting to His dishonor?) is fielding to men's own lusts, the excess of self-will in despite of Christ.

But there is more still. “And from the truth they will turn away their ear, and will be turned aside unto fables.” Here is the fatal result. Who can measure the dishonor thus done to God and His word? who tell the loss to their own souls, not only by their alienation from the truth, but by their actual appetite for imaginative falsehood? So Satan would have it, who likes no one thing so much as a direct affront put on Christ, which all this implies. Thereby evil ensues in every way. The conscience is no longer governed by the sense of God's presence. Grace is unfelt, and thus the constraining power of Christ's love no longer operates. The holy fear of displeasing God vanishes. There is no consciousness of being set apart by the Spirit to the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. As He is altogether a nullity to such, so the god of this world blinds their thoughts that the radiancy of the gospel of Christ should not shine forth. There is no treasure consequently in the earthen vessels, any more than ever bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in the body, still less is there exposure to death on account of Jesus, that His life also might be manifested in their mortal flesh, so that death should work in them but life in the objects of divine love.

Hence present things fail not to rush in and fill the void according to Satan's pleasure. The age asserts its influence, and the world is loved and the things that are in it. On the one hand, the poor saints seem vulgar and forward; and the trials of the assembly become odious and contemptible. On the other, how much there is in the world that begins to look fair and pleasant! Then excuses sound plausible for the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. How narrow-minded and weak appear the once decided grounds to stand aloof! Thus as the word of truth is the means of practical sanctification, so the fabrications of the enemy undermine and supplant till there is nothing that the Holy Spirit can use to warn the soul or deliver from this corrupting and malignant power.

The “fables” here are not qualified as “Jewish,” as in Titus 1:14, nor are they connected with “genealogies” as in 1 Tim. 1:4, which points in the same direction. It seems a sound deduction therefore to regard them as of a larger character, and open to the workings of Gentile fancy no less than Jewish. But it is vain to speculate on what was then impending. Suffice it for us to know that they are here unlimited and the sure accompaniment of turning away from the truth. One of admirable judgment infers from the structure of the phrase that their being already turned aside to fables leads them to turn away their ear from the truth.

Chapter 23

On 2 Timothy 4:5-8

Very different from that melancholy and humiliating picture of the course of Christendom is the stand to which the apostle proceeds to exhort Timothy.

“But be thou sober in all things, suffer evils, do an evangelist's work, fully perform thy ministry. For r am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is all but come. The good combat I have combated, the course I have finished, the faith I have kept: henceforth is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me in that day; and not to me only, but also to all those that love His appearing” (ver. 5-8).

Here therefore, as in chap. 2:1, the charge is emphatically personal. To be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus has its own weighty place. But more is needed for a workman and leader in a day of general and dangerous declension, when intoxicating influences were as rife as they were various. “But thou, be sober in all things.” Vigilance (γρηγορε■ν) is not the thought as in the A.V., nor yet a sound mind (σωφρονισμ■ς), however nearly allied, but sobriety of judgment. The Greek answers fully to the English usage, and, from the primary sense of drinking no wine, comes to the ready metaphor of being sober, or wary, in all things. Timothy was to stand clear of that which might excite or stupefy, in contrast with those drifting into a mass carried away from the truth into fables.

Further, he is called to “suffer evils," or hardships, and this in the most general way. In chap. 1:8, it was to suffer evil “with the gospel,” a favorite personification of the apostle, who was not ashamed of it, and would have the faithful servant identified with its afflictions here below. Chap 2:3 presents the different thought of Timothy's taking his part in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, without expressing or understanding any special comrade. Here all idea of “sharing” is left out. Readiness to endure ills in his place and service is what the apostle claims. Paul did not lay a burden on his young colleague which he had not long and fully borne. It is but fellowship with the Master's sufferings here below: only these, without of course speaking of the unique sorrows of atonement, went far deeper than those of His servants; which such as have experienced most would most freely own.

The next call appears to be often strangely misunderstood, as if the apostle meant Timothy to do an evangelist's work, when he had not that gift, and consequently was not really an evangelist! For such a construction there is not the shadow of a sound reason. The danger rather was that the increasing difficulties and troubles of the assembly might distract the young and sensitive laborer, calling him to forego the exercise of that which was truly his gift without, though not his only one, because of the demands from within. Work so blessed to which the Lord had called him must not be intermitted. The evangelist is not a preacher only: work of faith and labor of love in quest of souls characterize him who presses the glad tidings on souls individually as well as publicly.

But it is a mistake not to be passed over, that the evangelists did not form a special and separate class. It is more correct so to designate them than even the teachers, for Eph. 4:11 couples the

pastor with the teacher in a way in which he joins the evangelist with no other class; yet is the teacher elsewhere viewed, as a distinct gift, though here, as often in fact, combined with pastorship. All gifts were certainly subordinate to apostles; yet neither evangelists nor any others were missionaries of the apostles, but of the Lord. He it is Who sends laborers into His harvest, as He is the Lord of it. The apostles were servants, though set by God first in the church. They could not send: still less the church in this sense. Nor is it well founded to say that this was the work to which Timothy was called when he journeyed with the apostles. In all probability Timothy evangelized when privileged with that companionship; but the gift in itself had no connection with such a journey. On the contrary, Timothy would properly he intent on learning all he could in such circumstances, as it would be his joy to serve in every way personally and ministerially, if one may so say, to give the greater effect to the beloved and honored chief, as is implied in Acts 16:3; 19:22.

That this is no question of working as subordinates and missionaries of the apostles is made still clearer by the case of the only one whose course as an evangelist is traced in the Acts. Philip officially was one “of the seven” (chap. vi.), but as a gift was an evangelist, and is so designated in chap. 21:8. When his office lapsed through the dispersion of all who composed the assembly in Jerusalem, he is seen (chap. 8.) in the active exercise of his gift as an “evangelist,” and with signal blessing both to a whole city and to an individual. In no case is he even journeying with an apostle, but rather as one of a special and separate class. The apostles on bearing that Samaria had received the word of God, sent Peter and John who put, the seal of the Spirit on Philip's work; for indeed lowly love wrought, and rivalry was as far from the evangelist as lording it from the apostles. But the characteristic of what is described is the free and sovereign action of the Lord; and as the two apostles did not think it beneath their exalted place to evangelize “many villages” of the Samaritans during their return to Jerusalem, so Philip went on his unfettered way under the Lord's direction, evangelizing “all the cities” till he came to Caesarea. There was no question of a sphere circumscribed by the presence or the absence of an apostle. The world is in principle the evangelist's province: journeying or abiding is a question of subjection to the Lord.

Lastly, Timothy is told “fully to perform (πληροφ■ρησον) his ministry” (ver. 5). It seems more than πλ■ρωσον (Acts 12:25, Col. 4:17), judging by the emphatic usage of the word where it occurs as verb or noun elsewhere. To translate with Beta, to “give full assurance of thy ministry,” may sound more literal but hardly suits the subject before us, which wholly differs from faith, hope, or understanding. For these mean subjective enjoyment, the other would be objective proof; neither of which can rightly apply here, but filling to the full the measure of his service. Evangelizing, however incumbent on him who has the gift was not the whole of the ministry which Timothy had received in the Lord: to fulfill all he is here engaged.

A weighty and affecting enforcement follows in the approaching departure of the apostle. “For I am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is all but come” (ver. 6). The A. V. by no means conveys correctly the form: “now ready to be offered” is in several respects different from “am already being poured out,” which exactly reproduces the original. It is not the first time that the apostle employs the same figure of a drink offering. To his beloved Philippian brethren (H. 17) he had written a little before, “But if also I am poured out on the sacrifice and service of your. faith,” &AL Now he drops all condition, as his release is before his eyes. He speaks as though the libation were being made. Again, ■φ-is hardly the same as ■ν-■στηκεν, though the difference be

the merest shade, which is sought to be expressed in “is all but come,” as compared with “is present,” or “come.” “Is at hand,” as in the A.V., is the true rendering of neither, but of ■γγ■ς or ■γγικεν.

Few even of the apostles could say as Paul does at this solemn moment, “The good combat I have Combated, the course I have finished, the faith I have kept” (ver. 7). The imputation of vain glory to the apostle, with death (and such a death!) before his eyes, is unworthy of anyone but a rationalist. It was of the utmost moment, not only for Timothy but for all who might follow, to know what grace can, and does, accomplish amidst the general wreck. Neither 1 Cor. 4:3, 4, nor Phil. 3:12, &c., is inconsistent; whereas Phil. 4:13 affords direct ground for its realization.

How are we to account for such inability to conceive the power of grace by faith Is it not that so many excellent men, through a false system, are still groveling in the fleshy combats of Rom. 7, ignorant of that deliverance which Rom. 8 proclaims in virtue of a dead and risen Savior, that is, of our death with Him, and the power of the Spirit of life in Him. Under law they look for failure, and failure is theirs according to their unbelief, however grace may interfere sovereignly spite of the error. But that of which the apostle speaks is the honorable combat which befits the soul set free, who has Christ before him, and has to face in his measure what Christ faced in the days of His flesh. It is the holy struggle for God's glory in a hostile world, and not merely struggling against self in the despairing strife of Rom. 7. This we learn experimentally to teach as what we are even as converted, and that the law aggravates the distress instead of giving us practical victory; which comes solely from giving ourselves up as good for nothing to find all in Christ dead and risen. Thenceforth begins the proper and good combat of us Christians, now not converted only but delivered, in whom the Holy Spirit works in power with Christ before our eyes, whose grace is sufficient for us. Paul had triumphed day by day, and so are we called to defeat the enemy here below.

Next, “the course I have finished.” There is the general idea of the games narrowed to the race; and on this he looks back as “finished.” At an earlier day in writing to the Corinthians, familiar as they were with the Isthmian Games in their neighborhood, he had applied the theme to the life and service of the saints in general, introducing himself as an example of one running not uncertainly, not beating the air but buffeting, or bruising, his body, and bringing it into bondage, instead of surrendering it to relaxation, and indulgence, and luxury. In Phil. 3 we hear him expressing the utmost ardor of devotedness in that race for the prize. The general reference recurs in 2 Tim. 2:5, in just the same spirit in which it was first urged in 1 Cor. 9:25. Now he applies it to his own case, not for self-applause, as a bad conscience and an envious heart might think, but transferring these things in application to himself for Timothy's sake, and all after who in faith read these words. Boasting was far indeed from one who had one foot in the grave and all his heart with Christ in heaven.

Finally, he adds, “The faith I have kept.” This Christendom sought to make easy and sure by the regular profession of the three creeds. But alas! all who look below the surface know how pitiable is the failure, when the most heterodox leap over all bounds in the solemn and habitual repetition of every word; while godly, but weak souls, are too often stumbled at that in them which they fail to comprehend; and thus on both sides endless mischief ensues. The faith was really kept when creeds did not exist. The word and the Spirit of God are all-sufficient for him whose eye is on

Christ by faith. And then keeping the faith, as Paul did, to the end, was a blessed test of fidelity to the Master. How many have turned aside following their own minds and lusts, without creeds at first and now with them! They are but puny and human barriers and of necessity powerless, the inventions of men when the word and Spirit of God were losing power through unbelief.

The sense of all being closed here below is what gives force to his looking onward to the kingdom, and this most appropriately. For responsibility and service are bound up, not with the Son's coming to take us to the Father's home, but to the Lord's appearing, when fidelity to His name here below, or the lack of it, will be made manifest. It will be observed that it is the epiphany of the Lord which is presented in these pastoral Epistles, rather than His presence or coming; because it is a question throughout of work done in and for the Lord, with its specific reward “in that day” from His hand. It is not heavenly grace with the blessed issues of Christ's love in heaven before the day shines. Here the necessary principles of righteousness and of order, ecclesiastical or moral, are laid down, and the work on that foundation is insisted on, with its reward to the faithful. Both aspects are true and important, each in its place, and never to be confounded without loss. Which of the two is before us here is beyond controversy in ver. 8: “Henceforth is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall award to me in that day; and not only to me but to all those that love (■γαπηκ■διν have loved and do love) His appearing.” Is not this precious? The promise is sure to the apostle, but he is careful to ensure it to all that love the Lord's appearing, which will put all evil down, judge the indifferent as well as the rebellious, and establish peace and righteousness over the earth, with the display of all the saints in whom He is glorified.

Chapter 24

On 2 Timothy 4:9-13

The apostle now turns to his companions in service with varied expression of feeling; and to Timothy first as one specially near to his heart.

“Use diligence to come onto me quickly; for Demas forsook me, having loved the present age, and went onto Thessalonica; Crescens unto Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia: Luke alone is with me. Take up and bring Mark with thee, for he is useful to me for ministry. But Tychicus I sent unto Ephesus. The cloak which I left behind in Troas with Carpus bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments” (ver. 9-13).

Without doubt, deep solemnity pervaded the apostle's spirit in the thought of his speedy departure and especially of the Lord's appearing; and no wonder: it is the goal of responsibility, the moment when all shall be brought to light, and the mind of the Lord pronounced accordingly. Early in the Epistle he had expressed his great desire to see Timothy, whom he regarded with especial affection. Now he urges upon him to be zealous in coming quickly to him, and assigns the reason. He was deserted by a fellow-laborer. This affected his heart deeply. He felt, therefore, the greater wish to have Timothy with him. It would be the last opportunity, and as his mind—we saw in the first chapter, called to remembrance the past, so here he could not but look onward to the future, as he thought of those who were to continue the work of the Lord here below, when he himself was gone.

Not long before, in writing to the Colossians, the apostle conveyed to them the greetings of Luke and Demas, with those of Epaphras and his own, and in writing to Philemon, probably about the same time, he conveys the salutation of Demas once more to his dearly-beloved Philemon, distinguishing him with others as his fellow-laborer. Now he has the sorrow to write, as one reason more for Timothy's presence, “For Demas deserted me, through love of the present age, and proceeded unto Thessalonica” (ver. 10). This is sorrowfully explicit. To say that Demas left the apostle to go on an evangelistic tour, is to slight the word, blot out the revealed motive, and to confound his case with that of the others who follow. It has been conjectured that the departure of Demas for Thessalonica was due to love for his birth-place. Others have guessed that it was for trading. We are not at liberty thus to speak; and the less because the Holy Ghost stamps the motive as love for the present age. The first was rather the fault of Mark and Barnabas in earlier days; but it had no deep root, and grace had long given self-judgment. The failure of Demas was far more serious, not merely because it was late in the day, but because love of the present age utterly opposes the moral purpose of Him who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age. It is not said that Demos forsook Christ, still less, that Christ forsook him; but the sin was a grievous one, as is the endeavor to put the stigma of it on evangelizing. This was an insult reserved for folly and bitterness. Preaching the gospel is certainly not everything, but it is the foundation of all, as the evangelist is the gift of Christ. It is more than probable that the fellow-laborers took their share in gospel work, as we know the apostle Paul always did with the utmost zeal and devotedness; but here it is not expressly said of anyone. To drag it in and connect

it with the only one who is named as sinning against the Lord, is a very great affront to Him, unless it were said as an idle jest; but a jest that manifests a heartless feeling against the gospel or its heralds.

Of Crescens, we are only told that he went to Galatia. This is the sole mention of him in scripture. For what purpose we are not told, but it can scarcely be doubted it was in the Lord's service. Tradition, and this the earliest, tells us that he went there to evangelize; but a later one speaks of him as laboring in Gaul. And it is well to note here that two of the earliest uncials (the Sinitic and the Re-script of Paris) read here Gaul for Galatia, as do several cursive manuscripts, the Ethiopic Version of Rome, and other authorities. So early did ignorance or evil intent tamper with the copies of scripture.

Of Titus we are told that he went to Dalmatia. We may gather from this that he had finished his work in Crete, had joined the apostle, and was now gone in another direction, the last notice of him which scripture affords. There is not the smallest ground, therefore, for the tradition that he was diocesan of Crete. A singular fatality of error appears to pervade these extra-scriptural notices, which seem to be mere legends of imagination, grafted upon a most superficial use of scripture. It is altogether ad exception to find a single one of the old traditions containing an atom of truth. How deeply then should we feel the blessing of God's perfect word!

“Only Luke is with me. Mark take up and bring with thyself, for he is to me profitable for ministry” (ver. 11). It is interesting to observe that the verse brings before us these two inspired writers of Gospels. They were not apostles, but, are none the less authoritative. They were doubtless prophets, which gift was in exercise indeed for Matthew and John also, in so writing the prophetic writings, or scriptures, as the apostle designates the books of the New Testament in Rom. 16:26. The context is decisive, not to speak of the absence of the article, that the Authorized and the Revised versions are wrong in giving “the scriptures of the prophets.” For the apostle is speaking of the “revelation of the mystery which had been kept in silence through times everlasting, but now is manifested.” In Old Testament times the silence was kept; now is the time for its manifestation by New Testament prophets, who, instead of testifying to Israel only, make known that mystery, according to the commandment of the Eternal God, unto all the nations for obedience of faith. It is the gospel in short, and here specifically Paul's gospel in contrast with the law. And it is only confusion to mix this up with what God had promised before by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, where accordingly is no allusion to “the mystery,” which is fittingly introduced only at the close.

Luke, then, was the only companion of the apostle. He had been his fellow-laborer during much of his ministry; he abides with him before his death. But, not content with this, the apostle desires Timothy to take up Mark on his way and bring him with himself, for he adds with exceeding grace, “he is to me useful for ministry.” We know how greatly grieved Paul had been with Mark's desertion in early days, and how it had led even to a breach with Barnabas. But this was long blotted out by the healing goodness of God. And already the apostle had joined Mark with himself as one of the few fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God which had been a comfort to him; as in the same Epistle to the Colossians he alludes to charges they had received to welcome him if he came to them. But now he goes farther and reinstates him in personal nearness of service to himself, the very thing in which he had originally failed. In nature a breakdown is irreparable, not so where

grace prevails; “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

“But Tychicus I sent unto Ephesus.” The Revised version is right, the Authorized version wrong; for the apostle draws a slight distinction here, which is expressed by “but,” rather than “and.” The others had proceeded on their own responsibility. Tychicus was sent by the apostle to Ephesus. Here, again, it is in vain for us to conjecture the special object of his mission. We may assure ourselves that faith in the Lord and love to the saints were the motives. But it is, well to take notice of an authority to which none can now lay claim.

Here follows, at verse 13, a new command of exceeding interest in the midst of these interesting notices of his fellow-laborers. “The cloak that I left at Trees with Carpus, bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments.”

Some pious men have allowed themselves the narrow and unseemly thought that inspiration is confined only to matters of spiritual truth. This is to lose a great deal of the grace of the gospel, and to shut out from our souls the interest which the Lord takes in what concerns the body, as well as the mind The truth is, that the grace of our God occupies itself with everything that concerns us, and our wisdom is to take up nothing in which we cannot look for the favor, guidance, and blessing of the Lord. Such is wondrous fruit, not only of the incarnation of the Son, but of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. He makes the body the temple of God. If it were not so, the ordinary matters of this life would be left outside and clothed with nothing but a human connection. We wrong the Lord and defraud ourselves of much where we do not bring Him into the least things that perish. “Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Hence the cloak, that the apostle left with Carpus at Troas, is not left for an uninspired note. It forms a direct part of this solemn Epistle, written for all times. God led His servant to direct Timothy to bring it, when he came. Winter was approaching, and the cloak would be needed. It is good for our souls to believe that God takes a personal interest even in so small a matter. Where God is left out, even saints become a prey to personal vanity or worldly fashion.

But Timothy was to bring the “books” also, “especially the parchments.” The latter were probably not yet written on: as being valuable material and suited to transmit more permanently, we cannot doubt that the apostle destined:” the parchments” for the edification of the saints and the glory of the Lord in an especial manner. “The books” may not have been inspired writings, and the indefinite language here used would rather imply the contrary. But they were not therefore devoid of interest to the apostle, even with death and the appearing of the Lord before his soul.

Chapter 25

On 2 Timothy 4:14-18

From fellow-laborers gone or sent away, and the desire to have Timothy with him, the apostle turns to an open adversary and to those who forsook him in his recent hour of need.

“Alexander, the coppersmith, did (lit. showed) many evil things against me: the Lord will render to him according to his works; of whom be thou ware also, for he exceedingly withstood our words. At my first defense no one took my part but all deserted me: may it not be laid to their account. But the Lord stood by me and gave me power, that through me the proclamation might be fully made, and all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of a lion's mouth. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve for His heavenly kingdom; to Whom [be] the glory unto the ages of the ages. Amen.” (ver. 14-18).

We may profitably notice the different form which evil takes in the adversaries of the apostle. Phygellus and Hermogenes were prominent in personal disaffection. Among those who, in Asia, turned away from Paul, Hymeneal and Philetus have a far darker character, for in their case profane folly wrought, and this, advancing to greater impiety. They were teachers, it would appear, but not of God. “Their words,” said the apostle, “will spread as a gangrene.” The character of their error was the destructive fable that the resurrection has taken place already, which, as it overthrew the faith of some, could not but falsify the walk and testimony of all led astray by it. But even as to these, he does not deal with. the same solemnity as John applies in his second Epistle to those who denied the person of Christ; for this demands the strongest reprobation of the Christian heart, as nothing else ought. Of Demos, we have seen enough already. The smith, Alexander, appears rather in the character of an active personal enemy of the apostle; and the more, because he seems to have been once in fellowship, which would give him no small advantage in mischief as in opportunities. The many evil things may not all have come to effect, but he did them and showed what he was in doing them. Yet one cannot but feel that the critical text, which follows on the highest authority, is a great relief to the spirit: “the Lord will render to him according to his works.” That this should be turned into the optative, as in the common text, with a few uncials, most cursives, and many of the ecclesiastical writers, etc., one can understand; for man readily falls in with Jewish feeling. On the other hand, that the Lord will render him according to his works, is a certain truth which every Christian conscience must feel; and a truth in special accordance with these pastoral Epistles, which bring into distinctness the Lord's appearing.

Against Alexander, Timothy also was to stand on his guard. It is clear, therefore, that he was an adversary still bent on evil to the saints and on opposition to the work. The gentleness of Timothy's character might expose him to a mistaken kindness, where caution was imperatively required: “for he exceedingly withstood,” says the apostle, “our words.” More than the apostle had warned or entreated, and it may be Timothy himself among the rest.

The apostle now turns to his own great and recent trial at Rome, and the experience, bitter in many respects, but not without deep thanksgiving to the only One Who never fails, and gives us to know, that all things work together for good to those who love God—to those that are called

according to purpose. “At my first defense no one stood with me, but all deserted me: may it not be laid to their account.” How keenly painful and humiliating thin was to the apostle few can estimate, because so few make the least approach to him either in faith or in love. Not a soul on earth could feet as he felt what such failure was to the Lord Himself; which gave, therefore, immense emphasis to his prayer, “May it not be imputed to them.” Psalm 105 makes evident what the Lord felt of old when His chosen ones went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people. “He suffered no man to do them wrong, yea, he reproved kings for their sake, saying, ‘Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm.'“ Now, He may let any or all men de them wrong, and for the present reprove neither kings, nor subjects, nor serfs, when they scorn His anointed, and do His servants all the harm they can. Another day He will render to each according to his works. But what does He feel now? What, by and by, where His own betray and desert those He honors, who, for His sake, served them best in the hour of deepest need? May it not be laid to their charge.

Christ, however, never fails. So the apostle here says, “But the Lord stood with me and gave me power.” This was more than strengthening him personally— “gave me power, that through me the proclamation might be fully made, and all the Gentiles might hear.” Thus; to Christ's glory, and in suffering for His sake, did the apostle bear witness of the truth, and the gospel, and the Lord, before the highest authorities that govern the world. There was no fawning on great men, no patronage on the world's part. “And I was delivered out of a lion's mouth.” Whether this alludes to the Emperor in particular, or to his representative in a more general way, men say they are not able to determine. The phrase clearly means rescued from most imminent or overwhelming danger.

But the apostle enlarges as he looks onward. “The Lord will deliver me from every evil work” —not necessarily out of a lion's mouth another day, but from all real evil, and “will preserve for His heavenly kingdom.” Earth might yield still more of sorrow and of human persecution, to the uttermost. For the apostle it was no question of flesh being saved, but of preservation for the Lord's heavenly kingdom, to Whom be the glory for the ages of the ages. His and our every psalm may well end in a continual Hallelujah.

Chapter 26

On 2 Timothy 4:19-22

The apostle now turns to salute some that were dear to him, whose names are familiar to us throughout the inspired history.

“Salute Prima and Aquila, and the house of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left at Miletus sick. Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus saluteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. The Lord [Jesus Christ be] with thy spirit. Grace he with you” (ver. 19-22).

“Salute Prizes and Aquila and the house of Onesiphorus.” The two former were early associates, who remained faithful to the last. With them he associates the household of Onesiphorus, the same of whom he made mention at the close of the first chapter of this Epistle. The apostle deeply felt the identification of Onesiphorus with his own circumstances as a prisoner. “He often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain.” He was no longer in Rome, though perhaps not then at Ephesus, his usual dwelling place. When he was in Rome, he zealously sought, out the apostle and found him. God prospers earnest love for Christ's sake. It was indeed no other love than the apostle had proved at Ephesus, and nobody knew what service had been rendered there better than Timothy. These dear saints now receive together the last salutation of the apostle, once more the prisoner of Christ.

“Erastus abode in Corinth; and Trophimus I left at Miletus sick." There was no compulsion in regulating the labors of his fellow-ministers, even for an apostle. They were servants of the Lord, and ammo would have pressed this more, solemnly than Paul, none have more shrunk from setting up a directive authority between the Lord and His servants. There were urgent calls elsewhere, no doubt; but Erectus abode at Corinth. It was he probably who was once treasurer of the city. Very different were the circumstances of Trophimus. Him the apostle left at Miletus sick. Miraculous power was never used by the apostle either for the relief of a brother or even for the progress of the work. Here, again, the Lord only was looked to, and His glory was the sole motive either for working miracles or for abstaining. So we find in the former Epistle the apostle prescribing to Timothy that he should be no longer a water-drinker, but use a little wine for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities—just as any Christian friend might do at this present time, but without having the Spirit's inspiration. This abides now in the written word. Certainly there was no miracle in his case, any more than in that of Trophimus. Miracles as a rule were signs for unbelievers, not a means of cure for the household of faith.

In the twentieth verse of the fourth chapter [of 2 Timothy], the Apostle Paul informs Timothy that Erastus abode at Corinth. The form of expression implies that Erastus had staid behind at Corinth when the Paul left it. But this could not be meant of any journey from Corinth which Paul took prior to his first imprisonment at Rome; for when Paul departed from Corinth, as related in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, Timothy was with him. And this was the last time the apostle left Corinth before his coming to Rome; because he left it to proceed on his way, to Jerusalem, soon after his arrival at which place he was taken into custody, and continued in that custody till he was carried

to Caesar’s tribunal. There could be no need therefore to inform Timothy that Erastus staid behind at Corinth upon this occasion, because, if the fact was so, it must have been known to Timothy, who was present, as well as to Paul.

In the same verse our Epistle also states the following article ‘Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick.' When Paul passed through Miletus on his way to Jerusalem, as related in Acts 20, Trophimus was not left behind, but accompanied him to that city. He was indeed the occasion of the uproar at Jerusalem, in consequence of which Paul was apprehended; for 'they had seen,' says the historian, 'before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.' This was evidently the last time of Paul's being at Miletus before his first imprisonment; for, as hath been said, after his apprehension at Jerusalem, he remained in custody till he was taken to Rome,

In these two articles we have a journey referred to, which must have taken place subsequent to the conclusion of Luke's history, and of course after Paul's liberation from his first imprisonment. The Epistle, therefore, which contains this reference, since it appears from other parts of it to have been written while Paul was a prisoner at Rome, proves that he had returned to that city again, and undergone there a second imprisonment.")

“Do thy diligence to come before winter.” In verse 9 he had said, “do thy diligence to come shortly unto me.” The repetition with the defining words, “before winter,” is surely not in vain. He had told Timothy in verse 13 to bring the cloak left at Trees with Carpus. But he also no doubt would warn Timothy to start before wintry weather would expose him to such a voyage as he himself had known; and he would give him the opportunity of helping Paul the aged, and now a prisoner also. The Spirit of God deigns to think of the most ordinary things of this life. The body is for the Lord, not merely the soul; and the Lord is for the body. It is, therefore, not only moral debasement which should be far from the saint, but vanity and worldliness. On the other hand, the Lord condescends to think of that which might be a physical comfort. He has no pleasure in His servant shivering with cold; still less does true devotedness show itself in objects lees plain, any more than in enduring vermin. Superstition revels in these wretched ways; scripture is no less sober than holy. Tradition is the pride of man and the sport of Satan.

“Eubulus saluteth thee, and Pudens, and Linos, and Claudia, and all the brethren.”

The apostle was careful to promote love, and sends the salutations of several by name, not of men only; but of a woman, as well as of the brethren generally. If a woman was put first, and with good reason, in ver. 19, a woman is, with no less wisdom, put last of those personally named in ver. 21. The fabulists have spared the first-named. The second has been sought to be identified with the. vile friend of the vile epigrammatist Martial; in order to build up the romance of his subsequent conversion to Christianity, and marriage with Claudia, a supposed royal maiden of Britain, here assumed to be the Christian companion of the apostle! One admits the ingenuity of the mosaic formed out of small pieces of Martial 1:32; 4:13; 5:48; 6:58,; 11:53; and of Tac. Agric. 14. Ann. 12:32, as well as of the dubious but possible inscription found at Chichester in 1723 (Horsley's Brit. Romans p. 192, No. 76). But it will be noticed that in our verse they are not classed together as a pair: Linus separates them; and there is a Linus in the Spaniard's epigrams, as well as a Pudens, and a Claudia, and a Claudia Rufina whether identical or not. That Romanists should seize on the Linus here mentioned as bishop of Rome in apostolic times is natural. But it is certain

that the earliest extant record of this is a sentence of Irenaeus which is palpably unfounded on a point far more important than the identity of Linus. Speaking of Peter and Paul, he says, θεμελι■σαωτες ο■ν κα■ ο■κοδομ■σαωτες ο■ μακ■ριοι ■π■στολοι τ■ν ■κκλησ■αν. Λ■ν■ τ■ν τ■ς ■πισκοπ■ς λειτουργ■αν ■νεχε■ρισαν. Now it is demonstrable from scripture that the church in Rome cannot boast like Corinth of an apostolic foundation. There were converts thence from the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10). The apostle Paul wrote to them an elaborate Epistle, wholly ignoring Peter's ministry there, much more his episcopate there for 25 years! according to the Chron. of Eusebius. Paul is only known as a prisoner there himself, though he may have edified them after his discharge, before he was a second time in bonds, and his martyrdom that followed. As for Peter, the apostolate of the circumcision was his allotted province (Galatians and though we do hear of his unhappy visit to Antioch, not a word is said of Rome. We only know of his labors outside Judaea in the east (1 Peter 5), not the west. His Epistles are both addressed to the Christian Jews far east of Rome; where, if he went at all, it was to die for Christ, not to found the church there, still less to join Paul in ordaining Linus to its episcopate. Even the Benedictine editors confess and do not pretend to solve “diffioultates quibus primornm Petri (I), successorum turn chronologia, tum suceessio,” etc. Ensebius and Theodoret make Linus to succeed after Peter's death; and so Baronius and deTillemont. The Apost. Coast. (7:48), and Ruffians (Praef. Clem. Reeog.) hold that Linus was appointed bishop at an earlier date, while the apostles lived and moved elsewhere to the regions beyond; with which the words of Irenaeus are quite consistent; and so Bp. Pearson and Flenry the historian. Epiphanies adds to the confusion by the assertion that it was Clement who was ordained by Peter (I) for the Roman see, while he and Paul pursued their apostolic labors, as Tertullian had affirmed before him. All the differences of the ancients are far from being here stated. The only thing certain, when we leave scripture, is the uncertainty of tradition.

As to those whose salutations appear in ver. 21, their names were too common then to build on personally. One thing is sure, that they were Christians, those of whom Martial writes, heathen, who never, as far as we know, submitted to the righteousness of God. Martial came a young man to Rome only about two years before the apostle's death, and did not at first take up letters. His epigrams, as far as is known, were after, most of them long after, when his Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, were still heathen.

“All the brethren” are added by the apostle who would not forget the least, dear to Timothy as to himself. How strange, not to say unaccountable, that the great apostle Peter, if here then as tradition boldly declares, should have no place, even where persons so little known have their names indelibly inscribed by grace! Can it be believed that he was at Home with “our beloved brother Paul,” at his first defense, when no one took his part, but all forsook him? or that Paul could have written, “only Luke is with me?” It is too plain that tradition is untrustworthy, and fails wholly in those moral elements which ever accompany the inspiration of God.

There is good and ancient evidence for “the Lord Jesus Christ” in the last ver. (22), the Alexandrian and two cursives adding “Jesus” only. Though one or two cursives may omit the clause as a whole, there is no doubt of the “Lord,” which, it may be noticed, is the prevailing designation throughout, save where special reasons have “Christ Jesus.” But the prayer is that He be “with thy spirit.” Such was the last inspired desire of the apostle for Timothy, with “grace be with you” for those in general with Timothy, which is marred in the Posh. Syr.'s, making Timothy the

only abject in the second wish as in the first. It is the expression of a heart that could feel fervently for all, yet knew how to make a difference.

Chapter 27

Experience of Abraham

The experiences of the heart occupy a large place in the thoughts of Christians. It is nevertheless important always to judge them by the word of God. These experiences are the expression of the inward state of the heart, and of our relations with others, as well as of the sentiments which our conduct, in these same relations, produces in our hearts and in our consciences.

It is not necessary here to speak of the experience of an unconverted person, although such an one is nevertheless not without experiences. It is true, that he does not know God, but in a certain sense, he enjoys His goodness in nature; his conscience can blame him—he can be weary of sin, and alarmed at the thought of judgment. He can never forget the latter in the enjoyment of his family and society in a life naturally amiable; but he can do no more.

Nevertheless there is a great variety in the experiences of men in whom the Spirit of God is working. This difference arises, on the one hand, from the relations in which we stand to God, and, on the other, from our conduct in the same relations. It is true that God has not put us under the law; nevertheless an awakened conscience is, as regards its relationship to God, either under the law or under grace. The Spirit of God, Who has awakened it, has caused its light to enter, and produces there the feeling of its responsibility. I am under the law as long as I make my acceptance with God to depend on my faithfulness to God, that is, on the fulfillment of my duties. If, on the other hand, the love of God and His work in Christ are, for my conscience, the only and perfect ground of adoption, then am I under grace. The Holy Spirit cannot weaken the responsibility; but He can reveal to me that God has saved my soul, which was lost because my life did not answer this responsibility.

As long as the awakened soul remains under the law, it has sad experiences; it feels that it is guilty according to the law, and that it has no power to keep it. It is well aware that the law is good; but, in spite a all its efforts, it does not attain its object, which is obedience. The experiences of souls in such a state are the experiences of their sin—of their weakness and of the power of sin. Even supposing such a soul should not be as yet altogether brought to despair by the expectation of the just judgment of God, because it experiences in a slight degree the love of God, and because it hopes in the work of Christ, there will not be less uncertainty as to its relations with God, and this gives place to alternations of peace and trouble.

In the latter case, the soul has indeed been drawn by grace; but the conscience has not been purified, and the heart not set at liberty. These experiences are useful, in order to convince us of sin and weakness, and to destroy all confidence in ourselves. It is necessary that we should feel ourselves condemned before God, and that we should know, that henceforth all depends on His unmerited grace.

It is otherwise when our conscience is purged, and we have understood our position before God in Christ. Condemned in the presence of God, we understand that God has loved us, and that He justifies us by the work of His Son; we understand that sin is taken away, and our conscience is

made perfect. We have no longer conscience of sins before God, because He Himself has taken them away forever by the blood of Christ, and that blood is always before His eyes, we know that, being united with Christ Who has fully glorified God in that which concerns our sins, we have been made the righteousness of God in Him. So the heart is free to enjoy His love in the presence of God.

Thenceforth we are under grace. Our relations with God depend thenceforth on God's nature, and the righteousness which Christ is become for us. Our relations with God do not depend on what we are before Him as responsible beings. Our experiences henceforth ever return to this; that God is love, that Christ is our righteousness, and that God is our Father. We have communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. We enjoy all the privileges of that relation. Nevertheless the use which we make of our privileges affects that enjoyment. These relations remain constantly the same, as well as the perception which we have of them; but the enjoyment of what God is in that relation depends on our conduct in such a position.

The experiences are always founded on my relations with God. Am I sad? It is because the communion with God—communion which answers to my relations to Him—is interrupted. I feel that I do not enjoy the blessed communion to which I have attained, and it is this that causes my sadness; but this does not arise from uncertainty as to the communion itself. The flesh has no relations with God; and the flesh is ever in us. And “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). By this Spirit we have communion with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3); and we are called on to walk in the light, as God Himself is light (1 John 1:7). Our communion with God depends on our walking according to the light, although, when we have lost it, God can visit us by His grace, and restore communion. But God is faithful and does not permit sin in His children. If they do not walk with Him in the light, He will cause them to pass through all the trials and all the conflicts necessary to bring them to the knowledge of themselves, that they may remain in the light, and that their communion may be true and pure.

It is true that these trials and conflicts do not affect our relations with God, because these depend on what God is in Christ, according to His graze and righteousness; but the suspension of communion with God, a suspension which puts us outside of the enjoyment of the light, brings us into all kinds of conflicts, and painful and humbling experiences of what our own heart really is. God Himself also employs correction to humble us and break our will. Not only is the actual fall into sin an opportunity for the dealing of God with our souls, but all that is hard and rebellious in our souls also affords an opportunity for it. The consequence of these truths is, that the experiences of a soul that walks with God are far more simple than the experiences of an unfaithful soul; and, nevertheless, the knowledge of God and of the heart of man will be far deeper in the former case. As long as we walk in communion with Him, we walk in the light; and we have in His presence the continual sense of His fatherly lore. Nevertheless this presence acts upon our soul to manifest all that is not in harmony with the light.

The judgment of ourselves takes place in the presence of God, in the sense of His love, and in connection with that love. Sin has the character of everything which is not light; and is judged, not only because sin cannot agree with holiness, but also because it does not agree with the love of God.

With hearts purified by the love of God, and strengthened by communion with Him, the grace which acts thus in us takes the place of sin which has been judged; and thenceforth our walk in the world is the effect of the communion of God in our hearts. We carry God, so to speak, through the world in, our hearts. Filled with His love, and living in the power of the life of Christ, that which Satan offers does not tempt us. Our worldly trials become a motive to obedience and not to sin. The presence of God in our hearts preserves us in our relations with men. Thenceforth we experience proofs of our corruption in the presence of God, and in communion with Him. It is thus we judge sin in ourselves, and sin thus judged does not appear in our walk. But if we do not walk in fellowship with God, if sin is not thus judged, we walk more or less in the world with a rebellious will and lusts unjudged. The action of our self-will makes us uneasy, because we are not satisfied. Are we satisfied? Then God is forgotten. Satan presents temptations which answer to unjudged lusts; then the corruption of the heart manifests itself by a fall and by our relations with Satan, which take the place of our relations with God. Such a knowledge of the corruption of our heart will be never so deep, never so clear, never so true, as that which we shall have obtained in the presence of God by the light itself. We shall know sin by sin, by a bad conscience, instead of knowing it by the light of God Himself. We shall be humbled instead of being humble. The faithfulness of God will restore the soul; but the continued power and growing light of His communion will not be the same. It is true we shall experience His patience and His goodness; but we shall not know God in the same way as when walking faithfully in communion with Him. It is true, God glorifies Himself by His ways with such a soul, because all things concur to His eternal glory; but the knowledge of God grows by communion with Him.

The life of Abraham and that of Jacob come in the way of interesting examples, in support. of what we have been saying. It is true that neither the law, nor the fullness of grace, had been as yet revealed. Nevertheless, as we see in Heb. 11, the principles of the life of faith on the promises of God were in general the same.

“In many things we all offend.” Abraham himself failed in faith on some occasions; but, in general, his life was a walk of faith with God. This is the reason why his experiences are of another nature, far more intimate with God, and more simple, than those of Jacob. His history is short, and not rich in incidents; while the communications of God, to this patriarch are numerous and frequent. In his history there is much about God, and little about man. With one single exception Abraham always remained in the land of promise. He was indeed a stranger and pilgrim, because the Canaanite dwelt there (Gen. 12:6); but he was in relation with God, and walked before Him.

At first when God had called him, he had not fully answered this call. It is true, he left indeed his country and kindred, but not his father's house, and so, he did not arrive in Canaan. It is true, he had given up a great deal; he had gone from Ur in Chaldea, but he came no farther than Haran and rested there (chap. 11:31, 32). So it is with the heart that has not learned that it belongs entirely to God. It is only in conformity with the call of God that we can enter into the position of the promise. Alter the death of his father Terah, Abraham started at the command of God; and they set out to come into the land of Canaan, and into it they came (chap. 12:5). Here we have the position of the heavenly people. Placed, by the grace and power of God, in a heavenly position, of which Canaan is a figure, they dwell there; they have everything in promise, but nothing as yet in possession. The Lord revealed Himself to Abraham in calling him; He reveals Himself anew to him in the place which he now knew and which he was going to possess: “I will give this land to thy

posterity" (ver. 7). Such is in general our confidence in God, that we shall possess really in future that which we know now as strangers.

"And Abram built there an altar to the LORD, Who had appeared to him" (ver. 7). He serves God and enjoys communion with Him. Thence he goes into another place and there pitches his tent; he builds anew an altar to the LORD, and calls on the name of Jehovah (ver. 8). He is a pilgrim in the land of promise; and that is his entire history. We dwell in the heavenly places, we enjoy them by faith; and we have communion with God Who brought us thither. Abraham's tent and altar in this place give a character to his whole history, and all the experiences of faith consist in that.

His unbelief brings him into Egypt (ver. 10-20). There he had no altar. An Egyptian servant-maid becomes afterward the occasion of his fall, and a source of trouble to him. She is, as we learn in Gal. 4:24, 25, a type of the law; for the law and the flesh are always in relationship with each other. The grace of God brings Abraham back; but he does not regain an altar till he has returned to the place where he first pitched his tent, and to the altar which he had built before: there he has communion afresh with God (chap. 13:3, 4).

The promises of God are the portion of Abraham. He lets Lot take what he pleases: Is not the whole land before thee? Depart from me, I pray thee. If thou choosest the lefts I will take the right; and if thou take the right, I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the whole plain of Jordan, which; before the Lord had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, was watered throughout until one comes to Zoar, like the garden of the Lord, and like the land of Egypt. And Lot chose for himself the whole plain of Jordan" (ver. 9-11). Lot is the type of a worldly believer. He takes that which for the moment appears the better part, and chooses the place over which the judgment of God is suspended. Abraham had given up everything according to the flesh, and God shows him the whole extent of the promise. He gives him a visible proof of that which He has given him; and confirms it to him forever (ver. 14-18). Lot, the worldly believer, is overcome by the princes of the world. Abraham delivers him. With the servants of his house he overcomes the power of the enemy (chap. 14:1-21). He will receive nothing of the world. He says to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted up my hand to the LORD, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, saying, Surely I will take nothing of all that belongeth to thee, from a thread to a shoe-latchet, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abraham rich" (ver. 22-23).

Afterward God reveals Himself to Abraham as his buckler and great reward. He promises him a posterity at a time when his body was now dead. Justified by faith, he receives the confirmation of the promises of God, who binds Himself by a sacrifice, type of the sacrifice of Christ. Then the inheritance is shown him in its details (chap. 15.).

Following the counsels of the flesh, Abraham desires for a moment the fulfillment of the promise by the law; that is to say, by Hagar. But thus he only learns that it is impossible that the child of the law should inherit with the child of promise (chap. 16.).

Then God reveals Himself anew as God Almighty. He tells him he shall be the father of many nations, and that God will be his God forever (chap. 17:1-14). The posterity according to the promise is promised again (chap. 17:15-19).

After that, God once more visits Abraham, and gives him positive promises respecting the approaching birth of his son (chap. 18:9-15). He looks upon him as His friend, saying, "Shall I hide

from Abraham what I am, going to do?" (Chap. 17). He communicates to him His thoughts concerning the world, and Abraham converses with Him in perfect peace and intimacy. He prays for those who had forgotten the Lord (chap. 18: 23-33). It was necessary that Abraham should again experience, in the case of Ishmael, that the law produces sadness and anguish; and at the court of Abimelech he learned to know, that, when unbelief is in action, it only produces troubles and sorrows. But God, in His faithfulness, watches over him, as well as over the mother of the posterity.

Afterward Abraham was tried in the highest degree, till he had to give up everything according to the flesh, and even the promises. But the promises in a Christ raised in figure: are confirmed to Christ Himself, and in Him to all the spiritual posterity of Abraham (chap. 22:15-19; compare Gal. 3:16-18).

Abraham then has learned by a fall that neither the law nor the promise are of any avail for the flesh. Nevertheless, in general, his peculiar experiences consisted in pilgrimage and adoration all the time he continued in the promised land. We have now remarked that his life is characterized by a tent and an altar. The whole experience, the whole life, of the faithful Abraham, consists almost entirely of worship, intercession, and revelations from God; so that he learned to comprehend these latter with increasing clearness and accuracy. He passed his time in the place to which God had called him. The revelations of God were for him, rich, sweet, and admirable; his knowledge of God intimate and deep; his personal experiences happy and simple; for he walked with God, Who had revealed Himself to him in grace.

Chapter 28

On Acts 15:1-5

The Spirit of God next brings before us the first signal working of that judaizing which was destined to play a deep, wide, and permanent portion in the history of the church of God. “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (ver. 1).

In every point of view this was serious. It was an error, and yet it claimed to be founded on the word of God. It proceeded from men bearing the name of Christ, and withal it struck at the foundation. Satan's habitual effort is to insinuate evil, not only under fair appearance and if possible by one part of the word made to neutralize another, but through disciples. No principle more false than to urge the reputation of advocates in defense of their doctrine, which must stand or fall according to scripture interpreted in the light of Christ and His work; for these ever call for the energies of the Holy Spirit, as they command the hearts of the faithful.

It is clear also that the truth of God is imperiled by an unwarranted addition even more than by the manifest opposition of unbelief. These men did not avowedly deny the gospel, nor teach that one could be saved by an ordinance only; but they did insist on the necessity of circumcision in order to salvation. This is to undermine Christianity, which is not merely promise but accomplishment; but mere promises leave the door open, as inspired history shows, for thereby insinuating the law, instead of sovereign grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. It was really ignorance of Christ risen from the dead and glorified in heaven, the proper object of the Christian. He never can thus be by faith before the soul, without maintaining the efficacy of His atoning death. What has law or circumcision to do with Him who is at the right hand of God? On this side of the cross law has its place.

But these men were occupied with their prejudices and were looking back at things and persons on earth, not through the rent veil upon Christ above. Hence their pride was wounded. They could not bear to hear that the distinctive mark, the ancient glory of a Jew, was now eclipsed and gone. They had feebly learned the teaching of the cross. They had not discerned there the sentence of death on the flesh at its best. They would no doubt have acknowledged their need of Him who suffered once for all for their sins; but they saw not their religion (and circumcision was its initiatory and characteristic badge) treated as naught, yea utterly condemned therein. Error flows from a wholly false measure. Had Christ, the truth, been before their souls, had they estimated aright His death on the cross, they had never fallen into a mistake so profound and unworthy.

But they were wrong otherwise also. The Lord had promised the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, to guide into it all and to teach what they could not bear daring His earthly ministry. The truth was there in His person; but yet the best taught of His disciples did not understand at all fully even fundamentals till He was risen and glorified. But now the Holy Spirit had been sent down from heaven, and Gentiles without circumcision had received Him, no less than did the circumcised believers. Was this nothing in their eyes? Is it not a solemn lesson that disciples could be so blinded by their religious habits as to overlook a fact so plain, certain, and conclusive? For God

had taken care that not the apostles of the uncircumcision but Peter himself should be His chosen instrument for the call of Cornelius, in the presence of the six brethren of the circumcision that accompanied him from Joppa.

It is instructive also to observe, if faith is ever humble, bold though it may be, how presumptuous error is. For these men who were clamorous for the necessity of circumcision, ventured not to plead that apostolic authority had laid down any such dogma as they sought to impose. Their judgment and their dignity, we may say, proceeded from themselves, in this behaving like the Gentiles who know not God.

Insurrection against the truth was thus permitted to display itself in the face of the apostles, that the Lord might give us His own distinct and ever-abiding correction. What a mercy to us, as well as to the church of God ever since, that this question was not suppressed till the apostles disappeared from the earth! We should then have had only an uninspired answer however sound. Now we have what all Christians own to possess divine authority. That which an apostle writes is really the Lord's commandment (1 Cor. 14:37).

The troublers came from Judaea, which with the weak and ignorant would be apt to lend weight to their words. Of this Satan is ever active to take advantage. Human tradition readily creeps in, and as naturally flatters the flesh. The Holy Ghost falls back upon the word; only we must take care that we do not require the letter which kills when we can only have the spirit which gives life. Subjection to Christ alone keeps us right; life in Him is always obedient and holy, and is the way of true intelligence. Human tradition is never to be trusted even among disciples. God is jealous for His word, which bears constant testimony to Christ and therefore against human pride. The men who came down from Judea were imperious nominally for God; it was really for the flesh and self. They would have cut off, if they could, not only the Gentile saints but the apostles of the uncircumcision.

“And when Paul and Barnabas had not small dissension and questioning with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up unto Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question” (ver. 2). Here again let us admire the wisdom of God's ways. Paul and Barnabas themselves were unable to settle the dispute. Self-will is invincible, even for apostles. God had it in His mind to interpose in a much more impressive and efficacious manner. It might have been dangerous, however desirable in itself, to have terminated the present matter of debate at Antioch. For the evil, being inveterate as to principle in the nature of things, would surely have broken out afresh subsequently, and elsewhere, probably worst of all in Jerusalem itself. It was true wisdom, therefore, to transfer the further discussion of the question to the source from whence the mischief had come; more particularly as Paul and Barnabas would go there, in order that it might not only be heard but there and then settled by all the authority given of God for the governing of His assembly on the earth. All was thus directed under the good hand of God; for the evil was judged in the quarter from whence it emanated, where presumably, not to say notoriously, was its hotbed, where lived those who knew best its promoters, and where all was rather favorable than hostile to them; with on the other hand the immense moral weight that would follow the judgment from such as God had set first in the church to govern in the Lord's name.

In Gal. 2 the apostle Paul says he went up “according to revelations” Here the inspired historian says that they (i.e. the brethren or the laborers generally without defining more) arranged or

decided that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem about this question. There is no more contradiction than in Acts 13 where the Spirit called unmistakably and exclusively the same servants of the Lord to a definite missionary work, while they also enjoyed the cordial and holy fellowship of their fellow-laborers in commending them to the grace of God for that tour. They may have had the revelation direct as in Acts 16 or through the prophetic intimation of others as before; what is certain is that “according to revelation” Paul went up, and not merely as a step appointed by others. Each statement is in perfect keeping with the document where it is given, and the Holy Spirit's design in each, though men as usual have not been wanting to set them in antagonism. Titus was one of these others, and his case at least of immediate bearing on the question, as an uncircumcised Gentile endowed and honored of God beyond most; but this again is specified only to the Galatians for its importance there, though room be amply and evidently left for it in the Acts. The rationalistic misuse of God's word is an instance of that ignorance or dishonesty, if not both, which characterizes the system. The believer ought to have no hesitation or difficulty, inasmuch as faith adheres to all scripture as divine.

“They therefore, having been set forward by the assembly, passed through both Phenicia and Samaria, recounting the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren” (ver. 3). Is there any good reason why προπ should not be rendered here as in Rom. 15:24, 1 Cor. 16:6, 3 John 6? No doubt the heart of the saints was with them, not with the legalists; but there was considerate and affectionate care for their wants by the way, whether or not there was any escort, as in ch. 21: 5, which some conceive here. The picture is a lovely one, the joy in all created by the accounts heard of God's grace outside Israel. What a contrast, with Jewish jealousy! Yet are unlettered men and women peculiarly open to superstition, prejudice, and human feeling. But divine love prevailed, in accordance with the truth. Others alas! who for the time ought to have been teachers had again need to be taught the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God and had come to need milk, not solid food. It is harder to unlearn than to learn.

“And on arriving at Jerusalem they were welcomed by the assembly and the apostle's and the elders, and reported all things that God did with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, believers, saying, It is necessary to circumcise them and charge [them] to keep the law of Moses” (ver. 4: 5).

The heart of the church beat truly; but there were adversaries now within as well as without. It was not yet the conference, but meetings preliminary to it, where the wonderful works of God by the gospel drew out sympathy or opposition among those at Jerusalem who bore the Lord's name. Those who at this time resented the liberty of grace are expressly said to have believed. The crisis therefore was grave. Unity—unity not merely by-and-by in heaven, but now on earth—is the blessed privilege and the unalienable responsibility of the body of Christ, the assembly. There was no such unhappy wish as to forestall the due place, by dealing with the question where Paul and Barnabas had especial and commanding influence, and then arguing on the church's unity to compel the communion of the assembly in Jerusalem and of course everywhere else. Yet Antioch might have been plausibly set forward as the only proper place to discuss and determine a question which so intimately concerned the Lord's glory among the Gentile believers. For not from Jerusalem but from Antioch were those ambassadors of Christ sent forth who had been the great pioneers in the missionary work of the Holy Spirit. Self or party could have furnished abundant reasons; but Christ held His place, which first sought His will and then made all saints dear, even

those who were creating trouble by their lack of grace, lowliness, and intelligence. Thus the snare was avoided by which Satan sought even then to scatter and make a Jewish church apart from the Gentile; or, at the least, by leaving out the assembly in Jerusalem the apostles, and the elders, to begin a separate course at Antioch, which would ere long end in division if not immediately. But grace and truth prevailed, the respect clue to all those whom the Lord had honored, and, as we have seen, the particular principle of dealing with evil in its root, and not merely its fruits.

It was, I presume, at this juncture that the apostle, as he tells us in Gal. 2, set the gospel he preached to the Gentiles before those of reputation in private. It was then they saw that he had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with that of the circumcision; and that James, Cephas, and John gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship according to that partition of the work which the Lord had already marked out for all that had eyes to discern. This was of the utmost moment to state in, the Epistle; but it was outside the public history and independent of the council which is the Spirit's. object in the chapter before us. The independence of Paul's mission and work does not enter into view here; whereas in the letter to the Galatians it was of capital moment, and the decrees of the council not named, where they could have no just place, and their mention might have wrought only mischief. How truly, in the New Testament as in the Old, to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. Above it is uncalled for, where all is light, peace, and love to God's glory.

Chapter 29

On Acts 15:6-11

It seems evident that much was done before the council. The opposition of the judaizing party had come out fully and distinctly from the time the apostles of the Gentiles had been received by the assembly, as it had wrought since the baptism of Cornelius and his household. Naturally the public recital of what God had done in Asia Minor provoked their prejudices yet more. What occurred privately is not stated here; but we know from the early verses of Gal. 2 that it was of high moment.

What is reported in Acts 15 had for its prime object the repression of Jewish feeling and the distinct recognition of the Gentiles who believed on common ground with the Jewish disciples. The decrees, that were ordained by the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem had the greatest weight in that point of view. But, in writing to the Gentile assemblies, the apostle takes the high ground of grace, and proves the incompatibility of a fleshly ordinance, however venerable or instructive, with the truth of a dead and risen Savior as a ground of justification before God. In that grand scheme, wherein God Himself has wrought for guilty and lost man in the cross and blood of His Son, circumcision made with hands wholly vanishes away. And the Gentile believers, dead in their offenses and the uncircumcision of their flesh, Christ quickened together with Him, no less than the Jewish faithful, having forgiven us all the offenses. The handwriting written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, He blotted out and took out of the way, nailing it to the cross. We can understand how truly it was of God, thus to confront and set aside all Gentile inclination for ordinances by the teaching of the truth of Christ; which had buried the question in His grave and given the Christian a new place in Him, to which the flesh never had, nor can have, a claim. The decrees had their place and season most suitably while the early Jews who believed were objects of the patience of God; but the apostolic Epistles treat the question on a deeper foundation, and with higher associations, which abide forever. But it is highly instructive to notice that the apostle was not behind others in honoring and using the decrees, which are not even mentioned in the final discussion of the case for the edification of the church in general.

“And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to see about the matter. And when there had been much questioning, Peter stood up and said to them, Brethren, (lit. Men-brethren) ye know how that from early days God chose among you that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And the heart-knowing God bore them witness, giving [them] the Holy Spirit, even as to us also; and He put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why tempt ye God, that ye should put a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus we shall be saved in like manner as they” (ver. 6-11). Here we have the opening of the council. None but the apostles and elders are mentioned as gathered together. It was emphatically for their decision; but assuredly not without the presence and concurrence of the assembly, as we know from verse 22, not to speak of verse 12; and this of course as a reality, not a mere form which Christianity forbids. But God would have the positive seal of the highest authority in the eyes even of the remonstrants. Hence the prominent mention throughout of the apostles and elders, while it cannot be doubted that the assembly was present and free to take,

part, It was a matter in which every soul had a real interest but in which the judgment of the wisest was particularly needed. And One wiser than any took His guiding part here (ver. 28), Whose personal presence we have seen to be sedulously acknowledged throughout this entire book; as indeed it is characteristic of the church of God according to the scriptures. The Holy Ghost was there and was counted on for guidance to the glory of Christ.

This, however, did not preclude discussion. Verse 7 lets us know that there was much debate or questioning. No doubt it was sorrowful and humiliating that there should be such disputation; even in the presence of the apostles; but the fact is plain and is calmly recorded by the Holy Spirit, which should convince not a few how far their notion of ecclesiastical order differs from primitive history. Even in apostolic days we see how liberty prevailed though flesh undoubtedly took advantage of it. To destroy the liberty because of its abuse were a remedy worse than the disease; and thus it is with Christendom bound in fetters of brass for ages, and denouncing true liberty as license. Human rules have rendered the scriptural state of things just as impossible against good as against evil. But faith, when directed to God's revelation in this, can never rest satisfied short of subjection to scripture, and the rather as the Holy Spirit was promised to abide with us forever.

The apostles, it is evident, bore patiently with the difficulties and even disputes of their less discerning and more prejudiced brethren. They were strong in the grace that is in Christ. They had His glory livingly before their souls. They tonight net lordship over the faith of their brethren, but that others should stand by faith even as they stood. As the grace and truth of Christ faded in men's hearts, ecclesiastical authority became an idol or self-importance a snare. Such was, such is, no small part of the present ruined state of the church: no one contends that there was perfection even in apostolic days, still less can one look for perfection now, even within the most circumscribed sphere. But every faithful soul is bound to stand for the Lord's honor according to the written word, and to eschew whatever is opposed to God's order as well as to doctrinal truth and personal holiness. The denial of such a responsibility is in substance not only a sin but antinomian in principle, no matter whose be the names or what the fair-spoken pleas to excuse the unfaithfulness. It is easy to point out grievous short-coming even where a truthful stand is made. But those who point it out with complacency fail in this very matter to exhibit the Spirit of Christ, and will never be able to justify human methods in God's church, even if they succeeded in carrying them out ever so successfully. How much more worthy to do better according to the word what they blame for being done so feebly! Is it uncharitable to say that to act themselves according to the word is far from their purpose, which is simply to discredit those who do seek it?

Peter then reminds all of his mission to Joppa, where the Gentiles received the gospel through him as God's first and apostolic instrument. Most powerfully does he urge God's dealings with them, “the heart-knowing God” being witness to them, in the gift of the Holy Spirit, uncircumcised as they were; nay, further, that He put no distinction between the Jewish and the Gentile believers, seeing that His purification is of the heart by faith. For this a rite avails nothing. “Now, therefore, why tempt ye God”? Their prejudice, in itself, and specially if maintained, was a real disbelief of God's word and acts. It was putting a yoke of law upon the neck of the disciples, which none in the past or present could bear: a circumcised man was debtor to do the whole law. For introduced in glory as it was, it is a ministry of death and condemnation. The gospel believed is salvation through the grace of the Lord Jesus, Who bore our penalty and blotted out our sins in His blood. This is grace indeed, where all the guilt was ours and all that availed for our forgiveness and deliverance was

His, to the vindication of that God, His God and Father, Whom we had rebelled against or lived without. In reality we knew Him not as He is, believing the lie of Satan rather than the truth of God. We did our own will and gave Him no credit for love, though He so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth should not perish but have everlasting life. But now we have seen the Son and believed in Him. His grace in suffering for our sins, the Just for the unjust, has made us both ashamed of ourselves and acquainted with God; and He is love. “Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us.”

Formed by that grace, it is remarkable that Peter says here, “we believe (we Jews) that we shall be saved in like manner as they (Gentiles).” The natural phrase for a Jew would have been, “They in like manner as we;” but grace reigns and Peter says, “We, in like manner as they.” How worthy of the gospel! This was not Simon Bar-Jonah left to himself, but it was Peter—a true rockman. Flesh and blood had not prompted the thought or word, but the Father Who is in heaven.

On Acts 15:12-21

Peter had made an admirable introduction and his argument was the reflection of the grace of the Lord Jesus. It was well and worthy that the apostle of the circumcision should so speak not merely from personal experience but from the sovereign choice of. God. We can understand the effect: “And all the multitude kept silence.” None could doubt the strong Jewish prejudice of Peter, no more could they question now his assertion of liberty from the law for the Gentiles. But there was another reason for keeping silence. “And they hearkened unto Barnabas and. Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God wrought among the Gentiles by them” (ver. 12). Here there ought not to be a hesitation that “all the multitude” must take in not merely the apostles and the elders but the assembly. This seems certain from ver. 22, whatever may be our judgment of the true reading in ver. 23. It is interesting to note that the signs and wonders are said to have been wrought of God by Barnabas and Paul, whereas in ver. 4 the more general work of the Lord is said to have been all that God wrought with them. The signs and wonders were more external and they are viewed as mere instruments. “With them,” implies more of fellowship and divine association than exercise of mere power. Such a statement must have had the most powerful effect on Jewish minds. God graciously gave in abundance what they would expect peculiarly in so novel a work among the Gentiles. His grace had fully provided for all emergencies beforehand. “And after they had held their peace, James answered saying, Brethren (men-brethren) hearken to me; Simeon has rehearsed how God first visited the Gentiles to take out of (them) a people for His name” (ver. 13, 14). This is a most important proposition in its way, it gives a separate character to the present work of God. It in no way denies that God had a line of saints in Israel, and before Israel, and what is more, outside Israel; but it asserts a special gathering out at this present time, and it leaves no room for the vain thought, that even one nation, as a whole, shall be brought by the gospel to confess the Lord, still less that all nations shall be so changed. The truth is that God only proposes while Jesus is at His right hand, to take out of all a people for His name. This is the church of God and as distinct from the ways of God before the cross as from those which are to follow the Lord's appearing and reign by-and-by. “And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written; After these things I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and will build again its ruins and will set it up; so that the residue of men may seek out the

Lord and all the nations upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, Who maketh [all] these things known from the beginning of the world” (ver. 15-18).

It is an error to suppose that these last words allude to the mystery of forming the believing Gentiles with the faithful Jews into one body the church. Rom. 16:25, 26 and Eph. 3:5, 6 do refer to that mystery, but not our text which simply speaks of God's gracious recognition of those of the nations that believe as His own, though Gentiles still, whether under the gospel now or in the future kingdom. Union with Christ and the head as His body goes much farther, though said of Gentiles now as of believing Jews;. but no Old Testament prophet reveals it. The prophetic writings of Rom. 16 and the prophets of Eph. 3 are New Testament exclusively.

It will be observed that the prophets are referred to generally, though none but Amos is quoted, and the object is general. James draws from their testimony, proved expressly by the one cited the principle, of Gentiles as such having the Lord's name called upon them. So far were they of the nations from having to accept circumcision that the prophet speaks of all the Gentiles. This will be in the days of the kingdom as no Jew could deny. They will not become Jews any more than the Jews will become Gentiles; both will be blessed of the Lord in their respective positions when the Messiah reigns. It was absurd therefore to object to God's grace toward the Gentiles now, under the gospel, and in the church where is neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christ is all and in all.

The reading in ver. 18 is somewhat doubtful, and even the version, which may mean “who doeth these things known from the beginning of the world.” The general sense is plain enough. Accordingly James gives his judgment. “Wherefore my judgment is that we trouble not those who from the Gentiles turn to God, but write to them that they may abstain from pollutions of idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For Moses from generations of old hath in every city those who preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath” (verses 19-21).

“The pollution of idols” were meats offered to idols, as in ver. 29. Cf. Dan. 1 Mal. 1, not to speak of Eccles. 11 Bentley's conjecture of χοιρε■ας (“pork”) for πορνε■ας is an instance of the great scholar's audacity and erudite ignorance (perhaps suggested by Bellonius' Observat. iii. 10 whom he cites on ver. 29). We may think it strange to see unclean sin classed with idolatrous sanction &c.; but the Jew felt differently, and to the Gentile they were equally indifferent.

Thus it was going up rather to God's ways with Noah, than enforcing the law of Moses. Noah being a sort of head of mankind generally, after the flood, Gentile liberty was thus secured, idolatry was intolerable, and so was fornication, however universal both among the nations. Abstinence from things strangled and blood brought in the recognition of God's taking account of man as fallen. God forbade both: the use of the creature was not forbidden to man, but God prohibited meddling with the special signs of death; life belongs to God, and it was forfeited through sin. As for the law, there was no reason why the church should busy itself in that direction: from generations of old Moses had in every city those that preach him. The synagogues at any rate had the law read there every sabbath. The Gentiles henceforth might well rejoice in the gospel.

Chapter 31

On Acts 15:22-29

It may be noticed by the way that no vote was taken, nor any equivalent measure. For it was no question of the will of man but of God, Who wrought by the Spirit to give holy wisdom and general concurrence.

“Then it seemed good to the apostles and elders with the whole assembly, having chosen from among them to send men, with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, Judas called Barnabas, leading men among the brethren, having written by their hand, The apostles and the elder brethren to the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia greeting. Whereas we heard that some who went out from us troubled you with words, upsetting tour souls; to whom we gave no commandment; it seemed good to us, having been of one accord, to choose and send men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have given up their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas themselves also announcing by word the same things. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these necessary things: to abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and blood, and things strangled, and fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well. Farewell” (ver. 22-29).

It will be observed that the most ancient authorities open with a reading which is now accepted by almost all critics. This yields a sense rather more remote from ecclesiastical tradition than the ordinary text, where “the elders” are distinguished sharply from “the brethren” immediately following. The “elder brethren,” however, is a formula which exactly agrees with the state of things which was obtaining at Jerusalem. No doubt they were “the elders” there, as we find them called in chap. 11: 30, as well as in chap. 15:2, 6. They were the local authorities; but they appear not to have been chosen formally, as the elders undoubtedly were in the Gentile assemblies by apostolic authority, direct or indirect; they seem rather to have acted simply from their experience and moral weight, as was usual among the Jews. This falls in remarkably with the peculiar expression employed here, “the elder brethren,” and harmonizes with the tone of Peter's address in chap. v. of his first Epistle.

But there is another remark to make of still more immediate and important application practically. Judas, Barnabas, and Silas were sent with Paul and Barnabas, characterized as “leading men among the brethren.” They were neither apostles on the one hand, nor were they elders or elder brethren on the other, but were chosen by the council, for their fitness, to visit Antioch. It is the same expression which we find three times in Heb. 13 The Revised version like the Authorized, translates it “chief” in Acts 15; but “those that had (or, “have") the rule” in Hebrews: “had” for the departed chiefs, “have” for such as still lived and labored. They are not spoken of as elders, but seem to have been identified with the ministration of the word (ver. 7), rather than with oversight or presiding like the elders. This fact gives us clear insight, when duly recognized, into the far greater liberty as well as variety of gift, exercised in the apostolic church, as compared with the straitness of modern Christendom. I do not speak of sign-gifts, such as miracles and tongues, but of spiritual

endowments given of Christ for the perfecting of the saints. Denominational arrangements on the worldly system of a salary, with the claims of an exclusive position, directly interferes with the Lord's will in this respect and destroys the beautiful liberty of the Spirit, to the famishing (not the edification) of the body of Christ.

Yet it will be found by the attentive reader not only of the Acts of the Apostles but of their Epistles, that the principle and the practice of this free ministration in the assemblies is easily vouched for apart from local authority or official rank throughout the New Testament. Rom. 12 is plain. “Teaching” and “exhorting,” and “ruling,” or “leading,” are spoken of as “gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us” distinct from “prophecy,” as well as one from another. In the church or assembly according to God's word there was and ought to be room for them all. It were the sheerest unbelief to assume that they are now extinct. Woe be to the adversaries of the Holy Ghost who affirm such a falsehood to justify their system!

The reader can Compare also 1 Cor. 12 and 14 throughout, as well as chap. 15:1-16, Gal. 6:6, Eph. 4:7-16, Phil. 1:14, Col. 2:19, 1 Thess. 5:12, 13, 2 Tim. 2:2, 1 Peter 4:10, 11, 3 John 7, 8, which prove in the clearest manner the full opening in the assembly as well as towards the world for those suitably gifted which scripture maintains, and only persons like Diotrephes; as far as God's word speaks, dare to oppose and neutralize.

It is in vain to plead, as unbelief blindly does, that such largeness and liberty were only suited to the apostolic day. For this really gives the highest sanction to such free action of the Holy Ghost. If inspired men, if the highest gifts that God ever set in the church, did not hinder but help on every form of gracious ministry, how can men in avowedly inferior position now-a-days justify their opposition? None but the most prejudiced will contend that the ordinary gifts of edification fail. None but enthusiasts will deny that the sign-gifts, which ushered in the present economy, are extinct. Not so those, thank God, that are given by the ascended Christ unto the work of ministering, save such as were for laying the foundation (Eph. 2:20) which once laid was laid forever.

We may remark in the letter of the council that the order is “Barnabas and Paul” (ver. 25) as in ver. 12, whereas earlier in the chap. as in ver. 2, and later as in ver. 35, etc., it is “Paul and Barnabas.” The feeling of the saints in Jerusalem expressed itself in the former way, as was the feeling elsewhere in the early days of the great apostle's testimony. Compare Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2, 7. But chap. 13: 13, marks a great change, as we see in verses 43, 46, 50 (but not 14:14). The reader of the Old Testament may find a similar principle in Ex. 6:13, 20, 26, and 27. In the order of nature it is “Aaron and Moses;” in sovereign grace it becomes “Moses and Aaron.” The author of the Old and the New is, the same and can only be God Himself, working in man through His unerring Spirit.

This was the only council which was entitled to say, “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.” If others have imitated the language, it is but profanity. Yet it was not an ecumenical assembly at all, but simply the assembly at Jerusalem where the apostles and local elders met together to consider the matter. The decision was most rightly taken there, whence the evil had sprung; and where the apostles were, Paul and Barnabas going up for the purpose. It was they with the whole assembly at Jerusalem who decided for the liberty of the Gentile converts. How different and disastrous it must have been had it been a council at Antioch, even though the decision had been

the same! It is of all consequence that the way as well as the end be of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with the word of God. So it was with this council, and we hear no more of the much discussion or questioning which had agitated the brethren before the council. Judas and Silas were sent as the most unequivocal witnesses of the decision at Jerusalem, that Barnabas and Paul might thence have a support above all question. The power of divine grace had thus wrought in truth and righteousness for the name of Jesus; and there was a great calm.

There was no such portentous error as a portion of the assembly (though in Jerusalem exceedingly numerous) deciding for itself alone; then the other portions following suit; and lastly all who objected to the fraud and force of the transaction justled and declared outside in the city, with the like course pursued throughout the country. No wonder that breaches must be created by so gross a departure from the word, even if the object had not been partiality to a favorite preceded by unrighteous oppression. At the council at Jerusalem, as love wrought for Christ's glory, so righteousness was the result, and unity throughout was maintained. Nobody thought of another judgment of the question, either in other parts of Jerusalem or anywhere else. God honored His own principles in His word, grace triumphed, and the saints at large, however previously alienated, owned and rejoiced in the blessing, where appearances had threatened a storm of evil omen to all who valued the gospel.

But the ecumenical councils anathematized individuals and forced divisions far and wide. In this they succeeded; for nothing is so easy as to scatter the saints. To allay fleshly violence, to conciliate the alienated, to repress party, needs grace and truth wielded by the Lord: what was so rare at these councils? Will and passion reigned more humblingly and bitterly than in the political sphere.

Even the first and most important of these “general councils” was convened by the Emperor Constantine, though an unbaptized man! to be held at Nicea. The number of western delegates was ridiculously small, as indeed it ever was at all the councils in the East. Later when the popes exercised the power of the emperors, the eastern bishops were wholly absent. Thus the claim to be “ecumenical” was a nullity, and most evidently after the west quarreled with the east, for thenceforward only the Latin party attended. Thus God took care that; as the departure became complete and evil was enforced by man's will, unity should be manifestly at an end, though none were so loud and arrogant in their claim of it as those who in their blind zeal had done most to destroy the testimony to it.

Chapter 32

On Acts 15:30-41

The scene now changes to Antioch, whither the chosen envoys repair with Paul and Barnabas.

“They then having been let go went down unto Antioch, and having gathered the multitude delivered the letter. And when they had read it, they rejoiced at the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with much discourse and strengthened [them]. And having continued a time, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto those that sent them” (ver. 30-33).

At Antioch was the assembly where the Holy Ghost had exercised His sovereign rights in making good the glory of Christ by calling and separating His servants. It was there that Satan had sought to judaize by legal influence derived from Jerusalem. And now that the assembly in Jerusalem had repudiated and cast out that leaven of Pharisaism, Antioch is the first Gentile assembly to hear that grace had triumphed in the very circle whence the evil had spread. The multitude assembled, the letter was delivered; and, when it was read, “they rejoiced at the consolation,”

Alas! it has been rare in ecclesiastical History when such is the fruit of “decrees;” for they are in general a dreary record of anathemas, and, like Ezekiel's roll, lamentation and mourning and woe is written there. Here the gracious power of the Spirit was at work, whatever the adversaries; and edification resulted, not destruction. There was no selfish design, still less a purpose to scatter. The word of God was proved to tally with the ways of His mercy, and the Holy Spirit bound all together, great or small, in giving emphasis and freedom to the gospel in its widest range. Those whose prejudice would have fettered and really corrupted its character, stood abashed and silent, however obstreperous they might have been before. Those who simply desired to hold fast grace, “rejoiced at the consolation,” which was the sweeter because the material of it came from Jerusalem. “And Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with much discourse and confirmed them.” We cannot but see the blessed liberty of ministry even where apostles were present. Clerical rights, and personal jealousies, had no place yet. The brethren accordingly confirmed all, as might be looked for, through these ample witnesses, whose one desire for all was growth through the truth. It was the same principle at work here, which was developed years afterward in 1 Cor 12, 14, as indeed the New Testament knows none other according to God. After some time Judas and Silas were dismissed in peace “unto those that had sent them,” not merely “unto the apostles” as in the later copies and some early versions; the more important of which join the ancient in omitting ver. 34 of the Text. Rec. as reflected in the Authorized Version. It was probably an insertion due to. an inference from ver. 40, which is as easy to account for, as it is hard to conceive the best leaving it out if genuine. Silas may have returned, instead of abiding, which last does not well agree with ver. 33.

But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch teaching and evangelizing, with many others also, the word of the Lord” (ver. 35). Here again we have a plain scripture fully confirming the large and active ministry of the word which characterized these early days. If it be answered that such simplicity was suited to days of testimony before Christianity became an institution established

here below, the reply is that the mischief lies there exactly. Christianity ought never to be other than a pilgrimage of faith, and never to have become a thing settled in the earth like Judaism. Communion with Christ and separation from the world are the necessary conditions of fidelity. Our only right establishment will be the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, in the day of Christ's appearing. Till then neither ease nor honor nor peace nor power in the world, but, as the apostle says, boasting in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom the world is crucified to each, and each of us to the world. Hence ministry is in scripture no question of worldly rank or emolument, (though the laborer is worthy of his hire), but of devoted and loving service according to the gift of Christ.

Here we cannot do better than introduce an incident of the liveliest but withal painful interest, the collision between the great apostle of the circumcision and the younger but still greater apostle of the Gentiles (Gal. 2:11 and seqq.). There seems no real reason to doubt that it occurred at Antioch about this very time after the council of Jerusalem and before the departure of Barnabas, and so it is understood by Ussher (Works, xi. 51), as by others of the greatest weight of old as now. Yet as a fact never was a plain matter so distressingly perverted than by respectable ancients, never greater anxiety to alter its time among recent writers, some of whom prefer an earlier, others a later, date. The real moral is the reluctance of men to bow to the truth, which is all the more impressive if we give due weight to the time when it happened. Certainly man is not exalted thereby, but God Who does not fail of raising up an adequate testimony to His own glory.

No less a man than the chief of the twelve, after all that grace had done, failed to walk straightforwardly according to the truth of the gospel; and having sinned publicly, he was publicly reproved for a compromise so dangerous, and for an inconsistency in his case most glaring. “But when Cephas came unto Antioch, I resisted him face to face, because he was condemned. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing those of the circumcision; and the rest of the Jews also dissembled with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw them not walking straightforwardly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before all, If thou being a Jew livest Gentile-wise and not Jew-wise, how dost thou compel the Gentiles to Judaize? We, Jews by nature and not sinners from among Gentiles, yet knowing that a man is not justified by works of law but only through faith of Jesus Christ, even we believed in Christ Jesus,” &c.

One can see on the one hand what a handle was given to enemies not only by the circumcision itself but yet more by the indelible page of inspiration; as on the other hand we may be sure the Holy Spirit would never have thus recorded it forever unless it were due to God's glory and a most needed lesson for the highest of the Lord's servants through all time. And so we learn how Porphyry chuckled over both (Hieron. vii. 371) and Marcion turned it to his Gnostic account (Tertall. adv. M. &c.) as the author of the Clementines to his malignant aspersion of the apostle Paul.

But there is incomparably more to humble a serious Christian in the way the truth was evaded save by very few. Clemens Alex. is mentioned by Eusebius H.E. i. 12 as authority for the notion that the Cephas in question was not Peter but one of the 70! a notion which spread of old and has not quite disappeared from modern times. Far more weighty are those who condescended to the

still baser idea of Origen that the dispute was a mere feint promoted knowingly by both Paul and Peter in which the latter plays the errorist in order to be crushed the more effectually by the former! The greatest preacher of Constantinople, Chrysostom, more than once advocates this monstrous figment; as did Jerome with his usual keenness. With such a representation Augustine dealt worthily, arguing that to accept inspired men's acting a falsehood was to shake the entire authority of scripture. The correspondence is characteristic of each, and may be seen in the Epistolary portion of their works. Jerome was neither humble nor magnanimous enough to sing the palinode to which Augustine had at first invited him; but his authorities, real or assumed, as well as his threats of crushing his adversary under the weight of his own blows, did not deter the Bp. of. Hippo from an overwhelming overthrow of the case alleged and a faithful vindication of the plain bearing of God's word, which in fact ought never to be called into question for one moment.

Thenceforward Peter vanishes from inspired history. This is the last of his acts noticed, though both his Epistles appeared much later. It is affecting and solemn that so it should be; but so it was. People think it strange after being so used and honored, after Pentecost, Caesarea, and the council in Jerusalem quite recently. But the fear of man was ever a snare to Peter; nor was it the first time that he was rebuked for shrinking from the practical consequences of the truth in this world.

“But after certain days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return now and see after the brethren, in every city wherein we announced the word of the Lord, how they fare. And Barnabas was minded to take with [them] John also that was called Mark; but Paul thought good not to take with [them] him that withdrew from them from Pamphylia and went not with them unto the work. And there arose a sharp feeling, so that they parted one from another; and Barnabas taking Mark sailed away unto Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. And he passed through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the assemblies” (ver. 36-41).

Alas! further sorrow was not far off; and the ardent desire of the apostle Paul to visit the young assemblies in Asia Minor gave occasion to it. For Barnabas, already damaged by the influence of Peter, set his heart on taking with them John Mark, his cousin. Paul had not forgotten his formerly forsaking the work, its toils and its disagreeables, its shame and the Self-abnegation it entails; hence he set his face against such a companion, till grace had wrought complete restoration in self-judgment and devotedness without stint. Good a man as was Barnabas and attached to his honored companion, this proved too much for his present state which resented Paul's. estimate as severe and beyond measure. But honey, however sweet in itself, was an element forbidden in an offering to the Lord; and Barnabas should have remembered that his natural tie was not favorable to a righteous judgment in the point of difference. Certain it is that there arose a sharp feeling between those blessed servants of the Lord, “so that they parted one from another,” never more to join in common labors. It is not that there ceased on Barnabas' side earnestness in the work or the blessing of the Lord; and the apostle Paul speaks of him with nothing but warm affection and respect in subsequent allusions. Further, it is the joy of grace to hear of Mark owned in the Lord's service, put forward by the apostle where the lack of such a recognition might have stood in his way, and this with peculiar appreciation in the latest Epistle he ever wrote. Lastly it was this very Mark who, I doubt not, purchased to himself a good degree and signal honor in being the inspired witness of our Lord's ministry. Who could enter so deeply as Mark into the wonders of a gospel service where glory shone out of the clouds of unequaled humiliation without one shade of failure,

where grace reigned unwaveringly in the midst of sore trial and continual provocation with not a single comfort save from above

So “Barnabas taking Mark sailed away unto Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.” It seems plain that Barnabas, beloved as he was, failed at this moment to carry the conscience of his brethren with him. Paul on the other hand was once more accorded, and Silas with him, that mark of united recommendation to the grace of the Lord, which he and Barnabas enjoyed on their first mission to the Gentiles from Antioch (Acts 13:2, 3; 14:26). It is almost needless to remark how unfounded is the assumption that “ordination” is in question here: the renewed mention shows how little they understand the mind of the Lord who are in quest of such perverted efforts to sanction old wives fables, and overlook the grace which identified the brethren that tarried by the stuff with the mightier champions that went down to the battle.

Another feature of interest to note is that, while ministry is of individual faith, this does not hinder one of superior discernment choosing another as companion in work; as the Lord had Himself sent out His servants, both twelve and seventy, two and two before His face. Such a choice is scriptural; election of a minister in the word by an assembly is wholly unknown to the word.

We are meant to observe too that not a word more is said historically of Barnabas, who with his kinsman sailed off to his native isle. Of Paul it is written that “he passed through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the assemblies” (ver. 41). The “rite” of confirmation has no real source in God's word; but His servants were diligent in strengthening the faith of the saints. They rightly felt that the truth is best learned within, where practice illustrates and develops principle. Church action where living and true is the ready comment on scripture, and continual teaching draws attention to details as well as to the truth as a whole in the person of Christ. Thus are the assemblies confirmed according to God.

Chapter 33

On Acts 16:1-5

The apostle has now fully and freely entered on his fresh missionary excursion, as well as visitation of the assemblies already formed. Silas is his chosen companion, no longer Barnabas. All things work together for good in the hand of divine love; whilst governmentally each shall bear his own burden: grace does not fail, but moral responsibility is untouched also.

From Syria and Cilicia Paul journeys to Lycaonia. “And he came unto Derbe and unto Lystra; and, behold, a certain disciple was there, by name Timothy, son of a Jewish believing woman, but of a Greek father; who was borne witness to by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. Him Paul would have to go forth with him; and he took and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek” (ver. 1-3).

Little is said of the other results from the apostle's visit to Derbe and Lystra. Our attention is concentrated on a “young disciple” there. He was therefore not converted at this time, but doubtless, during the former visit of the apostle, who speaks of him as his “true child in faith.” Timothy he had begotten in Christ Jesus through the gospel. The circumstances were peculiar. He was the son of a believing Jewess, Eunice, but of a Greek father, with an exceptionally good testimony from the brethren in those parts. This led to a remarkable step on the part of the apostle: he circumcised him “on account of the Jews” there, “for they all knew that his father was a Greek” or Gentile.

Now this was in no way the requirement of the law; which, on the contrary, in strictness placed Timothy by his birth in a painful and outside position. It was really an act of grace on the part of the same apostle who would have utterly repelled the circumcision of Titus; for Titus was a Gentile. Still less is it inconsistent with the recent council at Jerusalem; for the question there was whether the Jewish yoke was to be placed on the Gentiles that believed. It was decided, we have seen, that no such compulsion was authorized or desirable. Here, it was the child of a Jewess against whom Jews would have had a feeling because of his father. In all probability the father was now dead, of whom we never hear as alive, and who in that case, might have perpetuated the uncircumcised condition of his son. If the father no longer lived, Paul could act the more freely; and the same champion for liberty who refused compulsion in the case of Titus, himself took and circumcised Timothy.

It is of great moment that we learn to submit our souls to the largeness of divine truth. The principles which governed the cases of Titus and Timothy were quite distinct, because their nature and circumstances were wholly different. But there was a center in which the two principles found harmony. They were alike expressions of Christian liberty; in neither instance was the apostle under law but under grace. What can be more instructive for us? We are always liable to the exact reverse: flesh and law habitually work together, as on the other hand we are called to the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ.

We may learn from this to avoid and resist the notion that there can be but one principle to govern our conduct. It is not so, if the relationships and the circumstances of the parties wholly differ. Wisdom in that case would rather seek from God's word the Spirit's instruction for our guidance in each case respectively. Nature and tradition constantly tend to a dead level, which is as far as possible from the wisdom of God, in which we are called to judge and act. A principle however true and sound, as for instance not to circumcise Titus, might entirely fail to meet. Timothy's case whom grace circumcised to stop the mouths of Jews though the letter of the law would rather have put him away than circumcise him. Routine is sure to mislead in the things of God. An eye single to Christ and His grace will discover the true way, and grace knows where to be inflexible and when to yield. It was the wise procedure of one who, free from all made himself bondman to all that he might gain the more; who became to the Jews as a Jew in order that he might gain the Jews, to those under law as under law (not being himself under law) in order that he might gain those under law; to those without law as without law (not as without law to God but as lawfully subject to Christ) in order that he might gain those without law.

What an admirable lesson was this, practically, for Timothy, henceforth to be the companion and fellow-worker of the great apostle of the Gentiles, whatever the immense gap between them. The step, too, was taken in connection with his going forth with Paul who sought to cut of occasion from them that sought occasion. Grace where there is no demand can go far to meet such as have honest difficulties; whilst it resents and refuses every effort to impose what is unauthorized by God and inconsistent with itself.

We may here recall the important facts for which we are indebted to the two Epistles which the apostle wrote long after to Timothy; for they really had the most influential bearing on the course which was opening for his young companion. First, there were prophecies which went before as to Timothy

(1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14), and this not only as marking him out but indicating the gift of God to be imparted. The history simply gives us the apostle's wish and mind as to him; but the apostle shows that there were prophetic intimations, presumably from more than one, respecting the work to which he was divinely designated; not unlike the way in which Barnabas and Saul had been called and separated to their first missionary work and journey. Even the apostle did not act without these remarkable interventions; of which he reminds his beloved child when he first wrote to enforce the commission entrusted to him and to define his duties in that charge, “that thou mightest war by them (i.e. the prophecies) the good warfare,” though this would be vain without “having faith and a good conscience.” It would brace his spirit to remember that God had designated him to a work of such difficulty and peril. Secondly, a positive gift of God, or χ■ρισμα, had been communicated to Timothy by the imposition of the apostle's hands (2 Tim. 1:6), the elderhood having also joined in laying on their hands at the same time (1 Tim. 4:14) as not only witnesses but having fellowship with the apostle's act. The believer in God's word needs no argument to prove that such a power of the Spirit is wholly distinct from any qualities previously possessed by Timothy, though no doubt all he had before was the vessel in and through which the gift wrought. But such a phrase like so many common among evangelical, as well as Catholic, “sanctified intellect,” is wholly misleading; because it expresses the error of human nature rehabilitated or improved by grace, denies the judgment of the fleshly mind in the cross to which faith thoroughly bows, and leaves out the special energy of the Spirit according to the gift of Christ. This Timothy then received, and in the way

Scripture describes: which none should doubt because of the powerless, not to say profane, imitation of some bodies in Christendom from early days till now. With him it was a special way for a special work. It is error and ignorance to generalize it, and to assume that others did not receive gifts, χαρ■σματα, without any such laying on of hands; any more than to deny that the Holy Ghost was given to the faithful only after a similar sort. That He was so given in peculiar circumstances by imposition of apostolic hands is true; that it was always so is to neglect the still weightier instances of Acts 2 and 10. So with the gifts; they were given in sovereign grace without any such act ordinarily; and this is of all moment for the saints at all times since, when there were and could be no apostles to lay hands on any. But superstition is as blind as rationalism, though seemingly more reverent.

“And as they passed through the cities, they delivered them the decrees to observe, which had been ordained by the apostles and elders who mule in Jerusalem” (ver. 4). This is particularly recorded of the apostle and his companions; and it is the more to be noticed because, when the questions discussed at the council came up for solution in the Epistles these decrees are never referred to. Here again we have to discern the wisdom of God. The decrees were given where Jewish influence prevailed. They were of the highest value to settle the doubts of those who looked up to Jerusalem and especially to the apostles and elders there. If in Jerusalem the chiefs and the church as a whole condemned wholly the imposing of circumcision on Gentiles, who were entitled to press it elsewhere? Certainly not such as had reverence for those whom the Lord had set up in Jerusalem.

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians and in that to the Galatians, the question is argued on the broad ground of the gospel, without reference to the decrees. Here again there is no inconsistency whatever. The decrees were admirably in season and place for those to whom they were given; and Paul was conspicuously zealous in giving assemblies already formed where Jews abounded these decrees to observe. But when he wrote, his Epistles in the subsequent exercise of his apostolic power, he solves the question altogether apart from the decision at Jerusalem by the truth of Christ and His work now fully revealed.

“The assemblies then were being strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily” (ver. 5). Thus did the Lord use the action of grace for helping on His testimony. Agitation is eminently destructive not only to the confirmation of the soul but to the going forward of the work among fresh converts. Faith is nourished by grace, not by questions gendering strife, any more than “by meats” as the apostle somewhat contemptuously speaks of Jewish controversies, “wherein they that walked were not profited.” And grace is inseparable from Christ Who' s “the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” Questions apart from Him are met by diverse and strange teachings which only distract the senses. It is good that the heart be established by grace. This was what the apostle walked in, to the profit of those that heard him. Faith was strengthened and fresh assemblies sprung up more and more, or, at the least, their numbers increased daily. Such is the beautiful picture drawn by the Spirit of God; and such the encouragement given to the apostle with his companions in labor.

Chapter 34

On Acts 16:6-12

We know how universal was the field opened for the work of the gospel. Go ye into all the world, said the Master to the apostles, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. This general order which ever abides, does not however supersede the direction which the Holy Spirit knows how to supply in detail to the Lord's glory. He will have the servant subject to Christ and exercised livingly about His will: a matter of the deepest moment for all who would serve Him thoroughly, and as obligatory now as of old though we may lack some of the means of intimation. This truth remarkably appears in what follows as elsewhere.

“And they went through the Phrygian and Galatian country, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, and having come over against Mysia, they attempted to proceed into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus permitted them not; and passing by Mysia they came down to Troas. And a vision, appeared to Paul by night: There was a certain man of Macedon standing and beseeching him and saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. Having therefore sailed away from Troas we took a straight course unto Samothracia, and on the morrow unto Neapolis, and thence unto Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, first of the district, a colony. And we were in this city staying certain days” (ver. 6-12).

It is not only in the unconverted that man's will is treated by scripture as evil: the believer now, as living in the Spirit, is exhorted to walk in the Spirit, and the power is vouchsafed in the Spirit given, though His power will not act in positive blessing save to Christ's glory in dependence on Him and obedience to His word. So it is of high moment to remember that it is not otherwise in the work of the Lord, where the laborer is constantly exposed to the danger of being guided by fair appearances or of following what pleases his own mind, or it may be the suggestions of others whom he respects. The Lord is jealous, as valuing our subjection and fidelity and confidence in Himself, that we look to Him Who does not fail to act by the Spirit that His will be known and done. The work is His, and He only is adequate to its direction in gracious wisdom and power: we are at best only His journeymen in that work. How happy to work as well as walk by faith, guided by His eye and succored no less than sent here or there by His grace. In a world given up to self-will and all its baneful ways, how sweet to Him that His servants do not forget their absent Lord any more than their own blessedness in having Him to make His will plain, that their hearts refer to Him, that their faith expects from Him all needed to glorify Him and to preserve themselves from straying.

So was the work of Paul and his companions ordered of the Lord; as it is here set out in the written word, that we may labor in the same spirit of faith, and neither forego the like favor nor reduce scripture to a dead letter. “And they went through. the Phrygian and Galatian country, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.” The allusion to Phrygia and Galatia as the combined sphere of their visitation is full of interest. as a fact; but how striking the absence of detail where our curiosity would have demanded a great deal. In the Epistle to the assemblies of Galatia we have not only the fruit of sowing the gospel seed there but circumstances revealed of

high value and solemn warning. Of Phrygia we know scarce any particulars, save that Paul and Silas did then go through that region as well as Galatia, “having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.” Was this province of Asia then wholly barren? Was it hopeless soil? From the beginning of the gospel, witnesses thence (Acts 2:9, 10) had heard the mighty works of God spoken in their tongue and that of Phrygia, among many others; yet here Phrygia is visited, Asia is not; while in the all-wise direction of the Lord the region of Galatia and Phrygia sees the apostle going through it in order, “stablishing all the disciples” and not evangelizing only (Acts 18:23), and Paul visits Ephesus after Apollos had wrought there not in vain, and, to his own learning the way of God more carefully; and there the apostle brings on the little nucleus of disciples into full Christian truth and privilege (Acts 19), and carried on the work for more than two years, first in the synagogue, then in the school of Tyrannus, so that, not the capital only but the province also, “all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks,” and that word, not without special powers wrought of God by the hands of Paul, “mightily grew and prevailed.” He Who knew all hearts, and alone can employ any mouth to God's glory, the Holy Spirit forbade their speaking the word in Asia now. Those who believe in man may show their real unbelief in God by caviling at the present prohibition; those whose confidence is in His grace will admire His admirable care in leading to the right place of testimony then, and in working later in the place now prohibited when He deigned in His goodness to create a fruitful oasis if not more than one in that desert. He knows infallibly, as an apostle even did not; and He it is who is still here to guide the work to the praise of the Name of Jesus. As He knows the time to sow, so He ensures a harvest at the right season.

Nor was this the only prohibition about the same time. For “having come over against Mysia, they attempted to proceed into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus permitted them not” (ver. 7). Here the evidence is as plain as possible to those who justly estimate scripture of the personal action of the Spirit in correction even of the apostle's proposed movements. “They attempted to proceed into where we know (1. Pet. 1.) sojourners of the dispersion, i.e. Christian Jews were, as well as in Galatia and pro-consular Asia; but this was not now the mind of the Lord for His service. And an expression is employed, more than usually, though by no means uniquely, connecting the Spirit with the Lord, which has therefore so much the more appropriate force in the passage, “and the Spirit of Jesus permitted them not.” The Spirit is as we all know a divine person and may be spoken of simply as the Spirit or the Holy Spirit; He may be introduced in a general way as the Spirit or the Holy Spirit of God, or as the Spirit of the Lord, i.e. Jehovah. Again He may be specially designated where truth required it, as the Spirit of the Father, of the Son, of Christ, or as here, of “Jesus,” in each case securing an appropriateness not to be reached otherwise. Scarce anything shows or produces more looseness of conception among Christians than the neglect of these fine and wonderful distinctions found in no other books with any approach to scripture, found in every book of scripture where the subject matter admits of them, and in perfection, whoever may be the inspired writer, and when ever written, so as to point to one unerring and divine Spirit, the true Author. “The Spirit of Jesus,” blends the personal interest of the glorified Man Whose Name it was their heart's desire and the great object of their life to make known, subject to His will, with the power of the Spirit Who is the energy that works in the new man.

“And passing by Mysia they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul by night: There was a certain man of Macedon standing and beseeching him and saying, Come over into

Macedonia and help us. And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (ver. 8-10).

Thus the Lord helped His servant in a positive manner. They all needed direction for their work; and Paul alone saw the vision: a favor frequently shown him; and of the highest character, which no creature has a right to expect. Grace gave him revelations also. But though set in a very different place in the assembly, the condition and wants of which are so far apart from the primitive state God never fails for present difficulties. It is we who fail in waiting and counting on Him, though the prime directory of His written word is complete as it was not then. But special honor was put on one who was behind none in position, and whose labors were most abundant and blessed. All were immediately impressed by the apostle's vision and turned their eyes and steps toward Macedonia.

But it is well to notice that the language is "we," and not "they" as heretofore. Luke thus modestly but without doubt lets us see that he at Troas joined the apostle's company. That I he inspired writer was a personal witness from this point is surely not a slight matter; but no error can be more profound in principle than the human notion that a higher character begins to attach to his account. Not so: inspiration excludes all question of degrees of assurance or authority. It is equally of God, whether the writer witnessed what he wrote, or not. The Spirit of God alone secures absolute truth, which no seeing, hearing, or research could effect. Man cannot rise to the divinely given, save as a receiver. He may be indefinitely exact but is necessarily human. God as He knows all, communicates what is due to His glory in love to His own.

In fact there is no more minuteness in what is conveyed during the writer's presence. Conversations, differences, journeys, preachings were given when he was absent no less than when with the apostle's companions. How comforting this quiet evidence that in the inspired word we have to do, not merely with, good men doing their best, but with a God Who cannot err or lie. He provides us with His account through man of these spiritually instructive facts. Later in the history we learn that they made a little stay in the Tread where then at least was an assembly (ch. 20.); but there was no indecision now, no tarrying by the way: the gospel must be preached forthwith in Macedonia. "Having therefore sailed away from Troas we took a straight course unto Samothracia, and on the morrow unto Neapolis, and thence unto Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, first of the district, a colony. And we were in this city staying certain days" (ver. 11, 12). The description is most exact. It would not have been true to call it the chief city or capital of Macedonia; but of that part or district it was: a Roman colony too, not a Greek, which had a somewhat important bearing on the incidents that follow, of which we have so graphic a sketch. There Roman armies had engaged in deadly strife not with strangers, but one with another. There the fate of the moribund republic was decided. There the coming empire of the world began to dawn, an empire which was to last as no predecessor had done, though it had the unenviable distinction of contact with the Lord of glory,. not only in His despised birth but in His crucifixion of shame; as it alone, after succumbing long and notoriously, is destined to live again for a brief but awful space of lawlessness closing in a vain blasphemous and destructive opposition to His appearing from heaven in glory. But there were far other and happier reasons which made the entrance of the gospel and the founding of the church in Philippi full of holy interest. The work began in face of an ensnaring spirit of evil and of an adverse unrighteous world, with singular simplicity, with joy rising high and loudly above sorrow and shame, with a display of divine grace

no less than divine power. There was nothing exactly like this at Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, Thessalonica, though each no doubt had characteristics of admirably suited and special favor. Philippi too went, not without severe trials, and peculiar difficulties, but as a whole in spiritual power to ripe experience beyond known parallel without so painful a brand of declension as we know befell the once fair and bright assembly, in Ephesus. God would have us learn how the good seed took root and bore fruit at Philippi. Let others boast in the old almanac of man's tale as vain and unreliable in the ecclesiastical as in the secular sphere. Here the believer can rest in the certain truth of God and profit by that which He Who knows all gives for our refreshment, or admonition. We see alas! how fading was that which grace made so good, and true, and faithful in its measure; for where is that assembly now? how was it in the next generation after Paul's Epistle to all the saints there? If it had stood as the Latin church, it had like Rome been but a pillar of salt with every truth falsified (save perhaps those elements which the Athanasian creed owns), and every way of grace changed into Judaizing. This would have been but deeper dishonor of Christ, and the assembly at Philippi, as in almost all the apostolic plantations, has passed away, that men might learn, were they not blinded by worldly wisdom and the fleshly mind, that the power and even the truth of the church of God rests not in an ecclesiastical succession, but in the living energy of the Holy Spirit working in the bond of Christ's confessors, who are worse than nothing as a witness if untrue to Him, who are just of price in God's sight as they do His will and reflect His grace.

Chapter 35

On Acts 16:13-18

The gospel entered Europe apostolically with genuine simplicity. Two inspired men were among those who introduced it, an apostle, the greatest of them indeed, and a prophet not the least of them, or as he is popularly styled “the evangelist,” Luke. Very likely he may have been an evangelist in the true—scriptural sense of the term. Certainly upon such as Paul and Luke were built the saints now called of God (Eph. 2:20), as to them was revealed the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:5). The foundation was well laid, even Jesus Christ; yet what a holy absence of pretension do we see here!

“And on the sabbath day we went forth outside the gate by a river where prayer [or, place of prayer] was wont to be; and we sat down and spoke to the women that had come together. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, that worshipped God, heard; whose heart the Lord opened to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized and her house, she besought, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide. And she constrained us” (ver. 13-15).

There was no synagogue, it would seem, in the city, once called “The Fountains” but now Philippi from his name who had annexed the district from Thrace to his ancestral Macedonia, and drew largely the treasures of this world from gold mines in the neighborhood. By that river side Outside the city gate, among the women that assembled, one at least received richer treasure and so drank as to have within her a fountain springing up into eternal life. The good physician who writes was not a painter save graphically. Think of a philosopher, or even a rabbi, speaking to the women of what God is and gives, of the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ! Even the disciples once on a time wondered that the Lord talked with a woman; for He first vindicated the solemnity of a lost soul, the blessed value of a saved one, be it of man or woman. And here the choicest of his servants is found, not alone but with a few of kindred mind and heart, ministering Christ and dispensing the mysteries of God to the assembled women.

Among these one attracts our attention in the narrative, Lydia, of Thyatira, a seller of that dye for which these Lydians were far famed in Homer's day (II. 8. 141), as “the dyers” may be illustrated by the inscription found in the ruins of Thyatira. She was not an idolater, but a worshipper of God, and so betook herself to the little band of Jews that met on the sabbath for prayer, separate from the heathen corruptions around, at a river side, a spot convenient for the Jews made use of for purifying. This seems to decide that it was the little and less known Gangas, rather than the Strymon which was more remote. Lydia was hearing, and the Lord opened her heart to attend to the things spoken by Paul: she received Him that came by water and blood, believing on the name of Jesus Christ.

It is well to observe the special form of the work of grace in souls: two never seem precisely alike. It is not merely that men differ, but that the Spirit of God gives a fresh character in the case, while all had been once alike lost sinners, and the same Christ is all and in all. Each however has his own individuality, and God does not withhold honor from the weaker vessel but shares His joy in

love by detailing the peculiar circumstances of such an one as here before us. No doubt her conscience was exercised; she repented toward God. If this had not been before, it was now; for there is no vital operation in the soul without that self-judgment which owns our sins and ruined state, and turns to God's mercy as the sole spring of saving hope. But the glad tidings or gospel of God presents the Christ already dead and risen; that the guilty may have remission of sins not promised only but preached to them, and every believer may know himself justified from all things exactly what the law could not effect for its most zealous votary. But here we are not told of such pungent grief and anxiety as in the Jewish converts at Pentecost confronted with their guilt in rejecting their own Messiah; nor of such great fear as smote all that heard of the judicial death of Ananias and Sapphire; nor of the great grace which multiplied disciples in the face of persecutions for such as taught and preached the Lord Jesus. The Lord wrought on Lydia, opening her heart to pay heed to the discourse of Paul. It was not prayer only that day, but God's answer in the testimony of grace which supplies every want in Christ, and flows, yea, overflows, evermore to His glory.

Made a disciple, Lydia was baptized (John 4:1), as became her. Such was the Lord's command to His servants. Only the males among the Jews were circumcised; disciples, both men and women (Acts 8:12) were baptized. Not only Lydia was baptized but her household also. “And when she was baptized and her house,” &c. What is meant thereby? We do not hear of children or of husband; she may have been a widow without a family or never married. She had a household, and we hear (ver. 40) of the brethren there, believers therefore, and probably not men only but women. Of little ones we hear nothing; and the divine account, which is full and minutely exact to admiration in other respects, not even implies anything of the kind, so that the temerity of tradition, of intellect, of will, that would from this account extract a ground for supposing infants in this case at any rate, is as bold and manifest as unjustifiable. Hence Meyer, the ablest modern commentator of the Lutheran body, says honestly, in opposition to all his ecclesiastical prejudices, “When Jewish or heathen families became Christians, the children in them could have been baptized only in cases in which they were so far developed that they could profess their faith in Christ, and did actually profess it; for this was the universal requisition for the reception of baptism: see also ver. 31, 33; 18:8. On the contrary if the children were unable to believe, they did not partake of the rite, since they were wanting in what the act pre-supposed. The baptism of children is not to be supposed as an apostolic institution, but arose gradually in the post-apostolic age, after early and long-continued resistance, in connection with certain views of doctrine, and did not become general in the church till after the time of Augustine. The defense of infant-baptism transcends the domain of exegesis, and must be given up to that of dogmatics.” Others of high eminence might be added, themselves pedobaptist, who frankly own that neither here, nor later in the chapter, nor in 1 Cor. 1, is there the least proof that any were baptized except confessors of Christ, and that the baptism of infants has no scriptural warrant.

But this by the way. Lydia's heart opened of the Lord went out toward His servants. She “besought [us] saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide. And she constrained us.” The love of Christ was there and made her, little knowing the value of her gracious importunity in His sight, to be a fellow-helper with the truth (3 John 8).

Another lesson of far-reaching practical moment ought to be evident, the profound indifference not only to souls but to the Lord in that refusal to “judge,” which pleases the flesh and characterizes

the world-church, be it Catholic or Protestant, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or aught else that is not based on the Christ of God confessed and the Holy Spirit given of God (Matt. 16:16-18, Acts 11:17). No doubt men plead that we must not judge, or that we must exercise a judgment of charity: both pleas alike ignorant, perverse and evil. Certainly we ought never to be censorious, never to impute bad motives where evil conduct is not manifest. But it is equally unbelieving and heartless, for such as know that faith in God's testimony to Christ is the turning point of the passage from death into life—life eternal, to abandon or neglect discrimination in this respect. Our solemn judgment, if guided by the word, is that death is the condition of all; our judgment of charity and our joy are, that they only live through and of and in Christ who by grace hear His word; as thereon we exhort them in His name that they should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him that for them died and rose again. From such a judgment as this Lydia did not shrink but rather humbly challenged it as due to the Lord, Paul and his company acted on it, and the Holy Spirit has recorded it for our admonition. There was assuredly therefore no lack of love in Peter's judging Simon the Samaritan from his own words, and this, though a baptized man, to be in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity (Acts 8). It was rather indeed the painful side, but in the circumstances absolutely indispensable, in that judgment of love which the knowledge of God entails on His servants; and woe be to those who, to gratify the world or for selfish ease and advantage, relinquish so plain and indisputable a duty to their Master! This did not Peter any more than Paul.

“And it came to pass as we were going unto prayer [or, the place of prayer], that a certain maid having a spirit of Python met us, who brought her masters much gain by divinations. She having followed Paul and us, cried, saying, These men are bondmen of the Most High God who announce to you [or, us] salvation's way. And this she did for many days. But Paul, being distressed, turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out the same hour” (ver. 16-18).

As the better authorities (à A B C E &c.) insert the article with “prayer” in ver. 16, it is allowed that “the place of prayer” is the more likely meaning. But if so here, it would go far to commend the same sense in ver. 13, the article being there properly absent as it was a previously unknown and unmentioned place. The incident recorded was weighty in itself and in its consequences. Satan essayed a new means of mischief, not assailing the gospel but patronizing it, and this for many days. Distressed thereby the apostle at length turned and enjoined the evil spirit to leave her, which came to pass in the name of Jesus.

Alas! not so have the servants of the Most High God acted in Europe. They have accepted, instead of eschewing, the favors of the enemy, to their own shame and ruin and to their Master's dishonor. In Asia the gospel was resisted, calumniated, and persecuted. No Python followed its preachers; nor was the cry heard, These men are bondmen of the Most High who announce to you salvation's way. Open opposition, not flattery, was the devil's way. But Europe later had no Paul to cast out the unclean spirit, an unholy compact at last prevailed, and servants of God claimed honor to Jesus from the homage of the world. But it was hollow lip-service, as the event in Philippi soon proved. The world is at enmity with God essentially and always; and nothing is so far from its prince's heart than the honor of His Son. A liar and its father, he hates detection; and his rage came out when the faithful apostle, who had at first slighted his overtures, cast out in Jesus' name the power from its instrument of imposture.

On Acts 16:19-31

An act of such uncompromising decision as well as power roused the enemy acting on human covetousness. But it is well to note that the apostle did not act in divine energy till Satan's persistence made it a duty.

And when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they laid hold on, and dragged, Paul and Silas, into the market place, before the rulers, and when they had brought them unto the praetors, they said, These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city, and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive or practice, being Romans. And the crowd rose up together against them; and the praetors rent their garments off them, and commanded to beat [them] with rods. And, having laid many stripes on them, they cast [them] into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely; who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison and secured their feet into the stocks (ver. 19-24).

Defeated in his effort to mix himself up with God's work, the enemy flees to his ordinary and natural opposition, through human interests and passions. Covetousness is a mainspring of the world's activity, “covetousness, which is idolatry.” Those whose hope of gain vanished with the cast out spirit lawlessly apprehended Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the market place, where the local rulers then, even more than now, wore found. It may be noticed that here only the inspired historian specifies the magistrates in Philippi with the Greek term which answers to praetors: a striking evidence of minute accuracy, for the city was a colony, and a colony was but Rome on a small scale, with its two chiefs (sometimes modified by need, but in general duumviri). We shall see the city governors of Thessalonica quite differently designated in the next chapter, but there too with similarly characteristic accuracy as here. Compare also Acts 13:7, 12; 18:12; 19:31 for other instances of such exactitude.

“And when they had brought them unto the pastors, they said, These men, being (■π■ρχοντες) Jews (or, as Mr. Humphry suggests, ‘being Jews to begin with'), exceedingly trouble our city, and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive or practice, being (■ντες) Romans.” This was calculated, and no doubt intended, to arouse the mob, the more sensitive on the score of Roman pride and privilege, because they were not unmixedly Roman; and such as might be Romans, though tolerant of Other religionists one with another, were jealous, of anything like aggression on themselves. The appeal was not in vain. “And the crowd rose up together (i.e. with the masters of the dispossessed slave) against them, and the praetors, rending their garments off them, commanded to scourge them with rode.” It may not be necessary to hold with Bengal that the dumvirs stripped Paul and Silas with their own hands; but the special expression employed (περιρ) the general scope and intrinsic sense, exclude the notion that the magistrates rent (διαρ.) their own clothes. It is certain that they gave command to beat them with rods, though uncondemned: an open violation of Roman law, which exposed themselves to severe punishment, had proceedings been instituted. “And having inflicted on them many stripes, they cast [them] into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely; who, having received such a charge, cast them into

prison and secured their feet into the stocks.” Such was man, civilized man, high and low, carried away into most manifest injustice, without the form even of trying the holy, harmless, and self-denying servants of the Lord, at the call of the basest who had lived by the oracles or divinations of their female slave under Satan's power. Had God nothing to do? “But about midnight Paul and Silas in praying were singing praises to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and the bands of all were loosed” (ver. 25, 26). Could any facts more clearly indicate Whose purpose and hand had wrought on behalf of His injured ministers? An earthquake, men could readily argue, might happen, and with the most singular coincidence of circumstances; but whoever heard of an earthquake so great as to shake, not windows or walls, not chains or bolts only, but the foundations of an extensive building; and withal so nicely adjusted as to cast down nothing, nor injure a soul! Only forthwith all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed! It was the same divine power which had delivered Simon Peter, though chained to two soldiers, on the eve of his execution (Acts 12); the same power which had extricated the apostles from a prison house, shut in all safety, with the keepers standing at the doors. (Acts 5) Here a deeper purpose was in hand, and a great earthquake heralded it; and Paul and Silas, who had been praying to God in hymns, remained in the prison to declare His wonderful works; and those whose naturally strongest desire had otherwise been to make their escape and renew their lawless life, were so overawed that not one stirred from the opened prison. It was the God of all grace, Who answered the prayers and praises of His prisoners, Who knew how to control the wicked; and Who was guiding His servants for His glory. For He was now about to do more, and most worthily of the name of His Son, and this so as to win to Himself as hardened a heart as beat within the prison walls. Let us too hear. “And the jailor, being roused out of sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here. And he called for lights, and sprang in, and trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, and led them forth, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (ver. 27-31).

We can understand the horror of the jailor, and his first impulse, as a heathen, to make away with himself, inferring from the open doors the flight of the prisoners, and therefore (according to the stern law De Custodia Reorum) with no other prospect for himself than a violent stroke of judicial shame. But conceive the overwhelming effect on his conscience when the apostle averted his suicidal hand by the loud assurance that the prisoners were all there! Light from God penetrated his dark heart on the instant, with a deep desire for mercy, before he got the lights he called for. He needed no more intimation where to turn for the truth he wanted, no more dealings of God to prove His hand was in all that had just occurred, and that He was really with those who had been so harshly thrust into prison, with mockings and scourgings. Had not the Pythoness notoriously designated them as servants of the Most High God, who proclaim salvation's way? The depths of his soul were broken up; and as his sins rose from every hiding place, he felt instinctively that now was the moment to find God. So he sprang in, and, all of a tremble, fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them forth to inquire of the great salvation.

For salvation in any lesser sense is not to be thought of. The earthquake was soon all over, the prisoners were all safe; what had he to fear from Roman justice? But God had awakened his soul,

and his sins troubled him. Not death from man, but divine judgment at the close of all was before his eyes; and God's servants, for whom He had just been interposing miraculously, were there to tell him the way of salvation. Whatever learned men may think, who, never having felt the burden of their sins, catch at words, and waste their time on dubious questions or words, the jailor's burning anxiety was about the salvation of his soul. The strange utterance respecting his two holy prisoners could not but rise before him in his then awe-stricken frame of mind. It was really God Who was at work in his conscience, as He had wrought otherwise in the prison. Not a moment was to be lost; so, having led forth the two prisoners he says, “Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?” Eternal salvation was the urgent want of his soul, as he honestly owns.

Nor was the answer of the Lord's servants less prompt. Thanks be to God, it may, it ought always, to be so, when the soul is thus in earnest. For the righteous foundation on which salvation rests is already laid, and so perfectly that to add anything, to wait for aught else, is to dishonor God and to hinder the sinner. The atoning work is done and accepted of God, Who therefore sends His glad tidings to the guilty, without respect of persons. It is no question of promises on man's part or of amelioration as a ground of divine favor. Man was once let alone till his violence and corruption became insupportable, and judgment swept all away, save the few who trusted God in the ark provided for them by grace. Man was then tried fully by God's law, with every religious help possible; but, as God indicated beforehand, all was vain, save to prove that man could not be saved on any ground of moral worth, or religions ordinance. What remained? Nothing but a Savior sent from God to be a propitiation for sins. The Savior has already come, has already died, and is now risen and glorified. Yea, God has sent from heaven the Holy Spirit thereon to declare the glad tidings by His servants. Therefore Paul and Silas could say with absolute confidence, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.”

Such is the grace of God in the gospel. It brings salvation for all. It is no longer laid up in shadows. It has appeared to the world. It summons all men everywhere to repent, but none receives the remission of his sins, save through faith; and the Lord Jesus is the object of that faith. No doubt He has suffered for our sins: else could there be no sovereign proclamation on God's part, nor such a righteous blessing for man. But faith goes with grace, and excludes any and every desert of man; as the righteousness revealed in the gospel is God's, founded on the accomplished work of Christ.

But it is all-important to see and hold fast the fact, that the gospel presents the person of Christ, and not His work only. The soul is called to “believe on the Lord Jesus.” This could not purge the conscience without the shedding of His blood; it could not give peace or liberty, unless He were not only delivered up for our offenses, but raised for our justification. But it is on the Lord Jesus that we believe. Thus alone is the soul set in a right attitude from the first; and that object of faith abides to the last. “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.” This gave joy and assurance to the jailor's soul, as we shall see by and by. So it was intended of God, Who is the God of peace, not of uncertainty, and would bring the believer into the communion of His own mind. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Faith is the principle, and not human righteousness but God's revealed unto faith; for there is no other ground which grace or truth could accredit. Anything else would exalt man, in the way either of his own merits, or of ordinances done by others for him. God's righteousness revealed by faith unto faith excludes everything of the sort. Christ alone is, and abides, the only efficacious ground—the Lord Jesus who has already offered His one sacrifice on the cross. All scripture on

this infinite theme is but the development of that which was made known to the jailor in these pregnant words, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.”

It will be seen that salvation is no less open to the jailor's house than to himself. Jew or Gentile makes no difference, old or young, bond or free, but on the same terms of faith. In scripture there is no such notion, whatever the precious privileges attached to the head of a house, that he believes for them, or that they are to be saved, because he is saved by faith. On the contrary the idea is a fleshly license, based on letter, not spirit, as dangerous for the soul as it is subversive of fundamental truth. No wonder that it shelters itself under the dark shade of ordinance with appeal to feeling and imagination without scripture, though boasting loudly of its own spiritual intelligence. Even Dean Alford forgot the Book of Common Prayer in his allegiance to God's word, and declares that κα■ ■ ο■κ■ς σου [and thy house] does not mean that his faith would save his household—but that the same way was open to them as to him: “Believe, and thou shalt be saved; and the same of thy household.” So too Meyer, in the face of as great or yet greater prejudices, exploded an error opposed to the gospel, and the truth generally, and says that the epanorthosis σ■ κα■ ■ ο■κ■ς σου extends or belongs in effect to π■στευσον and σωυ■ση. For, be it noted, the verse speaks not of an institution like baptism, but, of salvation, and we do well to speak seriously of what is so serious. But human levity in divine things is as incredibly common as deplorable.

But as yet, so far as I am aware, this heterodoxy is only whispered in private, or at most, taught where the ignorant and blinded votaries of party are present to hear. Its advocates do not venture to affirm it where it would be sifted to their shame, and rejected by those who still hold the truth. It will be seen in the inspired word which follows, how daringly these enthusiasts overlook the context in their haste to avail themselves of the most superficial appearance to give their favorite notion currency. This however we may leave till the rest of this scripture comes before us in due course. But it is the characteristic of error to despise what is most certain, solid, and blessed in a vain chase after shadows, and to rejoice more for one pervert, than for ninety and nine repentant sinners.

Chapter 37

On Acts 16:31-40

Let it be carefully weighed: the question of the jailor, the answer of the Lord's servants, was not about the sign but about the reality of salvation, soul-salvation, as Peter calls it. And this is here, as elsewhere, bound up with faith; which of all things is personal, as is the repentance it implies. Believing for others, even so close as one's household, in order that they should be not baptized merely, but thus saved, shows not only the poverty in resource of this pretentious school, but their hardihood in advancing questions, so dangerous for souls, on such slender grounds. The assumption which underlies the theory, in the minds of the more moderate, probably is that the jailor's house consisted only of children, young enough to be irresponsible: otherwise (of which extravagance some are not ashamed) it would be convicted of slighting repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus more flagrantly than any orthodox Christian sect: for which of the sects does not demand some such profession in candidates of riper years? No wonder therefore that all godly, or, even sober, interpreters of the divine word repudiate those shifts of hard-driven controversialists. But scripture enables us to carry this disproof to the uttermost; for it is added (in ver. 32) that they spoke the word of the Lord to him “with all that were in his house"; as if the Holy Spirit by express anticipation had designed to leave no possible plea for teaching so strange. Those only who could hear the word were then concerned; none else was by the call itself included within the terms of the blessing, whatever grace might effect afterward, if indeed any remained to be called and blessed.

“And they spoke to him the word of the Lord” [or God] with all that were in his house. And at that hour of the night he took and washed [them from] their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his immediately. And having brought them up into his house, he set meat [a table] before them, and rejoiced with all his house, having believed in God (ver. 32-34).

The jailor took them “that hour” of the night, however unseasonable it might seem; for such is the force, rather than “the same” which is not said, though of course the latter also was true. But we must correctly reproduce what was originally written and meant. After washing their stripes he and all his were baptized without delay, it would seem in the precincts of the prison proper. Then he brought them “up” into his house, apparently over the prisoners' quarters, attended to their bodily refreshment, and rejoiced with all his house, having believed in God. Undoubtedly the Greek phrase for “with all his house” is adverbial; but this makes no difference for the sense substantially, either here or anywhere else. Thus all the family of every man pertaining to Jacob (Ex. 1:1) came from Palestine into Egypt: the heads of each house did not come with Jacob in lien of the members. It was equally true of all, though the heads only were specified. So here the jailor rejoiced, yet not representatively for his family; but they too as really in their measure as he, though his joy as believing in God is duly specified. It is intended that we should understand the joy of faith in the case of all. A beautiful picture of the reality and activity of God's grace in this world, and this with the whole house of a hardened pagan; and of such it is repeatedly predicated. For is He the God of Jews only? Is He not also of Gentiles? Yes, of Gentiles also; since. God is one who shall justify circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through their faith, not annulling law

thereby, but establishing it, for law never was so vindicated as in the death of the Lord Jesus; and hence the believers, once guilty, enter into peace and joy.

Such is the triumph of God's righteousness for all who submit to it; yet it is no promise in suspense, still less a sham, but a reality of blessed and effectual grace, for none but those that do submit, whatever may be one's desire and hope for others. It is sweet to see thoughtful love and hospitality at once in motion, when faith purifies the heart. The restraining and controlling hand of law is a great boon in a sinful world; yet what is it at best compared with the working of divine grace, even in one but just born of God?

“And when it was day, the praetors sent the lictors, saying, Let those men go. And the jailor reported the saying unto Paul, The praetors have sent that ye be let go: now then go out and proceed in peace. But Paul said unto them, They beat us openly, uncondemned, men being Romans, and cast us into prison; and now do they cast us out privily? No indeed; but let themselves come and bring us out. And the lictors announced these words, and they were afraid when they heard they were Romans. And on coming they besought them, and bringing out entreated [them] to go out of the city. And when they went out of the prison, they entered into [the house of] Lydia; and when they saw the brethren, they exhorted them and departed” (ver. 35-40).

Another evidence of a Roman colony appears here in the lictors employed as subordinates by the praetors, which is disguised in the vague name of “serjeants,” as the higher officials under that of “magistrates.”

The passionate or time-serving concession to unjust clamor had now passed away; and word was dispatched next morning to dismiss the abused prisoners of the day before. The jailor naturally repeated, his orders, glad doubtless to release them. But Paul was now as firm in a dignified way for the vindication of the gospel, and even of the law, of which they were the unworthy administrators, as he and his companion before in uncomplaining meekness had borne their lawless violence. If there is a time to keep silent, there is a time to speak; and the Spirit alone can guide as to either, for which the word alone suffices, for it warrants both, each in its due season. Here we see the two injunctions carried out in the same transaction, and both turning to the glory of the Lord.

It was not invariably so even with such honored, servants. Their own spirit might, and occasionally did, act without the sure guidance of God; as when the high priest was rebuked and Caesar was appealed to, each time with consequences less or more serious, as it may be shown when the history comes before us. Here beyond controversy the silent suffering of Paul and Silas was a mighty and striking testimony to the practical grace which our Lord would have to characterize His own. “For what glory is it,” says another apostle, “if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable [lit. grace] with God.” To this, saints, as such, are called. Peculiarly does it become those to practice it, who teach it, as did the blessed pair then at Philippi. They were reproached for the name of Christ, and were partakers of His sufferings without a murmur, nay, with prayers and hymns of joy that they were counted worthy to bear wrong and shame for His Name.

But now that they had thus endured, it was fitting that it should be proved that Paul and Silas were not evil-doers punished justly with scourging and prison and the stocks, but that the guardians of

the law had been guilty of flagrant, manifest, and inexcusable unrighteousness against the preachers of the gospel. The time was come when the praetors sent to let them go, and Paul saw this, not at first the jailor. Therefore said the apostle to them, “They beat us openly uncondemned, men being Romans, and cast us into prison; and do they cast us out privily? No, indeed; but let themselves come and bring us out?” Their exposure was complete, though only the officials and their victims might know it. There was not the semblance of resentment, not the least desire to injure them, and exact from men who lay absolutely in the power of those they had wantonly injured. But it was unanswerably demonstrated, that, in the conflict between the officials of Roman war at Philippi and the ministers of the gospel, the latter were no less honored by the gracious power of God, than the former had utterly failed to repress the mob, and had even become the ringleaders in cruel infraction of that law they were bound to enforce.

The lictors bring back Paul's words to the praetors, who, when they heard the sufferers were Romans, could not hide their fear but came and besought their prisoners. It was a humiliation on their part, as undeniable a triumph for those charged with God's gospel, who had suffered only as Christians with the Spirit of glory and of God resting on them.

Certainly the preachers of grace were not disposed to swerve from grace, least of all now that the truth was clear; nor had they any wish to put dishonor on any human institution, but rather to be patterns in that subjection to it for the Lord's sake, to which they were conspicuous in exhorting others. They were easily entreated, having never thought of a prosecution.

“And when they brought them out, they asked [them] to go out of the city. And they went out of the prison, and entered into [the house of] Lydia; and when they saw the brethren, they exhorted them and departed.” They exercised their indisputable title to liberty by a visit on quitting the prison to Lydia, where they saw “the brethren.” These would seem to be her household of whom we heard in verse 15. Of none others in that holy band of relationship do we read at this time in Philippi. These they exhorted, or comforted, as well there might be need, and the Lord's servants could happily do in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. As they had rejoiced in their bonds, they took their leave: a lovely picture in their own persons, of that superiority to circumstances which the apostle at a later day impressed in his Epistle on all the saints there, for their blessing and ours.

Chapter 38

On Acts 17:1-15

We are now brought into somewhat new circumstances. The work of the Lord goes on, the testimony varies in its character, the zeal of the laborers is the same, the results differ more or less, and so does the opposition to the enemy.

“Now, when they had journeyed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was the synagogue of the Jews” (ver. 1).

It is remarkable the more ancient manuscripts (à A B D, etc.) omit the article before synagogue, as do the Authorized and Revised versions; but the testimony is ample and varied to its existence. On the one hand it is well-nigh impossible to conceive its insertion, unless it were originally there. On the other it is easy to understand its omission, because of its unusual connection. It would be quite justified if in fact there was but the synagogue in that district, which would give it notoriety. At Philippi we saw that there was none; only there was the place for prayer by the river, where a few used to assemble on the sabbath.

“And Paul as his custom was went in among them and on three sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging that the Christ must suffer, and rise again from the dead, and that This Jesus, whom I announce to you, is the Christ” (ver. 2, 3). Here the apostle returns to a testimony of pointed application to the Jews. No doubt it is of the highest value to everyone, but the form of it exactly suited the place where his discourses were given. A suffering and a risen Christ was proved out of the scriptures; and this not merely as a truth in what they owned to be the word of God, but the absolute necessity because of man's sin, and the only adequate remedy in God's grace, with the further and clenching conclusion that “This is the Christ Jesus, whom I announce to you.” No miracle was needed here to arrest attention. The scriptures are a testimony beyond miracles, and the most permanent of all testimony. Jesus alone, as far as His first advent is concerned, gives full meaning to the word of God; and this it is which completely meets the conscience and the heart of the believer, for purging the one, and giving a blessed and blessing object to the other. But it is not all that the apostle had to say at Thessalonica, as we shall shortly learn; as it is all which is mentioned here, no more need be added now.

“And some of them were persuaded and added to Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few” (ver. 4). Thus, as the apostle wrote afterward, “Our gospel was not with you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance” (1 Thess. 1:5). The harvest was considerable, not only from among the Jews, but far more from the Gentiles, including not a few women of rank. In no assembly of apostolic times do we find in fact greater simplicity, freshness, and power of the truth than among the Thessalonians.

But the success of the gospel is ever apt to rouse bitter opposition and nowhere so much as among the Jews, who would keenly feel that rancorous spite which is natural to those who were overwhelmed by their own scriptures, for which they could not account, but to which they would not bow. “But the Jews, having been stirred up to jealousy, took unto them certain wicked men of

the rabble (lit. market-loungers) and gathering a crowd sot the city in confusion, and besetting the house of Jason, sought to bring them out to the people. And not having found them, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the city-rulers (or politarchs), crying out, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also, whom Jason has received; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus. And they troubled the crowd and the city-rulers when they heard these things. And having taken security for Jason and the rest, they let them go" (ver. 5-9).

Here we see the usual lack of common honesty which marks the religious assailants of the truth. The Jews, who professed the fear of God, did not scruple, through jealousy, to form a party with wicked men of the lowest sort against the gospel. Abandoned heathens were good enough allies against the truth of their own Messiah, whom worldly lusts would not let them discern in the suffering, but risen, Jesus. God was in none of their thoughts; and self-will wrought to darken and destroy the force of His word. Their degradation could not be hidden in the company with whom they consorted to form a crowd and set the city in uproar. Yet were the Jews the exclusive representatives of divine law before all nations. They were now alas! the standing proof of utter failure, not because the law was not holy, the commandment holy, and just, and good, but because they themselves were unholy, unjust, and evil. Even now, their own Messiah being come, they failed to recognize Him through unbelief, urged the Gentiles to crucify Him, and were also forbidding His servants to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved. Thus were they filling up their sins always, "but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." The host of Paul, Jason, was the special object of their animosity; his house they beset in their desire to bring forward the Lord's servants unto the people, i.e. the regular assembly of the city. Not finding them, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the city-rulers, a peculiar title of the local authorities, which so much the more attests Lake's accuracy, because it occurs in no known remains of Greek antiquity. But an inscription still extant on the marble arch of the western or Vardar gate of Saloniki proves that such was the title of the Thessalonian magistrates, and that there were seven. By a remarkable coincidence three of the names of Paul's companions found here, or in the Epistles, answer to as many in that inscription given from Boeokh, No. 1967, in Conybeare and Howson I. 395. Sosipater, Secundus and Gains are common to both, a fact which points to the prevalence of these names in that region. It was a free city anciently called Therma, which afterward received its name of Thessalonica from Cassander in compliment to his wife, Thessalonica, sister of Alexander the Great, and remains a flourishing city of the Turkish empire in our day under the derived name of Saloniki.

The outcry of the assailants in verses 6, 7 is strikingly instructive, at least in its latter part. That the preachers of divine grace turned the world upside down was natural to say, and became a standing reproach, however untrue. Yet is it intelligible because the gospel penetrates among high and low, and separates from the world by a divine bond to Christ in heaven. But for that very reason it does not meddle with the authority of the world; to which, on the contrary, it enjoins subjection on every soul as God's ordinance here below. It simply but completely attaches the heart of those who believe to the rejected One, now glorified in heaven. But we cannot look for truth in a foolish cry raised by envious Jews and idle loungers of the. Gentiles. They only sought an appearance sufficient to arouse the fears of the magistrates, and thereby drive away the chief heralds of the truth.

But they lay another charge of a more definite kind, which has the more interest because of the light on it furnished by both the Epistles to the Thessalonians, “And these all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”

The insinuation was unfounded and malicious undoubtedly; but it had a show of evidence in the prominence given to the kingdom of God in which Jesus was to come. For He was gone, among other objects, to receive that kingdom and to return. Now, whatever the ill-willed folly of representing that this expectation is antagonistic to the rights of Caesar, it is plain that the teaching was very far from modern doctrine, which could never be so misconstrued. Paul and his companions held before the saints the constant looking for Christ to come and reign; and this, not as a secret for the initiated, but as a most influential hope which penetrated all walk as well as doctrine, and to be urged from first to last throughout the whole Christian life. We learn from the earliest chapter of the first Epistle that it characterized the Thessalonian converts from their starting point. They turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to await His Son from the heavens, Whom He raised out of the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath. Their conversion was to wait for Jesus no less than to serve God, That hope therefore was suited to the youngest believers, as truly as to the apostle. It was independent of prophetic scheme, with which neophytes, especially from the heathen, could not be acquainted. Yet was it so much the more a hope bright and unembarrassed in which they lived from day to day.

So surely was this the case, that the apostle reminds them (chap. 2) how, as a father his own children, he used to exhort “each one of you, and comfort and testify, that ye should walk worthy of God, Who calleth you to His own kingdom and glory.” What could more prove His kingdom as bearing on present walk? And in fact it is notorious that the lack of it before the eyes of the saints exposes them to seeking ease, and honor, and wealth, and all worldliness. With His kingdom and glory before as, we can heartily bear present shame and suffering, and the walk is elevated accordingly. Even the apostle looked for his crown of boasting in the saints only before our Lord Jesus at His coming. Then would holiness have its consummation and display at His coming with all His saints (chap. 3). Dead and living saints (chap. 4.) would be changed and with Him on high at His coming; and in due time the day of the Lord should fall with sudden destruction on a thoughtless, unexpecting world (chap. 5.).

If possible more precise is the intimation about the kingdom in the Second Epistle. The saints in Thessalonica, through various causes, did not then enjoy so much of the brightness of the hope; but the apostle joins his fellow-laborers with himself in boasting of their endurance and faith in all their persecutions and tribulations. This is viewed as a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God to the end that they should be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, “for the sake of which ye also suffer.” Retribution will come in its day at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven: He it is who makes good, manifests, and administers the kingdom (chap. 1). But that day cannot be (errorists pretended that it was already present) ere the apostasy come, and the man of sin be revealed.

There was already at work the mystery or secret of lawlessness, the upshot of which will be the revelation of that lawless one, who is yet himself to sit down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. This will draw swift judgment on him and his adherents; for the Lord Jesus shall consume him with the breath of His mouth, and annul him by the appearing of His coming (chap.

2). This need not alarm the feeblest believers, seeing that God has called them by the gospel to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, though we need the Lord meanwhile to direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ (chap. 3.). It is the second advent, as men call it, the manifestation of the Lord in glory, which introduces the kingdom judicially, when in the language of Daniel, the “little stone” having executed judgment on all opposing hostile powers here below, will then expand into a great mountain and fill the whole earth. To expect universal spread and supremacy for God's kingdom before the King comes in personal and public overthrow of His foes is an error of no small magnitude. The error sought early entrance, but met with immediate exposure by the apostle who strengthened the Thessalonians in the truth. He pressed from the beginning the coming of Jesus, and God's kingdom then: a truth as solemn for the world as full of cheer for the saints.

But the world was hostile, though nothing more was done then beyond taking bail of Jason and the rest, and letting them go, as the preachers were not found. Persecution soon fell heavily, as the Epistle shows, on the young converts.

“But the brethren immediately sent away by night Paul and Silas unto Berea; who on their arrival went away into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, being such as received the word with all readiness of mind, day by day examining the scriptures whether these things were so. Many out of them therefore believed, and of the Greek women of good position, and of men, not a few. But when the Jews from Thessalonica knew that the word of God was announced by Paul in Berea also, they came thither also, stirring up and troubling the crowds. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to proceed toward the sea; but Silas and Timothy abode there. But they that were conducting Paul, brought [him] as far as Athens; and having received a charge for Silas and Timothy that they should come as quickly as possible unto him, they departed” (ver. 10-15).

It is blessed to mark the unwearied zeal of the Lord's servants. They had barely escaped the ill-will roused by the Jews at Thessalonica, when we behold them undauntedly repairing to the synagogue in Berea, on their arrival. Here they experienced such readiness of heart in searching the scriptures as evinced a greater simplicity and real nobility of soul. Bowing to the word, receiving it as God's word, which indeed it is, is the truest condition of divine blessing; yet did they daily examine scripture, whether the things preached accorded with the things written. Therefore many from among them believed. There is no way so sure or good. And it is of interest to observe that, here also not a few Greek women of rank, no less than men, believed as well as the God-fearing Jews. It was doubtless an unspeakable deliverance from debasing immorality, as well as empty fable—from a life of selfishness to serve an only and true God, and to await His Son from heaven.

But Jewish rancor could not content itself with driving the apostles from Thessalonica: from Thessalonica came the hostile Jews to Berea in order to counteract the preached word, stirring up and troubling the crowds there also.

Knowledge of old revelation gives no security for receiving the truth God is actually sending or using most at any given time. On the contrary, as we see in these Jews here and elsewhere, if there be pride in what is already possessed, it will act powerfully to reject what is meant of God to test the heart now; especially if grace be at work to open the door of faith to those who had no

religions standing from of old. Hence the gospel is of all things most repulsive to the ancient people of God, who madly refused the mercy which waited on them first of all, before it was preached to the Gentiles.

Thereon Paul is again sent off by the brethren toward the sea, whilst his companions staid there still. Athens was the apostle's destination, whither he had a loving escort, and where he charged Silas and Timothy to rejoin him. But Athens, as we shall see, was not destined to be a fruitful field for the incorruptible seed, the living and abiding word of God.

Chapter 39

On Acts 17:16-34

No! Athens was to be comparatively barren for the gospel: so different are the thoughts of God from those of men. Mere love of novelty, not value for truth, characterized that city once the most renowned seat of the arts, of letters, of philosophy. It was covered with idols: God was not really in their thoughts. Indeed He cannot be known or loved apart from Jesus. But now a herald was come to set the testimony of Jesus before them, yet alas how little heeded!

“Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked in him as he observed the city to be full of idols. He reasoned therefore, in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout, and in the market-place every day with those that turned up. And certain also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers attacked him. And some said, What would this babbler say? and others, He seemeth to be an announcer of strange deities, because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And having taken hold of him, they brought [him] up to the Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new teaching [is], that is spoken by thee? For thou bringest certain strange things unto our ease: we wish to know therefore, what these things mean. Now all Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else than either to tell some thing, or to hear some thing newer” (ver.16-21), i.e. than the last.

It was an indignant and painful feeling which stirred the apostle s spirit as he beheld idols everywhere. Companionship he loved and valued, and tidings of Thessalonica he longed for; but at once he goes to the synagogue, for the Jews and proselytes, as well as to the market-place every day for those that came by. The Epicureans and the Stoics soon encountered him; the former being really Atheists, under the plea of chance, and looking for the dissolution of soul and body; the latter, of a sterner school, which cried up necessity, or fate, and an intolerant and intolerable egotism, being really Pantheists: Some had recourse to banter. “What would this babbler say?” Others took Paul up more gravely, “He seemeth to be an announcer of strange divinities [or demons], because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.” So Ignorant were these sages as to count the resurrection a goddess, the counterpart of Jesus, a god. The true God was unknown. But they were no longer disposed to persecute. Intellectual levity survived the loss of their national independence and political power. Mocking or curiosity alone remained. Still they were sufficiently struck by the apostle's preaching to lay hold of him and bring him up to the Areopagus, not to try him for his life, as they once did with Socrates, but that they might know what this new doctrine was. Even they could not but avow how strange the sound was to their ears. “We wish to know therefore, what these things mean.” The truth, however, enters not through the ear merely, but the conscience; and what conscience was there in spending their time for nothing else than either to tell or to hear the last news? We shall see that the apostle brought God as a personal and living reality, before themselves as morally related to Him. Till conscience is awakened, what groundwork can there be? Otherwise the gospel is degraded into another new thing, and Jesus and the resurrection become the latest additions to the Pantheon of heathen vanities.

“And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said, Men of Athens, in all things I observe that ye are very [i.e. more than others] reverent to deities [or demons]; for passing through and closely observing the objects of your worship, I found also an altar on which was the inscription, To an unknown God. What [or whom], therefore, ye without knowing worship, this I announce to you. The God that made the world and all things therein, He, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands as needing something more, Himself giving to all life and breath, and all things. And He made of one [blood] every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and are; as also some of your own poets have said, For His offspring also are we. Being therefore God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divinity is like gold or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man. God, therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, now commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent, inasmuch as He appointed a day in which He is about to judge the world [inhabited earth] in righteousness, by a man whom He marked out, having given assurance to all in that He raised him from [the] dead” (ver. 22-31).

Though we have only a sketch of the apostle's discourse, we can readily see its striking difference from that which he was wont to preach to the Jews. He comes down to the lowest point and form of truth, in order, as he had done before (Acts 14) with the Lycaonian barbarians, to reach the Athenian conscience, the Jews having through the law incomparably more worthy thoughts of God and of their own relationship to Him. Nevertheless the address opens with habitual courtesy whilst there was not a particle to flatter their pride. The apostle laid hold of the only object, in that crowd, of honors paid to truly strange demons, which confessed the humbling fact about themselves and God. “An unknown God” told the true tale; all else around was but deception and the triumph of the enemy. “What, therefore, ye worship in ignorance, this I announce to you.”

“The God that made the world and all things therein” is the Judge of all the world by the same risen Man who is Savior of such as repent and believe the gospel, be they who or what they may. Creation was owned by neither Epicureans nor Stoics: the one holding the absurdity of a fortuitous concourse of atoms; the other conceiving a fixed ever recurring cycle of generation and dissolution in the universe, which was their god if they can be allowed to have had any. But the Creator of all things is also Lord of heaven and earth; He neither rests in apathy, nor is He the mere active soul of the passive world, but supreme Ruler, not of heaven only, but of the earth. He is not therefore to be limited to human sanctuaries, nor to be served by human hands as though He needed anything, seeing that He Himself gives to all life and breath and the whole of what they enjoy. Some elements of these truths might be accepted here and there, for man has a conscience.; but seen fully and simply they swept away the dark clouds of philosophic dreamers, maintaining for God His own place of sovereign goodness towards man, let him be ever so proud, dark, and miserable.

The apostle adds more. He struck next at a well-known theme of Athenian vanity, by no means, however, peculiar to that race, or land, or time: “And he made of one [bleed] every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek God, if indeed they might feel after him, and though he is not far from each one of us.” The one origin of man goes with the unity of God, as the pretension to

distinct races with their respective patrons of polytheism. The Jews as they fell away helped on the falsehood in their self-exalting vanity, though to them only was committed the revelation of the two-fold truth, which Christianity alone applied thoroughly and carried out according to God. It was not only the mere passing testimony to His goodness in the gift from heaven of rains, and fruitful seasons, to which the apostle here pointed, but to appointed seasons, and the boundaries of the dwelling of the various nations, all under God's hand with peculiar favors distributed to each, and at least a whisper to seek after (not “the Lord,” which is true neither in the Jewish sense of Jehovah, nor still less in the only just revealed exaltation of the rejected Messiah, but) “God,” if haply they might grope after and find Him, though not far from each of us.

It is not however without interest to compare Job's treatment of the same truth generally (chap. 12:23-25): only he dwells rather on the side of the divine sovereignty of Him to whom the nations, haughtily indifferent about Him though they might be, are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. But the glowing heat of the inspired preacher does not fail to urge the moral aim of His beneficent arrangements on the grandest scale, that they might seek after Himself, if perhaps they might feel after and find Him: teaching quite in keeping with his own Epistle to the Rom. 1:20. Even, in the darkness of heathenism more than one had owned, if not Paul's fine statement of man's absolute dependence on God for continued life, activity, and existence, yet God the source of the race: a truth already given most distinctly in Luke 3:38, supposed parabolically in Luke 15:11, and taught formally in the first clause ck; mph. iv. 6. The poets among them (the heathen Greeks) had expressed it; not the Cilician Aratus only (whom he cites verbally), but Cleanthes also in nearly similar words, as others substantially.

With this acknowledgment of their poetical seers the apostle states the confutation of the folly of idolatry. If man alone of creatures on earth is God's offspring, how maintain that the divinity is like a work of man's craft and imagination in gold, or silver, or stone? “We ought not” so to think, he says graciously, not forgetting that Israel too had to bear the sterner irony of Isaiah (chap. 44:9-20). A lifeless stock that man forms cannot be, or duly represent, the God that made him aid all things.

Yet the God, who was time shamefully misrepresented in the times of the ignorance that was past, would no longer overlook as heretofore such delinquency; He is now charging them that they everywhere repent (ver. 30.). This was a death blow, not only for the self-indulgence of the Epicurean as well as for the self-righteous Stoic, but for the careless and the proud all mankind and not least in that city. And the apostle followed it up with the solemn reason for heed and urgency, “because he had appointed a day in which he is about to judge the habitable [earth] in righteousness by a man whom he had marked out, having afforded assurance [or, ground of belief] to all, in that he raised him out of [the] dead.”

Here the prevalent thought of Christendom errs greatly. The Jews used to, and perhaps in some measure do, look for a judgment of living men; the mass of Christians, notwithstanding the Creeds, only look (all but exclusively in fact) for a judgment of the dead before eternity. The apostle here and elsewhere pressed the judgment of this habitable scene at our Lord's appearing to introduce His kingdom in displayed power and glory, as He did Himself in Matt. 24, and 25; Mark 13; Luke 17, 19, 21, and other scriptures. The pledge of His thus coming to judge and to reign is His own resurrection, as ours who believe will be at His coming preparatorily to our appearing and reigning

with Him.

This shows how vital and fundamental a truth is His resurrection, which so blessedly involves our own, besides being the witness to His victory over death and Satan, to the Father's glory in vindicating His Son, to the efficacy of His sacrifice for the believer, and to the displayed condition of man for heaven according to divine counsels. Granted that in the nature of the case it is a fact attested by His own, though with the most abundant and weighty evidence, above all by God's word long before the fact, as well as by fresh revelation immediately after. Could any other fact be shown possessed of grounds to be compared with these? All that on which the soul stands forever before God, rests on the self-same ground of divinely given testimony; and consequently, as being addressed to faith; purifies the heart through the operation of the Holy Ghost, as nothing else can do.

What was the effect on the Athenians? “Now when they heard of resurrection of dead [men], some mocked, but others said, We will hear thee concerning this yet again. Then Paul went out from their midst. But some men slave to him and believed; among whom also was Dionysius, the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them” (ver. 32-34).

Nor should we wonder at these heathen philosophers, and news-mongers, staggered by a call resting on a basis so irrefragable on God's part, so crushing to human will and unbelief, as resurrection. For human science never rises above sensible causes and effects, or phenomena arrayed according to natural laws. This is all true and interesting in its own sphere. The folly is in denying what is wholly different in kind, as grace necessarily is from nature; and rejecting facts attested by the fullest and surest testimony, the most unreasonable course to be conceived in things which must, and ought, as facts, to depend on testimony: a course only intelligible in this exceptional case through the desperate antagonism of fallen humanity to God, even when waiting on and speaking to man in the richest mercy. But man, and not least philosophic, man, rebels against resurrection. He might endure a whole night's Socratic discussion of the soul's immortality; for this gratifies the nobler sort, if it be offensive to the more degraded. But a dead man raised brings in God; and God intervening in the midst of a busy world to mark out the Man Whom they crucified, Who is going to judge this habitable world one day, as also in due time the dead raised later, ere all things are made new for eternity. To science, as science, I repeat, it is repulsive, because impossible for their idol; for what can be the cause of resurrection? Certainly not death, but God in the person of the Son.

Bow, proud man, bow to Him, who in love sent His Son that we might live through Him, true God as He is, and that He might die for us—for our sins, without which the gift of eternal life had been the merest anomaly, but with it the deep blessing of a full and everlasting salvation of His grace, yet righteous, to the glory of God forever. There were mockers and triflers then as now. Oh! may you like the others of old, cleave to the apostle, and find your place with the true Dionysius of Luke, not with the Neo-Platonist impostor who borrowed his eminent name for his fables and rhapsodies of the 6th century manufacture. Doubtless that blessed place must be shared with a Damaris and others, whose names are written in heaven if unknown on earth. May Christ satisfy your soul, as well He may Who is all, and in all.

Chapter 40

On Acts 18:1-4

In marked distinction from Athens is the dealing of divine grace with Corinth, the wealthy capital of Achaia, the southern province of Greece under the Roman empire. Thither the apostle repaired after his brief visit to Athens: with what result the record stands, not in the inspired history alone, but in the two great epistles to the church of God in Corinth.

“After these things he departed from Athens and came unto Corinth. And he found a certain Jew, named Aquila, of Pontus by, race, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. And he came unto them; and because he was one of the same trade, he abode with them, and [?they] wrought, for by their trade they were tent-makers. And he was discoursing in the synagogues every sabbath, and persuading Jews and Greeks” (ver. 1-4).

The ways of grace are wholly above man's thoughts. None could have anticipated that God would raise a trophy to His Son, not in intellectual Athens, but in demoralized Corinth. Was there any antecedent link, or natural suitability whatever, between the Holy One of God and this proverbial seat of impurity? The grace of God gives no account of its matters but works to the glory of Christ; and most of all where man is most needy. Even so the apostle asked in the beginning of his first epistle to the Corinthians, “Where is the wise? Where the scribe? Where the disputer of this age? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God the world through wisdom knew not God, God was pleased through the foolishness of the preaching to save those that believe. Since Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Gentiles foolishness, but unto the called themselves, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God, because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” The wisdom of this age had proved its folly in Athens; the compassion of God yearned over Corinth in the face of all its dissolute manners and corruption.

“For behold your calling, brethren, how that there are not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God chose the foolish things of the world that He might put to shame the wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that He might put to shame the strong things, and the base things of the world, and the things despised, did God choose, and the things that are not, that He might bring to naught the things that are; that no flesh should glory before God.” Never was this more realized than in Corinth, where in due time a numerous assembly was formed from both Jews and Gentiles, for the most part of no great account in this world.

Paul was not alone long. He found in Corinth a certain Jew, called Aquila, who though of Pontes by race (like his namesake of a later date, who however was a Jewish proselyte and translated the O. T. into Greek most literally), had just come from Italy, with Priscilla his wife. This is their first mention in scripture. We hear of them afterward in Ephesus and of the assembly at their house. Later still they were found once more in Rome, and saluted as Paul's fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, “Who for my life staked their own necks, to whom not I only am thankful, but also all the

assemblies of the Gentiles.” There also we hear of the assembly at their house, In the last epistle which our apostle ever wrote, he bids Timothy salute them once more and for the last time in Ephesus.

The occasion of their coming from Italy at this time was because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Suetonius, the Roman biographer of the Caesars, states that this emperor, because of a Jewish outbreak, “impulsore Chresto,” expelled them from Rome. The Latin words cited are probably an error on his part, but may allude to violence on the side of unbelieving Jews against those who believed, or may be a confusion (owing to Roman jealousy) with the preaching of the Messiah elsewhere. Bp. Pearson is of opinion that this expulsion happened about A.D. 52, in which year Tacitus (Ann. xii. 52) puts the Senate's decree for expelling the “mathematici” or “Chaldaei;” but whether they were identical or connected is uncertain. It is known that Claudius was deeply indebted to Herod Agrippa the First for his nomination to the empire, and did not forget him but rewarded the Herod family: so one could hardly suppose so hostile an attitude toward the Jews, while Herod A. was in Rome; and we can easily understand that, if enacted in his absence, the decree soon fell through. This consideration clears up the statement of Dio Cassius (lx. 6), which some have supposed to contradict Luke, as well as Suetonius, that the emperor did not expel them, but ordered them not to congregate in Rome. If we distinguish the times, all is clear and true.

But God made use of the edict to bring Aquila and his wife into life-long communication with the apostle. Whether they were converted or not before they first net is not quite certain. Much stress has been laid on Aquila's description as “a certain Jew,” rather than as a disciple; but this may be satisfactorily enough accounted for, both as qualifying the place of his birth, and as furnishing the ground of his quitting Rome for Corinth. Then we must bear in mind that, as the Romans and strangers in general did not in these early days distinguish Christian Jews from their brethren after the flesh, so Paul repeatedly designates himself a Jew afterward in this book (21:39; 22:3). The apostle never speaks of them as his children in the faith, however warmly he may greet or characterize them. Certain it is that they were abundantly blessed through him, as he graciously owns the large debt due to them, not by himself only, but by all the assemblies of the Gentiles. We never hear of this devoted pair in Judea: they were widely known outside the land among the Gentiles where assemblies met. Their wealth, or their trade, afforded the means to welcome the gathering of saints at their own house; a circumstance not unusual in those days (or even much later, as we know from the Acta Martyrii S. Justini, Ruinart). So we see also in the cases of Nymphas and Philemon. It abides now a happy resource where a few can only thus be gathered to Christ's name according to His word. That they should first wait for a bishop is either an Ignatian tradition or a notion at the present day flowing from the same unbelieving superstition which gave birth to the tradition in the past. Only the ever living truth of “one body and one Spirit” would call for fellowship in such an act. Independency is a denial of true church action.

Another fact in solving a principle of deep practical moment comes out in verse 3. “And because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and wrought; for by their occupation they were tent-makers." God was pleased so to order things that the great apostle, in the wealthiest and most luxurious city of Greece, should carry on an honest occupation for necessary wants. What a death-blow to clericalism on the one hand, and to worldliness on the other! Yet in the circumstances of both Paul himself and Corinth, it was just the course which was worthy of the

gospel of the grace which sent it out. It is unreasonable to suppose that this blessed servant of the Lord failed in ordinary foresight for his missionary journey, or that the assemblies of the saints were lacking in care for him or in zeal for the work, especially in the regions beyond those where the faithful were already gathered together unto Christ's name. The apostle had pushed forward alone without means into a quarter of abounding ease and distinguished elegance, to say nothing of the dissoluteness of morals which followed in their train; and there, laboring with his own hands for the necessities of others no less than his own, as was his wont, he truly represented the Master Who came not to be ministered unto but to minister. It was for the Son of man alone to give His life a ransom for many; it was His exclusively to suffer once for sins, Just for unjust, to bring us to God. But the apostle of the Gentiles was Christ's follower, or imitator, with energy of devotedness unparalleled not among saints or servants only, but among the apostles, whom God set foremost in the church. And grace gave his single eye to discern how best to please and glorify Christ in such circumstances. At a later day he exhorted the presbyters of the Ephesian assembly in his affecting farewell charge at Miletus; for he was not the man to urge on others what he shrank from himself. Neither did he shrink from commending such a path of gracious self-abnegation to those whose function it is to feed or tend the flock of God.

The laborer is indeed worthy of his food and of his hire, for there are other necessities beyond food, and the Lord forgot none, as is plain from this twofold statement (Matt. 10:10; Luke 10:7, as cited in 1 Tim. 5:18): so the apostle declares (1 Cor. 9:14) the Lord ordained that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel, as the law had done before for those that ministered about holy things. But, while insisting on a title so just and true for others, we see the blessed man foregoing it for himself in the same context: “But I [emphatically] have used none of these things; and I write not these things that it may be so done in my case; for it were good for me rather to die than that any man should make my glorying vain. For if I preach the gospel I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel. For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. What then is my reward? That in preaching the gospel, I make the gospel without charge, so as not to use for myself [or, to the full] my title as to the gospel.” Here was not letter but spirit, not self but Christ, in the full stream of that love which displayed itself to sinners in Christ sent that we who were dead might live through Him, and that He might die a propitiation for our sins. It was meet that the highest witness of grace among men should be a manifest giver in his measure as God is infinitely.

So he told the Thessalonians in his earliest Epistle, that he sought not glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have been a burden as apostles of Christ. None ever so well felt the value of Christ's words, It is more blessed to give than to receive. His reason was far more, elevated than that which Calvin imputes—because the false apostles taught freely without taking anything, that they might craftily insinuate themselves. In 1 Cor. 9, where his motives are shown, there is no allusion to those evil workers; and in fact there could be no such persons in Corinth when Paul came to preach, and no assembly as yet existed. It was a heart filled with love, and burning to illustrate the gospel in deed and in truth as he proclaimed it in word, without question of adversaries yet to arise and set up cheap and vaunting pretensions to similar grace. In his second epistle no doubt he does speak of his keeping himself in everything from being a burden to the saints in Corinth, and of his determination so to keep himself, that he might cut off the occasion of

those wishing for an occasion, that wherein they boasted they might be found even as we [not we even as they].

“And he was discoursing in the synagogue every sabbath and persuading Jews and Greeks” (ver. 4).

The same word means either “discoursing” in general, or in particular “reasoning,” or even “disputing,” as in Mark 9:34; Acts 17:2; 24:12; Jude 9. Here, as in ch. 20:7, 9; Heb. 12:5, the more general force seem preferable; in others “reasoning” may be right as between the extremes. Context alone can decide. As the synagogue was the scene of the discourses, we may gather assuredly that the testimony of the O. T. was the ample groundwork on which he appealed to his hearers, who were not exclusively Jews; for we are expressly told that (not Hellenists but) Greeks were the objects of his habitual persuasion. If they were not proselytes, they must have been men whom the licentious excess of heathenism drove there; and no wonder, when, as another has said, their religion itself corrupted man; and he made of his corruption a religion. Nowhere was this more deeply and conspicuously true than in Corinth, where the worship of Aphrodite with her infamous ■ερ■δουλοι prevailed (the counterpart of Venus at Rome, and of Astarte or Hebrew Ashtoreth, in Syria). Abandoning all fear or thought of the true God, they fell below even the natural decency of man, and dishonored themselves in the dishonor of God. The synagogue, cold as it was, attracted consciences which revolted from evil which philosophy indulged in, or at best was far too weak to supplant or restrain; and Greeks there listened with Jews to the holy and persuasive discourses of the apostle. We shall find a crisis that went farther ere long, but not till the apostle had the companionship of beloved fellow-laborers.

Chapter 41

On Acts 18:5-7

It may be added that too much has been made of the word “persuade,” in rev. 4, as if it meant to induce by little and little.” It is on the contrary the word by which the apostle himself expresses the preaching of the gospel to win souls in view of the awful reality for the hard or heedless, of Christ's tribunal (2 Cor. 5:10, 11). Paul's word was not certainly in persuasive words of wisdom, as he told the Corinthians in his First Epistle, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, at the very time when he was with them, from his coming in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. He was not there as a philosopher or as “the power of God which is called great,” but as much of a contrast as one can conceive; and this, that the faith of such as believed might stand, not in man's wisdom, but in God's power. But as the effect of his discoursing in the synagogue, he was persuading Jews and Greeks.

When his companions arrived, this was what they found, and snore soon followed. Great is the virtue, even for an apostles of fellowship in labor; and cheering the news then brought.

“And when both Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was engrossed with (or constrained by) the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. But as they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook out his clothes, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own head: I [am] pure; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles, and departing thence he went into a certain man's house, by name Titus Jusius, a worshipper of God, whose house adjoined to the synagogue” (ver. 5-7).

It will be noticed that the two fellow-laborers are said to have come down from “Macedonia,” as the Roman province of northern Greece was called in distinction from Achaia, of which Corinth was the metropolis. Macedonia is the natural phrase, if Silas and Timothy came down from different quarters, and the repeated article would well fall in with this. They were no doubt together at Berea; and Timothy, if not Silas; joined Paul at Athens, whence he was despatched to Thessalonica, with a view to establish thorn and encourage on behalf of their faith, that none should be disturbed in the afflictions then, and there so severe. Both Silas and Timothy now joined the apostle at Corinth, but not necessarily at the same moment, any more than from the same point of departure. 1 Thess. 3:6 omits all mention of Silas, as the, companion of Timothy on this mission to Thessalonica, who brought to Paul the glad tidings of the Thessalonian saints; whereas the apostle from Corinth joins Silas and Timothy with himself in the address of that Epistle (2 Cor. 1:19). The apostle had forewarned these young converts of the tribulation that befell them but this only the more increased his desires for them; and now he could rejoice that the tempter had failed, and that they were steadfast. The apostle was then occupied earnestly with the word when the two came down; and assuredly their joint labors with him were as cheering to his heart as the good report brought about his beloved Thessalonians. Not the least ground seems to support the notion that their arrival with supplies enabled Paul to give up tent making for the exclusive preaching of the word: certainly the verb συνε■χετο does not mean anything of the sort, but rather that the state of absorption with the word, by which he was characterized, went on; for it is the imperfect,

not the aorist, as it should have been if indicative of a fresh act or course consequent on their coming.

But there is another word which has to be taken into account, in order to a sound judgment. Were vv. genuine, I cannot but think Erasmus (pace Bezae) right, and that the meaning would then be straitened in spirit." But it is not so. The received reading πνε■ματι ("spirit") is not sustained by the best authorities which give λ■γω ("word"), πν. having crept in from Acts 17:16; 18:25; 19:21, etc. Hence such a rendering as Wakefield's must be summarily and on every ground discarded, "the mind of Paul was violently disturbed;" and none the less because the translation is commended by its author in his notes as perfectly agreeable to the original. Similarly erroneous is the turn given by Hammond, Mill, and Wolf, as if the apostle's spirit was vexed at the unbelief of the Jews; or the opposite notion of Beza and others, who construe it into the zealous ardor which carried him away. Others again like Casaubon, Grotius, &c., depart still farther and consider "the spirit" to mean the Holy Spirit by whose impulse he was borne away at this time: a rendering which is in every way faulty, for the verb cannot bear such a force, and the reading is certainly erroneous. If genuine, it would rather require the article absent (unless ■γ■ω were expressed): its insertion simply would point to one's own spirit.

It is needless, however, though instructive in some measure, to discuss these departures from the truth; for it may be laid down as certain that the passage intimates that the apostle was occupied in the word when his fellow-workmen came from Macedonia. He was testifying thoroughly (διαμ.) to the Jews, that Jesus is the Christ or Messiah, the constant stumbling block of that blinded people. Undoubtedly Jesus is much more than" the Christ"; and none ever preached His higher glory, both personal and conferred, more than Paul. But none the less did he press on the Jews that Jesus is the Christ, as the break-up of their unbelief, and the necessary hinge of all further light and blessing.

"But as they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook out his clothes and said unto them, Your blood [be] upon your own head: I [am] pure; from henceforth I will proceed unto the Gentiles" (ver. 6).

With rare exceptions, Such is the spirit of the Jews, and in it they fulfill the awful warnings of their prophets from Moses downwards. They are a perverse and crooked generation, and very froward withal, children in whom is no faith, moving Jehovah to jealousy with that which is not good, and provoking Him to anger with their vanities; as He has moved them to jealousy with those which are not a people, and provoked them to anger with a foolish nation. Ignorance is bearable and claims patient service in presenting the truth; but opposition is quite another thing, especially in the face of ample and convincing testimony; and speaking injuriously, or yet more blasphemy, is worse still, seeing that it is grace and truth in Christ which is thus outrageously rejected. This is fatal. Those who despised Jesus on earth had a fresh testimony concerning Him risen and glorified, and still waiting to be gracious. There is no third, no other, witness to render those who reject Him speaking from heaven, as He is now—nothing but judgment for His adversaries when He appears in glory.

The apostle accordingly answered in significant deed as well as word. "He shook out his clothes, and said unto them," &c. It was the spirit if not the form of Matt. 10:14, as even more rigidly carried out by himself and Barnabas at the Pisidian Antioch. It was as if the dust of the place they dwelt in

defiled, and must be shaken off as a testimony against them: Sodom and Gomorrah were less tolerable. He said also, Your blood [be] upon your own head. So, and yet worse had those cried who actually urged on the Lord to the cross, when Pilate would have let him go, His blood be upon us and upon our children. And so it is until this day. “I [am] pure,” added the apostle; “henceforth I will proceed unto the Gentiles.” It was in perfect harmony not only with his own course elsewhere, but, what is of deeper importance still, with the ways of God in the gospel. The Jew was to have testimony first, and so they had, and not quite in vain. Some did hear to the salvation of their souls; there is an elect remnant. But when the mass reject, the gospel with hatred and blasphemy, the stream of blessing flows, though it is not lost but blessed amid the barren sands of the Gentiles.

It may interest some to know that, even in so simple a passage as the last, men of learning have differed. Lachmann suggested, and. Alford followed, a punctuation which yields the sense, “I shall henceforth with a. pure conscience go to the Gentiles.” Wakefield follows the Peschito Syriac in breaking it up thus: “From this moment I am clean therefrom; I go to the Gentiles,” In his note he says, “This disposition gives a degree of abruptness to the periods more suitable to an angry man!” The irreverence of the translator seems to my mind as manifest as his lack of judgment, and the ordinary division most consistent, dignified, and impressive.

“And departing thence he went into a certain man's house, by name Titus Justus, a worshipper of God, whose house adjoined to the synagogue” (ver. 7).

Many from Chrysostom to Alford, &c., have understood that the apostle removed from his quarters with Aquila; and they have sought to assign motives and reasons in justification of the change. But there is no need to take the trouble; for it was a question of leaving not his lodgings, but the synagogue, and of finding therefore, not new quarters for his abode, but a suited place wherein to continue the testimony rendered previously in the synagogue. And this appears to, me strikingly confirmed by the contiguity to the synagogue of the house; the use of which was offered at once by the devout Gentile whose heart was opening to the truth. If it were a mere lodging, why speak of its joining hard to the synagogue, on which Paul was henceforth turning, his back? But if a suited room were wanted for testimony, two conditions met in the house of Justus: one, that the owner was himself a Gentile, and hence most proper to win the attendance of Gentiles, as well as to accentuate the grave and new step of the apostle; the other, that it was close enough to the synagogue to attract both Jews who might have a conscience about the rejected truth of God, and Gentile, proselytes who had been in the habit of attending the synagogue, like Justus. The school of Tyrannus in the following chapter exactly answers to the change here. There nobody questions that a place for meeting apart from the synagogue is meant. We need not therefore infer that the apostle ceased to reside with Aquila, because the house of Justus furnished a suitable place for preaching when the synagogue no longer served. The apostle was not consulting for himself but for others, without allowing Calvin's idea, “that he might the more nettle the Jews” —a petty and evil motive, very far from his heart who had just forewarned them of their obstinacy and danger of destruction. To remind them of the baneful consequence of impenitence was of God; to “nettle!” them by abandoning the house of his godly friends, Aquila and Priscilla, for that of a Gentile proselyte, seems inconsistent with Christ, with godly wisdom, and right feeling. But with the gainsaying and blaspheming of the synagogue it was impossible to go on without constant strife; and therefore to use for testimony the house of one who valued the gospel, became the evidently proper step, particularly as it was hard by the synagogue, whence any disposed or in earnest

might the more readily come.

Chapter 42

On Acts 18:8-11

Remarkable blessing followed the decision of the apostle, not among Gentiles only, but among the Jews themselves.

“And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. And the Lord said, by night, through a vision to Paul, Fear not, but speak and be not silent; because I am with thee, and no one shall set on thee to harm thee; because I have much people in this city. And he settled down a year and six months, teaching among them the word of God” (ver. 8-11).

It is not a small thing that the Holy Spirit singles out the name of any man for everlasting record in scripture. Thus “Crispus” is mentioned as believing the Lord; and the rather, as he had been “the ruler of the synagogue;” nor this only, for “the whole of his household” believed also, though nothing is said of their baptism. Their faith, the great matter, was no slight cheer to the laborers and a powerful appeal to the Jews generally. The phraseology is peculiar: not here behooving “on” the Lord as object of faith, though this was true also, but believing what He says. 1 Cor. 1 states that the apostle baptized him, but not a word about his house; yet assuredly they too, accepting His testimony, were baptized, though not by the apostle, who did but little in it, as he tells the Corinthians. Under the Lord's keeping he had been preserved from any appearance of prominence personally.

“And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.” The work now went on vigorously under the blessing of the Lord. It was a time of rich ingathering. These were clearly not Jews but Greeks; but none the less did many of them hear and believe the gospel; and, as became them, they submitted to the outward mark which severs the confessor of Christ from the careless or hostile world. They were buried with Christ through baptism unto death. In that act, had they been dumb, they said they died with Christ to sin; not only that He had died for their sins, now remitted on their faith, but that they were to reckon themselves to be dead to sin and alive in Him to God. Sin, therefore, was not to reign in their mortal body. What a change and deliverance for men once bond-men of sin unto death, now made free from sin, and become bondmen of righteousness, bondmen to God, having their fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life! For in Corinth abounded fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with men, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners. “And such were some of you,” said the apostle, to the Corinthians who believed. In no way had they been exempt from those vile corruptions.

Grace does not find, but makes, the saints after a new and heavenly pattern, as will be manifest when they are manifested with Christ in glory. It levels all in an utter condemnation, but it freely and fully sets in Christ all who believe according to the good pleasure of God's will, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved, in Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our offenses, according to the riches of His grace. This men hate, because it makes nothing of human distinctions in which the pride of man exalts and loses itself. It forbids all glorying in flesh,

that the sole glorying may be in the Lord. For there is but one man who is of all weight in the eyes of God, not the first, but the Second, even the Man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all, the testimony in its own times, which becomes the turning-point of every soul: if heard, he lives; if rejected, he perishes in his sins, whatever the appearances or pretensions.

For in believing, man best owns his guilt and God's grace, reversing the world's sentence and endorsing heaven's estimate of the Crucified One. Baptized in His name he becomes His to serve, where he was once Satan's slave, in not a few cases shamelessly.) henceforth by virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, he is, whatever the condition, to please Him in all things; if a slave, he is Christ's freedman; if free, noble, royal, none the less is he Christ's bondman. You can not have the heavenly and everlasting privileges, without the responsibility meanwhile here below. Of this, for the individual, baptism is the sign; as the Lord's supper is the sign of communion corporately. And none had the significance of the latter so fully laid open to them, as the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 10; 11. They needed the instruction and the warning peculiarly; and therefore grace gave them both.

But the Lord was pleased also to vouchsafe extraordinary encouragement to His servant. Paul had a vision, in which he heard as well as saw. At his conversion he had seen and heard the Lord by day (Acts 9); as afterward in a trance or ecstasy, when he returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, he saw Him who bade him to get out of Jerusalem for his mission to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-21). 2 Cor. 12 records his translation (whether in the body or out of the body, he did not know) to the third heaven. Thus visions and revelations were comparatively frequent with the apostle. At this time the design was practical. The Lord said to him, “Fear not, but speak and be not silent” (ver. 9). The structure of the phrase implies that he was anxious. He needed a spring of courage beyond what His fellow-laborers could supply; and the Lord gave accordingly. Natural boldness is a force wholly unsuited to spiritual warfare, where the rule is, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” All to be safe and of God must be in dependence on the grace of Christ. Then, as He Himself said to the apostle, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly therefore, the apostle could say, will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may spread a tabernacle over me. So it was now: instead of fearing more, he was to persevere in speaking and not to hold his peace, of which he was in danger, though he had net begun to yield to it (as the form implies).

In the next ver. 10, the Lord condescends to give two reasons: the first, “because I am with thee, and no one shall set on thee to harm thee;” the second, “because I have much people in this city.” What could be more consolatory to the tried servant? The Lord bound Himself, on the one hand, to give His gracious and mighty presence against all adversaries, and, on the other, to open to him a great door and effectual in His work. Rage as Satan's emissaries might, the Lord had many to bring to Himself as His own in that depraved and godless city. It is lamentable to hear such remarks as those of Lim-borch, who will have the Lord to mean, not so much objects of, more and sovereign grace to magnify. His own mercy in redemption, as virtuous and well-disposed brethren, for this reason called His people here, and His sheep in John 10:16. To mistakes we are all liable, and not least those who flatter themselves most secure; but an error of this kind undermines the gospel, as it indicates the feeblest sense of man's utter ruin, and of our need of grace to the last degree. No one doubts God's wisdom in bringing such an one as a Cornelius under the gospel, when He first sent it out publicly to the Gentiles by Peter; but the great apostle of the Gentiles tells a very different tale of the characters (1 Cor. 6:9-11) whom grace deigned to bless at Corinth.

Again, the Lord, in the parable of the marriage-feast for the King's Son, directs His bondman to go into the thoroughfares of the highways and as many as they could find, to invite to the feast. Accordingly they went out into the highways, and, gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding-feast was filled with guests. They are men met and, in believing the gospel, saved indiscriminately to the raise of the riches of God's grace; for the “good” discover through the truth of Christ that they too sinned and come wholly short of the glory of God, while the “bad” find in His plenteous redemption that His grace justifies freely, the same One being Lord of all, and rich toward all that call upon Him. There is no difference, as at bottom in the ruin, so in result in the salvation; that as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

At Corinth, in the face of all difficulties, the apostle abode longer than we have yet heard of elsewhere. “And he settled down a year and six months, teaching among them the word of God” (ver. 11). The result was, not only the salvation of many souls, but the church of God there: holy, catholic, apostolic, if ever there was such an assembly anywhere. It was planted by one inferior to none; it was watered by others who were not surpassed by any; and God gave the increase beyond controversy. Yet how soon the fair scene is blighted, not merely by the presence in their midst of such sin as was Unheard of ordinarily among the Gentiles, but by the low, fleshly, and worldly-minded condition of the saints generally! So much so, that the apostle had to vindicate his own office before the self-assumed bar of his own children in the faith, and put off a visit in their dire need of his help, because he must have come then with the rod, and he wished rather to see them in love and in a spirit of meekness; and this could only be on their self-judgment which in fact his first Epistle wrought in them. It is not so that men picture the apostles going about, as if their words were received implicitly, and their presence had but to be known in order to unhesitating deference among the saints. Miracles, inspiration, and the highest place in the church, produced no more submission then and there, than fin analogous plebe had given Moses and Aaron in the congregation of Jehovah of old. But their failure in so brief an interval was turned of God to the double end; first, of refuting the folly that a true assembly may not err and become corrupt, even in a few short years, in both doctrine and practice; and, secondly, of drawing from God the suited correction at any time, for all saints who are enabled by faith to gather on the footing of God's church according to His word and by His Spirit. No doubt, recovery was the fruit of the apostles writing, as the Second Epistle bears witness; but how long this lasted, who can say? Certain it is that the second century, if not the first, &c., saw the assembly everywhere departed from the very aim our gracious God and Father had in gathering the saints—the glory of Christ therein by the Spirit. His coming was no longer an object of hope, but rather of fear; His word became more and more overlaid by human authority and tradition; and the world began to seem a prize to possess and enjoy increasingly, instead of a scene of suffering and testimony, till He come Whose right it is, when we shall reign with Him in glory.

Chapter 43

On Acts 18:12-18

During the apostle's stay at Corinth occurred: un event which was of interest enough for the Holy Ghost to claim a place in the inspired narrative as carrying on the design of the work given to Luke for accomplishing.

“But when Gallio was pro-consul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul, and brought him before the judgment-seat, saying, This [man] persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If indeed it were some wrong, or wicked villainy, O Jews, with reason should I have borne with you; but if they are questions about a word and names and your own law, ye shall look yourselves: I do not intend to be judge of these things. And he drove them from the judgment-seat. And having all laid hold on Sosthenes the ruler of the synagogue they beat [him] before the judgment-seat. And Gallio cared for none of these thing's. And Paul, having remained yet many days, took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila, having shorn his head in Cenchrea, for he had a vow” (ver. 12-18).

The testimony went forth fearlessly; the vision answered its purpose. Paul was not afraid but spoke and held not his peace; and while much people came forth to the Lord's name, none else was allowed to do His servant harm. If not a sparrow falls on the ground without our Father, if the very hairs of our head are all numbered, if the Lord Himself will confess before His Father him that confesses the Son before men, there is ground for good courage, not for fear of man. And the impotence of the most exasperated was proved in an unexpected way and quarter, but not without the Lord.

Gallio was notoriously one of the most amiable of men. “None of mortals,” said the famous Seneca of him, “is so sweet to one man, as he to all men.” This no doubt expressed the admiring affection of a brother; but the general character of the Roman governor is indisputable. And the Jews hoped to profit for their rancorous hostility by his pliant temper and love of approbation against the uncompromising witness of the one true God the Father, And of one Lord Jesus Christ. But malice defeats itself against grace and truth whenever God is pleased so to order it; and here, as He had distinctly promised to be with Paul, and that none should injure him, so it came to pass in a way strikingly different from the apostle's experience elsewhere.

It may be well to notice again the precise position of Gallio. He was “pro-consul” of Achaia. It is the more striking, because the province under both Tiberius and Caligula had been imperial, and hence under the authority then of a pro-praetor. Claudius, the reigning emperor, had restored Achaia to the senate, which involved the change of its former government to that of a pro-consul. Accordingly at this time Luke speaks accurately, not of a pro-praetor, but of a pro-consul. We saw a similar instance in Sergius Paulus the pro-consul of Cyprus, which had been, like Achaia, under imperial authority, but was afterward transferred to the Senate, and thus became pro-consular. The inspired historian made no mistake in these details, where it was exceedingly easy if he had not been under divine guidance; and the more so, as the early Christians notoriously kept aloof

from all meddling with political administration. But in scripture we are entitled to look for the truth in things small and great; and this should be recognized by giving as exactly as possible the reproduction of its meaning. In fact Luke had been supposed in one at least of these instances to have erred by applying the term erroneously according to the state of things which had existed before the transfer to the senate, till a passage was found in a historian not read generally which confirmed the change, and coins with the new title made it still more evident. Had there been no coins, no statement in Dio Cass., extraneous evidence would have failed, yet the truth would have remained all the same in scripture: only even Christians would have trembled, because history did not speak in support of scripture. It is such incredulity which is so deplorable, and this among not heathens or Jews only but the baptized. But how sad that men bearing the Christian name should be swayed in a moment by human testimonies, after sheaving their readiness to doubt when they had the inspired word for it! Can anything evince more clearly that men naturally distrust God and His word? These things ought not so to be.

The Jews then with one accord rose up against Paul, and brought him to the well-known seat of the governor whence they counted on a sentence favorable to their desires. “This [man], said they, “persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.” Gallio saw through the case in a moment and needed no defense. “The law” in their mouth meant the law of Moses. This was enough for the Roman, whose pride was roused for his own. “And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews,” &c. He had heard enough to be sure that neither state law, nor public morality, nor private rights, had been violated; and it was no business of his to inquire farther. The contempt in which Jews were generally held no doubt strengthened his decision, of which the accused reaped the benefit. His amiable indifference did not wish to be troubled with what the apostle had to say. Religious opinion or the worship of God, as a question between the Jews and one they blamed, did not concern him or his office; God was in none of his thoughts, and he preferred to hear no more. The time would come when Christ's servants would be brought before governors and kings for His sake, for a testimony to them and the Gentiles, when it should be given them in that hour what was to be spoken. Here it was not the time to speak, though Paul was arraigned before the bema. The Lord guarded the interests of the gospel, and of its blessed witness, through employing providentially the careless amiability of the judge; who assuredly could not be accused of any real partiality for the apostle, and the less if he entertained views akin to those of his philosophic brother. Seneca's Stoicism was as far from appreciating the faith and humility of the Christian as from receiving the revelation of the Father and the Son, or the eternal life and redemption which the Holy Spirit now makes the known portion of the believer.

The Roman left the Jews to settle their religious questions in their own way. Gallio declined to have his hand forced: he had no mind to be a judge of these things. “Were it indeed some wrong, or wicked villainy, O Jews, with reason I should have borne with you; but if it be questions about a word and names and your own law, look to it yourselves: I am not minded to be a judge of these things.” The kindest and most courteous may be contemptuous enough when the truth is concerned, of which he knows nothing. “And he drove them from the judgment-seat” (ver. 16). Even if physical force was not used, there is implied at the least peremptoriness.

Such an issue on the part of an official so exalted would unavoidably act on an impressionable people who shared the prevalent scorn of the heathen towards Jews disappointed of their prey. It is not needful to specify that “all were Greeks,” who assailed the prominent Jew who complained in

the case, though there is large and good authority for this addition, adopted in the Text. Rec. Certainly the reading of some cursives, which attributes the assault to “all the Jews,” refutes itself as intrinsically worthless and absurd. Had not Sosthenes but Crispus been said to be the object of animosity, such a reading could be understood. But Sosthenes would seem to have succeeded Crispus in that office, without a hint of his conversion as yet, though he may have been the one who is later spoken of as a brother. The best, though not the most considerably authenticated, variant is that which is found in the Sinaitic, Alexandrian, and Vatican Uncials, and some of the most ancient versions. These witnesses simply say that they “all” laid hold of Sosthenes the ruler of the synagogue, and were beating him before the judgment-seat, and that gait) gave himself no trouble about the matter. Thus did God in His providence bring to naught the malicious attack of the Jews on Paul, while manifesting the unbelieving easiness of Gallio.

It is interesting to note also that the apostle did not quit Corinth at once, as indeed the failure of the Jews before the governor left him free, “And Paul having remained yet many days took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence unto Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila, having shorn his head in Cenchrea, for he had a vow” (ver. 18). It was during his stay at Corinth that the Epistles to the Thessalonians were written, with an interval between them, short but sufficient to show what mischief could befall the saints in a brief time; so mistaken are those who think it was only after centuries that error was able to enter. So it was, as we know, among the assemblies of Galatia in a more fatal way, and on a subject yet more fundamental. And both occasions were where the saints had the inestimable benefit of an apostolic, planting, which Rome had not any more than other places, which vaunted as proudly as with scanty reason. Indeed Corinth itself was to manifest the same liability to go astray, though it was chiefly in ecclesiastical truth and order, though by no means confined to it; and yet there Paul stayed many days before the charge before Gallio, and as we are told, “yet many days” after. But at length he bade the brethren adieu, and sailed thence unto Syria, and with him his beloved companions, Priscilla and Aquila.

There is a clause at the end of ver. 18 which has afforded matter for debate. The ancients do not seem to have doubted that Paul himself is in question, the preceding words being parenthetical. Others, especially of late, as Wieseler and Meyer, have been more willing to attach the vow, and shaving of the head, to Aquila. But the great apostle went far in compliance with, and in condescension to, Jewish forms in certain circumstances which left the Face of the gospel untouched. It was the effort to impose the law on the Gentiles who believed, which roused a tempest of feeling and irresistible argument, as indeed his whole soul was engaged with burning zeal at once for the cross of his Master, and for the liberty of the souls imperiled by, that effort. Some ancients indeed, not the Aethiopic Version only, gave the sense that more than one shaved the head according to vow; but I see no sufficient reason to doubt that it was Paul; for he is the one before the mind of the inspiring Spirit, rather than to speak of Aquila.

Chapter 44

On Acts 18:19-23

Not only was Paul's head shorn in Cenchrea, and this as a vow; but we ought to gather from the subsequent history, if not from the immediate context, that it was of the Spirit to reveal the fact as important for us to observe in the account He is giving of that blessed man and of his labors. Not that we are meant to infer that Paul in thus acting was at the height of the fresh revelations of Christ given to him, but that along with these he acted thus with a good conscience. He was apostle of the Gentiles and minister of the, church; but he was also, as he said, a Pharisee, son of Pharisees, who even after this charged himself to his nation with alms and offerings, and Was found purified in, the temple. Grace was bringing out its new and hitherto unrevealed wonders in Christ, and in the church, to God's glory; but the most deeply taught and fully furnished witness of heavenly truth heartily loved the ancient people of God, and never forgot that he too was an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin; and this, not only within the precincts of Jerusalem and the land, but, as we see here, among the Greeks. This is often a great difficulty to those imbued with the spirit and habits of traditional Christianity; but it is because they are and would be logical, where the Holy Spirit is giving in those most honored of the Lord things just as they were. Prejudices and prepossession are not so quickly shaken off, even where we behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile. The Lord deals pitifully with a true heart, where a cold intellect can only spy out an inconsistency; but the criticizing mind could not follow that heart for a moment either in its zealous service or in the spiritual might and power which pursues the service to the Lord's glory. We shall see that more follows of a similar character, which in the inspired record beyond controversy points to no less a man than the apostle.

“And they arrived at Ephesus, and he left them there; but he himself, entering into the synagogue reasoned with the Jews. And when they asked him to remain for a longer time, he did not consent, but taking his leave and saying, [I must by all means keep the coming feast at Jerusalem;] I will return again unto you if God will, he sailed from Ephesus. And landing at Caesarea, he went up and saluted the church, and went down unto Antioch. And having spent some time he departed, going through the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, establishing all the disciples” (ver. 19-23).

There is no doubt considerable and good authority in support of the received text, followed by the A.V. and most others. But the best witnesses and versions sustain the plural form in the first clause, which gives additional force to the singular in the second, in which all agree. “And they arrived at Ephesus” is the reading given by the Sinaitic, Alexandrian, Vatican, and Land's Bodleian, with some cursives. The Greek of Beza's MS. is probably a mere clerical error, as it makes no grammatical coherence, and the Latin agrees with the oldest authorities and several of the best ancient versions. It is certainly true that they all reached Ephesus. It is only a matter of emphasis that the apostle entered into the synagogue and discoursed to the Jews: though he did leave them there, there was no need of giving prominence to such a circumstance. Still less is it implied that they did not accompany him to the synagogue, or that α■το■; if genuine instead of ■κε■: suggests that the synagogue was outside the city; which inferences appear alike

unfounded.

“And when they asked him to remain for a longer time, he did not consent, but taking his leave and saying, [I must by all means keep the coming feast at Jerusalem;] I will return again unto you if God will, he sailed from Ephesus” (ver. 20, 21). It is well known that the clause within the brackets is not in the Uncials of the highest character, though it is attested by abundant and good authority. Hence it becomes very much a question of internal evidence. Mayer lays stress on the reference of ■ναβ■ς in ver. 22; but “going up,” though unquestionably to Jerusalem, need not have been to keep a Jewish feast, unless it was expressly so explained. The only thing recorded as a fact is his saluting the church. This in no way disproves the purpose to keep the feast there; but it undoes the force of the argument founded on ■ναβ■ς. The truth is that both may be true: ver. 21, if genuine, stating what he meant to do in Jerusalem, though nothing is said of its accomplishment; and ver. 22 letting us know that his heart had other objects before him than the purpose he had mentioned to the Jews of Ephesus. And the history shortly after informs us that he did soon return to Ephesus for one of the most blessed services even of his wonderful life.

Such statements as these test the heart of the readers. If vain or proud, irreverent or self-righteous, they will probably yield to the snare of thinking and even speaking disrespectfully of the great apostle to the damage of their own souls and the injury of others. For nothing is easier than for persons superficially conscious of their own grave faults to mark with eagerness and self-satisfaction any acts of Paul, a servant of Christ. so deeply taught and devoted, which sprang from his excessive attachment to the ancient people of God, and to the habits of their religious life. It is easy also to forget that it is to his inspired writings, more than to all other sources put together, that they owe the means of sitting in judgment on him in this respect. But is this the return that divine grace would produce in hearts which have truly profited? Does it become us? Is it not a wiser and a holier conclusion to see how affections of the sweetest kind may entangle even the most faithful and spiritual, and to watch that we who have it all set before us by the unwavering and impartial hand of the Holy Spirit may learn from it, so that, far behind in self-negation and untiring labors and sufferings of Christ, we slip not through less elevated affections into far more serious delinquency?

It was after this visit to Jerusalem that the apostle went down to Antioch (ver. 22). Was it not then, as it was certainly there, that Cephas, blessed man as he was, must needs be resisted to the face? Indeed he stood condemned; for his conduct was no mere lingering respect for Jewish institutions, nor self-sacrificing love for the people of whom, as to flesh, the Messiah came, but a wavering compromise of God's gospel to the Gentiles through fears of the circumcision; and this, after not only a special revelation to him when he went to Caesarea, but his stand with the apostles and elders at the council in Jerusalem. It was pot condescension to Jewish feeling, but what Paul did not hesitate to call dissimulation and not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel; and it was so much the worse and more dangerous because, of the eminence and influence of the defaulters. True, it was very far from the awful evil which began to rise up against the truth or teaching of Christ in the “last hour” of John, which this apostle of love vindicated so sternly. But hitherto men had not sunk to the unclean reasoning that heinous sin is to be excused, because it is practiced by those who claim to be dear children of God; though even they had had the warning that one who boasted of his readiness to lay down his life for Christ was precisely the one wile at that very moment was on the eve of denying Christ repeatedly with oaths.

All that we are told by Luke is that, having spent some time (ie., at Antioch), Paul “departed, going through the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, establishing all the disciples” (ver. 23). When the apostle planted the gospel in Galatia, he had entered the country from Phrygia, which lay to its south and south-west (chap. 16: 6). Now, coming from a different direction, he traversed Galatia before Phrygia. And as it was a second visit, we hear of his passing through the country “in order,” that is, where assemblies existed, and establishing “all the disciples” who had already received the gospel. This is of much interest in its bearing on the Epistle which was certainly written not long after their calling: “I wonder that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel, which is net another” (Gal. 1:6), Such is man even where the foundation had been laid a little before by the greatest of apostles.

Chapter 45

On Acts 18:24-28

Here is introduced an incident of importance in its bearing on the history of souls, passing out of the transition state which John the Baptist's teaching represents, into the full light of gospel. The episode indeed is two-fold; one part closing chap. 18, the other opening chap. 19, both tending to illustrate the same thing in substance: only the former deals with it as a question of truth; the other, of the consequent power of the Spirit which was received on the faith of the gospel. Let us look at each in due order, and first at the conclusion of the chapter before us.

“But a certain Jew, Apollos by name, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent [or learned] man, arrived at Ephesus, being mighty in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in his spirit he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John, and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him up, and more accurately expounded to him the way of God. And when he was minded to go through into Achaia, the brethren wrote and urged the disciples to receive him; and he, on coming, contributed much to those that had believed through grace. For he forcibly confuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ” (ver. 24-28).

There simply comes before us a Jewish workman, who soon needed not to be ashamed, however unformed at first. He was a native of the city which was afterward to play a notorious part in the corruption of heavenly truth by earthly wisdom, himself a man of learning, or eloquence (for the word A. is used for both), and able in the scriptures. Nor was he merely a scholar and otherwise competent, but already instructed in the way of the Lord. Born of God, he was as to intelligence in advance of a God-fearing Jew, but short of the fuller truth which the gospel affords as the foundation for the mystery to be revealed, with all its wonderful light on God's counsels and ways. Further, being fervent in his spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things “concerning Jesus” (for the right reading helps to clear the true sense). He was ignorant of all truth beyond “the baptism of John.” Nor was he lacking in moral courage or zeal; “and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue.”

This raised the question, practically of great moment, how are souls thus endowed, yet little acquainted with the truth, to be dealt with? Grace answer's and settles all according to its own power. The latest advance beyond the dead level of orthodox tradition is to be hailed and cherished. How lamentable to despise those to-day who are where we wore yesterday! “Who maketh thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive, why dost thou glory as if not receiving?” So at a later moment did the apostle reprove the vain Corinthians. Far different was the feeling of the godly pair with whom he had abode in that very city. “But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him up and expounded to him the way of God more accurately.”

Nor did the learned Alexandrian resent the private instruction, not only of the Christian Jew, but of his wife, who, as we may gather from the unusual order, seems to have entered into the truth with

a more spiritual mind than her husband: Was it inconsistent with the apostolic exhortation in 1 Tim. 2:12? In no way. A woman might possess the highest spiritual gift, as we find that the four daughters of Philip did in fact; and assuredly there is room, not to say responsibility, for the due exercise of that and every other gift from the Lord, without collision with His word, nay only carrying it out the more. To him that hath shall be given. Apollos had enough to encourage those who knew the grace of Christ better to set out the truth according to the word; as he had enough true knowledge of the things, concerning Jesus to value and welcome for his soul all that Priscilla and Aquila could open from the scriptures. Ought He not to have suffered unto death for our sins and to enter into His glory? “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved the Christ to suffer and to rise from among the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all the nations.”

This rises far beyond the promised Messiah which was the substance of John's teaching, with repentance urged on the souls that received it. Apollos knew no more, however eloquently he might proclaim its value, and however ably he might fortify its truth by apt proofs from the O. T. scriptures. It may be argued, no doubt, that John went farther in his preaching because he testified of Jesus as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. But the conclusion is invalid that John knew or taught redemption by His blood. Not even the apostles did till the Lord rose from the dead. John spoke in the Spirit beyond anything which he personally apprehended. He thoroughly knew that He, Who was standing in the midst of those, who knew Him not, was the Christ, and Son of God in a sense peculiar to Himself alone. And therefore, did he preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, owning the One mightier, Whose sandals he was not fit to unloose, Who should baptize with the Holy Spirit. The efficacy of His death, the power of His resurrection, the glory of His place on high, John did not enter into as the disclosed and enjoyed objects of his faith; nor did any other till the mighty facts took place, and were set out in the Spirit from the word of God.

Thus the help of the Christian pair was as welcome to Apollos as they were needed to supply the defects of his instruction. And we may observe how distant and different were the means employed of God from the formal methods of a divinity school. Can the moderns boast of superior, efficiency? This may well be doubted by those who know what fertile hot-beds of heterodoxy theological schools have proved in all ages and lands, Protestant as well as Catholic or any other. They may be more or less learned; they may cultivate for a few terms Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, &c.; they may teach their own peculiar traditions and dogmas, with the common-places of theology; they may exercise their students in composition and elocution. But the truth of God must be known by faith, and to faith only can it be entrusted profitably; and these are commodities so rare in the schools as never to be reckoned on, though of course now and then to be found there; but even where they enter, all is unfavorable for growth: so encumbered are they with that which is extraneous and human. The means afforded by grace to Apollos, and recorded for our guidance by the inspiring Spirit, would, I fear, find scant favor in the eyes of the professors, or even of the divinity students, that believe; and would be assuredly scorned by all who believe not, whether leaders or led.

But God has deemed it good and wise to let us know how Apollos fared under his tuition. “And when he was minded to go through into Achaia, the brethren wrote and urged the disciples to receive him; and he on coming contributed much to those that had believed through grace. For he

forcibly confuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." His progress was thus manifest to all; and arrogant opposers were put to shame, as the faithful were built up by his means. For Apollos could work with a force beyond those who privately had led him on. Such is the scriptural way of obtaining a good degree, and much boldness in faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 46

On Acts 19:1-4

Here we have another fact of deep interest as illustrating the state of souls, not as yet favored with the apostolic or even more ordinary gospel testimony. The grace of Christ displays its elasticity in meeting them with the truth which they, needed, in order to bring them into the fall enjoyment of the Christian condition.

“And it came to pass, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having gone through the upper parts, came [? down] unto Ephesus, and finding certain disciples, said unto them, Received ye [the] Holy Spirit since ye believed? And they [said] unto him, Not even if [the] Holy Spirit was did we hear. And be said, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. And Paul said, John baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him that was coming after him, that is, on Jesus" (ver. 1-4).

It is important to recognize what is here clearly made known in the inspired narrative that these imperfectly instructed souls, whom Paul found at Ephesus, after Apollos had gone to Corinth, are owned as disciples. The apostle does not question the reality of their faith. He observed probably a certain legalism in them, which raised the question, not whether they were born of the Spirit, but whether they were sealed by Him. “Received ye the Holy Spirit, since ye believed?” Their answer makes the distinction as plain as it is momentous. They had not so much as heard of the Holy Spirit as the apostle asked. They were doubtless not unacquainted with the O.T., nor of course with John's testimony, as appears from what followed. They were therefore familiar with the Holy Spirit as spoken of in the scripture, and must have heard directly or indirectly that John declared the Messiah was to baptize with the Spirit. Whether this was a fact yet, they knew not. The existence of the Holy Spirit was never in question. What they had not even heard was of any answer to the promise; still less had they been made partakers. This raised the farther question, To what then were ye baptized? with the answer, To John's baptism. They were not therefore even on the ground of Christian profession; for, as the apostle wound up, John's was “a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him that was coming after him, that is, on Jesus.” Christian baptism supposes Him to be dead and risen the work of redemption accomplished with eternal life and remission of sins proclaimed in His name. They were believers, the Holy Spirit had wrought in their souls so that the word of God had entered, but they were wholly short even of those immediately conferred privileges which faith in the gospel enjoys.

Now the case before, us is not without its bearing on souls around. How many saints there are who know nothing beyond, the new birth, imagining this the common blessing of Christianity if they be not also betrayed thereby into the delusion of what they call higher life, holiness, sanctification or perfection. These three last are scriptural terms; but treated as a goal of attainment, and especially in the sense of the amelioration of nature or the practical extinction of sin within, they veil very grave deflections from the truth.

It is therefore to be noted how careful scripture is to distinguish between, the early vital work of the Holy Spirit in awakening seals by the application of the word, and the subsequent reception of the

Spirit when the gospel is believed. In the men at Ephesus before us there was as yet no such reception; yet were they born of God, which never is apart from subjection to His word. But it may be far from the gospel of His grace. Any part of the divine word, one might say generally, is applicable to quickening a soul, hardly as in this case going beyond what an Old Testament saint experienced. How many in Christendom rest on promise and have no notion of accomplishment! They of course allow that the Savior is come; but of salvation come, and of God's righteousness revealed, they are wholly ignorant. They are still in quest of what they have not got as the present gift of God; they are therefore, if earnest, anxious, tried, groaning after they know not what, if not over their own proved unworthiness and the treacherous evil of their hearts. They quite overlook the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ; still less do they rest on His work of redemption as valid for their own Souls. Am I His, or am I not? is the question that harasses them habitually. Attracted by His love they listen to His words and are momentarily bright; then the thought of self rises in their conscience, and they are in the depths, wholly unable to reconcile the love of a Holy God with their actual state which they cannot but feel. Hence they are driven, from ignorance of the gospel, to search after as many signs of a renewed condition as they can discover within them; and thus they toil in a life of hopes balanced against fear, having as little sense of total ruin as they have of God's love toward them. And no wonder; for they are occupied not with Christ but with themselves. How then escape that sense of internal misery inevitable to the spirit, and the more so if born of God, till they know, by faith, the mighty work of Christ, where all evil is judged, all sins forgiven, perfect righteousness established without us and yet for us immutably, and ourselves brought nigh to God as His saints and children without a question unsettled?

Of all this the Ephesian disciples could know nothing. They were avowedly waiting where John's doctrine and baptism left them, believing on Him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus. But they were wholly unacquainted with the blessing as come, the glad tidings taking the place of promises, because all that God requires, as well as every need of the poorest of sinners, is already accomplished in the atoning work of our Lord Jesus. And so it is practically with many a believer now, not speaking merely of schools of doubt where on principle the right state is laid down to be the most painful shrinking from rest in the saving grace of God, but in view of the thousands who, without a doubt of Jesus as the only Savior, have no idea that God is proclaiming peace to them through the blood of His cross. They too, are under law in effect; and hence in a state of habitual bondage through fear of death, feelings as to themselves constantly clouding the simple truth (on which the gospel insists) that we are lost, and that all is grace on God's part, Who has been already glorified perfectly as to sin in the cross, so that He can righteously afford to bless the believer fully. Ignorant of this wondrous grace which excludes all thought of self save as evil and lost, what can one do but look for good as a ground of hope with God, while vaguely withal conscious that nothing but mercy will do! In truth all is comparatively vague in such a state, alas! far too common in Christendom, where not the wicked only need the gospel, but many a righteous soul, quickened by the Spirit to feel in a measure for God, but as yet never realizing that it is for the lost the Son of man came and died; that they, resting by faith on His blood, might know their sins blotted out, and their old man crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that they henceforth should not serve sin, but, freed from it and become servants of God, have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Now, in the state described, it is too much to assume that souls, wretched in the present, and drawing a precarious and oft vanishing comfort from the future, albeit prayerful and pious, have received the Holy Spirit; the incomparable privilege of the gospel; and this, because they have not really moved on from the promise to which an O. T. saint clung rightly as to his sheet anchor in a storm when the light had not yet dawned. It is sad for a disciple now to be in a similar state, instead of submitting to the righteousness of God and thus having peace with Him, as justified by faith, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are none of us apostles; but it is no mean part of our work and testimony to meet the true wants of such souls. In vain do you look else for an unworldly walk, for worship in Spirit and in truth; in vain, or worse than vain, do you force on these weakly plants into the high region of the church's privileges as Christ's body, or even of its responsibilities as of God's house. They really need the gospel as well as the Spirit in power for their souls. It is after hearing the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, that saints, it may be as in the case before us born of God, are, on believing, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Then, and not till then, can they thrive, flourish, and bear the fruit of righteousness, which is by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. The blessing turns on “the hearing of faith,” not on works of law, which works wrath and a curse. “They which be of faith are blessed” —they only.

Chapter 47

On Acts 19:5-7

It can hardly be supposed that the twelve disciples in Ephesus here brought before us had enjoyed the teaching of Apollos, still less the help of Aquila and Priscilla, who unfolded to him the way of God more exactly. They must have been in this case led on, as they were by the apostle afterward. For it was pure ignorance which hindered their advance in truth, and not either obstinacy or the absurd and winked error imputed by some to them, which appeared later in the East, and left traces to a recent epoch, as Neander states in the first volume of his Church History. John's baptism in scripture went with his call to repent, as we have just seen, and that they should believe on the coming Messiah, i.e., Jesus. In no way was it the blasphemy of accepting John as Messiah. They knew of promise, not of accomplishment: but that was to stop short of the gospel. They are now given to receive the full truth and blessing. Paul preached to them Jesus. What is there not through Him and in Him?

“And when they heard this, they were baptized unto the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied; and they were in all about twelve men” (ver. 5-7).

But here it is well to understand what is taught; for some have inferred from the inspired historian that the original formulary had lapsed, and that the apostles here and elsewhere in the Acts are represented as baptizing only to the name of the Lord Jesus. This is a serious position. It professes to stand on the letter of scripture, which cannot be broken; yet is it one which demands and deserves the fullest consideration, for it really annuls scripture. It has been entertained, and even acted on, by not a few whose principle it is to abhor any view or practice winch puts a slight on the immediate authority of our Lord. Yet no one denies that He clearly laid down for that institution baptizing to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

So it is laid down in the earliest of the Gospels, where the great commission is given to the eleven. They were told to go forth and disciple all the nations, the Jews having already been made the object of their testimony in chapter 10. But now, Messiah being not only rejected but risen, and themselves associated with Him, the circle is enlarged consequently on His death and resurrection; and it is no longer a question of the rights of Jehovah, the one true God and Governor of Israel, but of God fully revealed, not only in the person, but by the work, of the Lord Jesus; and those disciples His servants are to baptize unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Here in Matthew was the fitting place to make that Name known; for in this Gospel, more than any other, we have the consequences of the rejection of the Messiah, and the new witness substituted for the old, all authority being given to Him in heaven and on earth. From this point of view the rejecting and rebellious Jews are left with their house, and, we may add, their city, desolate, till grace works repentance in their hearts another day. Meanwhile, in virtue of the accomplished work of the crucified Christ now risen from the dead, grace sends out a message of sovereign mercy to all the Gentiles. It is not the Son of David filling the throne of Israel, nor is it the Son of Man with His dominion and glory and kingdom given Him, that all people,

nations, and languages should serve Him—His dominion an everlasting one which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. These are glories of the new age when He is displayed from heaven in power and presence on His return. Here it is the Trinity revealed and testimony to be rendered before that day, when they were to teach (not the law nor the prophets, but) all things whatsoever Jesus enjoined on them; “and lo! I am with you all the days until the completion of the age,” an age not completed till even the last week of Daniel's seventy is fulfilled. This may not be and is not the revelation of the mystery reserved for the Holy Spirit through the apostle of the Gentiles; but it is in contrast not only with the law of Moses, but with the promises given to the fathers and the seal attached to them. And Paul could say, as the twelve could not, that Christ sent him not to baptize but to preach the gospel, Yet did he in his place as a confessor submit to that institution of the Lord, as he also baptized from time to time those who confessed Him, as the inspired history abundantly testifies.

But nothing would be less like scripture than to rehearse the formula every time a record of baptism was made in it. The fact was stated, and the mode of statement is as invariably formed in scripture according to the character and design of the book wherein it occurs. Now it lies on the face of the Acts that the Holy Spirit is throughout bearing testimony, to Jesus as the Lord. Baptism therefore when predicated of any in its course is so described. This exactly accords with the record, and is as it should be, if the book be really stamped with that design, as it evidently is to any intelligent eyes. Besides, it is in the highest degree probable, that those who administered baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as bound by the injunction of the Lord, would also add the Lord's name as confessed by the baptized. So it is some way habitually done at this day by those who follow in their steps. Certainly the Book of Acts has Christian baptism mentioned as “on,” “in,” and “to” the name of the Lord in strict harmony with its own character. But this in no way warrants the inference that the twelve, or Paul, or any other, dispensed with the divinely given formulary. The form of the history is due to that design equally divine which controls this book like every other in the Bible.

Another circumstance may be noticed; that these Ephesian disciples received the Holy Spirit through the imposition of Paul's hands, as the Samaritans did through the hands of Peter and John. It was a signal mark of God's honoring the apostles. As the work in Samaria was due to the free action of the Spirit in Philip, it was the more necessary to bind all together, lest there should have been with God's sanction a church in Samaria independent of that in Jerusalem. The unity of the Spirit was safeguarded by giving the new converts the seal of the Spirit only in answer to the prayers and by the hands of two chief apostles from among the twelve. What simpler proof that, as the Spirit is one, so is the church, however locally severed? So it is now. The Ephesian disciples, baptized to Jesus on hearing the gospel, had Paul's hands laid on them in order to receive the Holy Spirit. It was one body everywhere; and Paul's authority; as set of God first in the church, is attested like that of Peter and John before him.

It is in vain to argue that the Holy Spirit here conferred means only spiritual powers. These powers indeed were included in the divine gift, as the close of ver. 6 intimates. But speaking with tongues, or even prophesying, was not all that the reception of the Spirit conveyed, nor yet the best part of the blessing. It is. the Spirit Himself who is given, as well as gifts for sign or for edification, which are both particularly indicated here. Even Bp. Middleton, according to his own too narrow and defective principle, would have been compelled to own the Holy Spirit here personally given. And

this it is which is never withdrawn, and indeed makes the Christian and the church to be such. There is neither the one nor the other if there be no gift, no sealing, of the Spirit any longer.

Nor is it true that this depends on an apostle, or an imaginary apostolic succession, which is wholly unknown to scripture and excluded by it. For the intervention of apostles, as in Acts 8 and 19, was exceptional, however right and wise on each occasion. The large and typical instances were when He was given, first to Jewish believers at Pentecost, and afterward to Gentile believers at Cornelius' house; at neither of which times does scripture speak of the apostles laying on hands. He was given directly on their faith of the gospel, a fact made absolutely certain and clear beyond controversy in the case of the Gentiles; which of course is especially of interest and importance to us who are not of Israel. Such a fact is decisive for one who believes in the wisdom and goodness of God, not only in so doing then, but of recording it for the comfort of souls ever afterward; lest they, ignorant of the direct gift to Jewish and Gentile believers, as a warrant for the like expectation afterward, might fall into the error, either of despair because the apostolic order existed not, or of presumption in dreaming of a fresh apostolic choir as necessary for the supply of that gift, or for any other kindred function. The Catholic systems indeed suppose a sort of perpetual apostolicity, and thus solve the difficulty by an error no less portentous; Protestantism believes not in the abiding presence of the other Paraclete so as to make good the promise of the Father forever; while Irvingism boasts of a new apostolate (well nigh gone) to effectuate an order proved to be mistaken. But the truth is as blessed in its permanence and freedom, as these errors are pernicious.

Chapter 48

On Acts 19:8-12

The rather peculiar but instructive case of the twelve disciples being given, the apostle is next seen resuming his service among the Jews at their synagogue. Compare chap. 18:19-22. He was there according to his pledge.

“And entering into the synagogue he spoke boldly for three months, discoursing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, discoursing daily in the school of Tyrannize. And this was done for two years, so that all those that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought uncommon powers by the hands of Paul, so that even upon the sick were brought from his body handkerchiefs and arms, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out” (ver. 8-12).

The apostles patient perseverance was great. For three menthe he spoke boldly in the circumscribed sphere of the synagogue, “the things concerning the kingdom of God” (ver. 8) being the matter of his discourse and persuasion as we can readily conceive of all subjects the most suited, to inquiring Jew's, who knew the law and the prophets. The godly, as we hear of Joseph of Arimathea, were looking: for the kingdom of God. This involved his opening to them the sufferings of Christ: and the glories after these. It never occurred to his mind to disparage that kingdom, still less to deny it, because of higher possessions and richer grace in the great mystery as to Christ, and as to the assembly (Eph. v.) meanwhile revealed for the Christian. Even salvation as now opened in the gospel of God's grace has depths beyond the kingdom. But the Jews, from tradition with its darkening effects, and from unbelief which overlooks what is of the deepest import in scripture were apt to turn from Jesus as the Christ, and, thug got blinded in presence of that light which if heeded would have made everything manifest. It is only by light divine in Him that all things have their true character exposed; and His grace not only frees us from all fear of consequences from it, but emboldens us to desire it as the assured blessing of our souls to God's glory. Some there were who did go on in faith and taste that the Lord is good others stumbled at the word, being disobedient.

“But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the way before the multitude; he departed from them, and separated the disciples, discoursing daily in the school of Tyrannize” (ver. 9).

The truth preached in the synagogue had now brought out plainly those who received the love of it that they might be saved, and with at least as much distinctness these whose hard rejection of it led them to speak evil of the way in presence of the multitude. To have continued longer could have answered no good end; it would have led to bitterness of altercation and reviling from the adversaries. To withdraw from them at this point was clearly of God. Thus were the disciples separated in the capital of the province, the religious center of an area far larger still. The synagogue being no longer a seemly place, a room commodious enough was due, not only to the disciples, but to the testimony; and the apostle carried on his work of daily discourse in the school

of one who was, as far as we can judge, a rhetorician or philosopher.

What a contrast, in that school, no doubt at different hours of the day, between the Christian teacher and the heathen! The one was filled with the grace and truth which, as a revealed whole, came into being by Jesus and in His person, flowing from the love of God to man, and with not a whit less divine authority, than the law pronounced at Sinai more than fifteen centuries before, and last, not least, brought home to heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, a Spirit not of fearfulness, but of power, and love, and a sound mind; the other, not perhaps lacking in imaginative thought clothed in attractive language, gave out speculation, being wholly destitute of certainty on all that most deeply concerns God and man, ignorant of all means of his reconciliation with God on a righteous basis, or of forming near and holy relationships with Him, possessing no present assurance of His will nor affections for every day's enjoyment and obedience, and still less able to lift up the veil which hides the unseen and eternal. Yet here each of them addressed his hearers, Paul, if not Tyrannus, day by day: the one presenting a work of art which gave scope for excellency of speech, and the assumption, but not the reality, of wisdom; the other a simple yet deep witness, dependent. on the holy Spirit, to the One Who gave Himself a ransom for all, the testimony in its own times, for God delights in grace.

Hence it is, that the place of testimony was of no moment: all the value, virtue, truth, grace, and glory that we boast is in the One preached. Holy place, or most holy, was nothing now: Jesus only. Had He not been cast out by the people of God, by their scribes and doctors, by Levites, and priests, and high-priests? and when they slew Him by the hand of lawless men, had not God Himself testified by rending the veil from top to bottom? Earthly holiness was utterly desecrated. The temple therefore is nothing, nor Jerusalem, nor the mountain of blessing in Samaria. One sacrifice has swallowed up all others, and is alone efficacious. All centers in the crucified but exalted Jesus on high, where is the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man; where is the Great Priest, even Jesus Himself. Hence the same building, which man misused for vanity, faith could use for magnifying the name of the Lord. The consecration of a building since the ascension of Christ is a return to Judaism and one of the beggarly elements of the world; and the grander the building is, the more flagrant its inconsistency with the cross. Popery in all this is consistently but outrageously wrong, in rebellion against God and the truth, resuscitating all that received its death-blow in the death of Christ; for it boasts of its temples, its priests, and its sacrifices for the living and the dead. But where is the consistency of the Anglican who, admitting the one sacrifice as already complete and accepted, contends for earthly priests as well as holy places? where of the Dissenter, who, discarding an earthly priesthood, clings to the delusion and pride of his temple; chapel, or miscalled “church”?

The practice of the early church coincided with and confirms the principle. For those who had boldness to enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, the great priest over the house of God, what mattered the mere place of assembling themselves together? Alas! indeed, one of earthly splendor must cloud the truth and moral glory of the cross. An upper room, a private house, however obscure the quarter, or (if occasion required as here) “the school of Tyrannus,” any place, small or great, according to the exigencies of the time, sufficed for the assembly. If numbers grew in a large town, they might for convenience meet in many rooms, but never so, as to jeopard the characteristic truth that it was “the church,” not “churches,” in that town. Where unity is abandoned, save for the foundations it is no longer God's church, but man's.

At Ephesus as yet things were in their infancy, the disciples were separated (i.e., from the Jews who adhered to the synagogue), and the apostle discourses daily. “And this was done for two years, so that all those dwelling in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (ver.10). A great and effectual door of testimony lay open to him, if there were many adversaries. Proconsular Asia had the gospel before it. Many may not have listened more than once; for curiosity reigned among the Greeks, which, if easily attracted, is not less easily sated. But if ever an attractive center existed for Asiatic Greeks, it was in Ephesus. It was a time too, when men, weary of pretentious philosophy, and sick of the mental and moral horrors of paganism, yearned after something sure, solid, and good, if they knew not what, which they had found very partially in the synagogue. They wanted, in the language of Job, “an interpreter, one among a, thousand, to show unto man what is right for him, and God could be gracious to him and say, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom. And in the apostle they had one of the rarest interpreters, and, more than that, one who beyond all men could feel for Jews and Greeks; for no Jew had, in his unbelief, ever hated Jesus more bitterly than he, no Greek more proudly than he despised that name. And who so much had felt or developed the riches of God's grace in Christ. For the space of two years all that dwelt, not in the city only, but in the province where the seven Apocalyptic churches and others are afterward known to have been gathered), heard the word of the Lord from one so laboriously zealous, and so every way competent to proclaim and unfold and apply it... He was content to go about preaching the kingdom; nor was it enough for him to urge on perishing souls repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. He did indeed testify the gospel of the grace of God; but he shrunk not from declaring the whole counsel of God. Nowhere do we see a spot so favored; nowhere did this wise master-builder lay a foundation so broad, deep, and strong, though indeed it was none other than that only one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But who laid it so well as Paul at Ephesus, according to the grace of God which was given to him?

In due time God's building in Ephesus comes before us with a wonderful luster and fullness, not only in the book now occupying, us, but in the apostolic Epistle to the saints that were there, and the faithful in Christ Jesus. To no assembly elsewhere does the Holy Spirit so freely bring out the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit, and by none was it revealed as by the. apostle Paul, and to no saints communicated as to those addressed in that Epistle. Yet in the eyes of tradition the church in Ephesus is of slight account compared with that in Antioch, or in Alexandria, to say nothing of Rome or of Constantinople afterward. But God's ways are higher than man's ways, and His thoughts than those of the sons of men. No more humiliating proof of the departure from the divine estimate than is found in ecclesiastical history, with its ever increasing homage to the spirit of the world.

But we may notice the honor which God at this time put on the apostolic testimony to the Lord Jesus and the gospel in the new sphere. “And God wrought uncommon powers by the hands of Paul, so that even upon the sick were brought handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went oat” (ver. 11, 12). The beneficent power of God in man and for man was thus attested. By and by it will triumph in the kingdom where all things are to be put into the hands of the glorified Son of man. But He is glorified already, although we see not yet all things put under Him. Meanwhile the Spirit is here on earth to bear witness of Him and His victory achieved

in righteousness over Satan. This is the principle of those early displays of divine energy in man. They were testimonies to His defeat of the devil in man's favor, powers of the world to come, though of course but samples of what will be then universal. Certainly neither the church nor any individual saint has ground for long centuries to boast on this score. But God did work marvelously not only by Paul but in the assembly, as we see even in Corinth, to the, glory of Jesus, that man might learn on all sides and in every way the delivering power in His hands, not only over human infirmity, but over all the power of the enemy. Through the apostle this was manifested here with no little splendor. The God, Who gave and sent His Son to become a man as well as a propitiation for our sins, is not indifferent to man's miseries, or to Satan's malicious pleasure in rebellion and ruin. And these early days of the victory of the ascended Christ were illuminated with brilliant manifestations that all power in heaven and on earth is in Him Who is at God's right hand, and answers to the faith that called on His name, Nor was it only in the presence or at the word of the apostle: what had touched his person did not fail upon the sick who could not approach him. The faith that brought handkerchiefs or aprons from him to them had its reward: the diseases departed from them, and evil spirits (a distinct class) went out. Truly it was delivering energy to the Lord's glory in and for man; and it could not but deeply impress those who are sensitive enough to their interests and feelings in this life. But what is it at the best compared with the still deeper glory of the Son of man when God was glorified in Him dying for sin, that there too righteousness, might be vindicated and be forever on the side of man, unequivocally and absolutely of believing man?

On Acts 19:13-20

But the Lord was pleased to manifest in another way, negatively indeed but effectively, what His grace delivers from in this present evil age.

“And certain ones of the Jewish exorcists that went about took in hand to call upon those that had wicked spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of Sceva, a certain Jewish chief-priest, doing this. But the wicked spirit answering said to them, Jesus I know, and Paul I am acquainted with; but who are ye? And the man, in whom the wicked spirit was, leaping upon them and mastering them both, prevailed against them, so that they fled out from that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks that inhabited Ephesus. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Many too of those that had believed came confessing and declaring their deeds. And not a few of those that practiced curious arts brought their books and burnt them before all. And they summed up the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So with might the word of the Lord increased and prevailed” (ver. 13-20).

During His ministry the Lord answered the reproach of the scornful Pharisee by appealing to those sons of Israel who cast out demons; He did so Himself by the Spirit of God. The spirits were subject not to the twelve only (Mark 6:7), but to the seventy also through His name; nor was there any exhibition of divine energy which more affected their minds (Luke 10:17). It was the first sign which, when He rose from the dead, He promised should follow those that believe. Whether by sickness or spirits' unclean possession, there was no case which resisted the power of the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:16). We have seen a similar record of Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:7), and especially of Paul (Acts 16:18; 19:12).

It is the more important to press the word of God as to those evil possessions, because, on the one hand, the bias of man has set in so strangely in modern times to treat their existence with unbelieving contempt, where, on the other hand, people are not given up to besotted and blinding superstition. For Satan catches men by snares of the most opposite kinds. The truth is the one thing which men do not affect. And as they treat evil spirits in possession of human beings as an exploded old-wives' fable, so they no less scout the reality of the Holy Spirit's dwelling in every believer, and working in some by way of special gift, not to speak of His action in the assembly. The Book of the Acts is most explicit in bearing witness to spiritual power, good and evil: to doubt the continuance of both is mere incredulity, and unworthy of the believer particularly.

Here the Lord displayed His resentment of those who, without owning Himself, sought to avail themselves of the apostolic action in His name, as a charm to which divine energy must be attached. Seven were concerned in a general way, two (it would seem) immediately, on whom consequently the blow fell. Their position too, as sons of a Jewish chief-priest, drew the more attention to so solemn a discomfiture. In vain did they call over any the name of the Lord; indeed their daring to adjure “by Jesus whom Paul preached” brought out the more distinctly His vindication of His servant, and their own impotence, as well as the reality of the enemy's power.

For the winked spirit attested at once his acquaintance with Paul and his knowledge of his Master, not only with withering contempt for the hollow profanity of those who abused His name, but with the most practical demonstration that that power could tread down and put them to shame, instead of submitting to a victory at such unholy lips.

It is interesting to note how the wicked spirit identifies himself with him whom he possesses, just as the Spirit of God is graciously pleased to work in those who are made, by His dwelling in them, vessels to magnify the name of Jesus. It is He who effects all that is blessed; yet is it all blended with their minds and affections; so that it is as a whole set to their account. Thus here the demoniac, “leaping upon them and mastering both, prevailed against them, so that they fled out from that house naked and wounded.” It was his doing, though he could not by any means have done it save by that terrible power. The moral impression was great on all outside in Ephesus. Nor was it only that fear fell on them all, but the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. It was not simply that God and the enemy were brought before men's consciences; there was a testimony to the Deliverer also.

But there was even more. What became known universally acted with especial power on many of those who had believed. They came confessing and declaring their deeds; and if any went farther still, they gave the best proof of the abhorrence with which they now regarded their tampering with the wicked one. For “not a few of those that practiced curious arts brought their books and burnt them before all.” The price was reckoned up, and it was found not inconsiderable. Living facts brought home the power of the word, and conscience responded at once. This was one of the many ways in which the Holy Spirit wrought at Ephesus; as we find the varied action of the Spirit one of the most prominent characteristics of the Epistle written to the saints long after. It was the word of the Lord that thus mightily grew and prevailed: not a company of saints merely, but the word of the Lord—that word which He has magnified above all His name. It is now the holiest answer on earth to Christ in heaven; and how precious to see, not merely the fear of His name overawing Jews and Greeks, but those who believed so zealous for His glory as to tell out their own shame and worst degradation in unconverted days, and to take vengeance on all they had, no matter how costly, which breathed of the enemy's power and wiles!

Yet it is salutary to bear in mind that, whatever be these dark arts and diabolical energies, the god of this age carries on his most widely destructive work by methods of no seemingly unusual character, but suiting his delusions to the passions and the lusts of the flesh, even to the natural affections as well as interests of men, through the meshes of that world of which he is the prince. It is in this way above all that souls are kept blind through the exclusion of the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. In Christendom now, as of old in Judea, the mass perish, not in the terrible displays which appear here and there, or now and then, but under the placid surface of what is respected and enjoys an unquestioned character of patriotism and even religion, where the Father is unknown, and consequently it is not the true Christ brought home to the heart by the Holy Spirit. But the word of the Lord accomplishes the gracious purpose of Him who sends it forth, and extensively too in the conversion and blessing of souls, if no longer in the might of apostolic days.

Chapter 50

On Acts 19:21-31

Thus in Ephesus did the word of the Lord grow and prevail with might, according to the remarkable expression of Luke. Every testimony had been at full tide there; the evident power and presence of the Spirit, attested by tongues and prophesyings, bold preaching of the kingdom of God for months in the synagogue, and still less restricted discoursing daily in the school of Tyrannus, for two years, during which time the disciples took up their due separate position; so that not only they of Ephesus, but, speaking generally, all those that dwelt in the province of Asia, Jews and Greeks alike, heard the word of the Lord. The uncommon powers wrought by the hands of Paul proved even externally where and with whom God was; as the ignominious penalty of the Jewish exorcists demonstrated that even Satan despised their selfish and profane use of the name of Jesus, so as to overawe all inside, and to exercise healthfully the conscience of many within, when it was for the Lord's glory. What need was there for the prolonged stay of the apostle whose heart went out to the regions beyond?

“Now after these things were fulfilled, Paul purposed in his spirit, passing through Macedonia and Achaia, to proceed unto Jerusalem, laying, After I have been there, I must see Rome also. And having sent into Macedonia two of those that ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while” (ver. 21, 22).

It is not correct to interpret “in the Spirit” here of the Holy Ghost. No more is meant than that the apostle purposed it “in his spirit “; a frequent phrase of his, not only in this book but elsewhere. He longed once more to go to Jerusalem, after passing through the two Roman provinces of Greece. He felt that his work was closed for the present at Ephesus, and that after visiting Jerusalem he must see Rome also. With this we may compare Rom. 1:9-13, as well as chap. 15: 22-29, though the journey to Spain appears nowhere else in the inspired writings, and we know not that it was ever realized. How immense, the energy which comes out in these few words! How much more, when we consider how fully he preached the gospel of Christ, not where He was already named, but where the good news had never penetrated before! It was also a spiritual capacity and zeal that embraced not heavenly truth only, and the whole scope of divine counsels for eternity, as well as the O.T. prophecies of the kingdom, but the most ordinary matters of need for the peace and fellowship of the saints, yea, even for their temporal good day by day. We see, too, how with apostolic authority he directed the service of others, and this at all cost to himself personally; for at thievery time he sent into Macedonia two of those that ministered to him, not Brutus only, but the fellow-laborer nearest to his heart, his beloved child, Timothy, whilst he himself stayed awhile in Asia.

“And about that time arose no small disturbance about the way. For a certain [man] by name Demetrius, a silver-beater, making silver shrines [miniature temples], of Artemis, brought no little business to the artisans, whom be gathered together with the workmen of like nature, and said, Men, ye are aware that we have our prosperity from this business. And ye behold and hear that this Paul hath persuaded and turned away a considerable crowd, not only of Ephesus, but of

almost all Asia, saying that they are no gods that are made by hands. Now, not only is there danger for us that this trade come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be counted for nothing, and that even she should be deposed from her magnificence, whom all Asia and the world [habitable earth] revereth. And when they heard, they were filled with wrath and kept. crying out, saying, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians. And the city was filled with confusion; and they rushed with one accord into the theater, having seized together Gains and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's fellow-travelers. And when Paul was minded to enter unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. And some of the Asiarchs also, being his friends, sent unto him and urged him not to adventure himself into the theater" (ver. 23-31).

Such was the fresh effort of the enemy, not so much by means of Zeivs as Gentiles, and accordingly by an appeal to worldly lusts rather than by spiritual power in an evil shape. Nevertheless, religious motives, such as they were, even here threw a certain halo around that which was really selfish and utterly sordid. Nor is any device of the enemy more common or permanent. Satan contrives in this world to interweave debasing and destructive superstition with the present interests and honor of mankind. This being so, one cannot wonder that the mass of men are most readily inflamed by the testimony of the truth which threatens to undermine their religion and their worldly property: It is the same today, in principle, as then at Ephesus. An active leader was easily found to take the matter up and blow it into a flame. The artisans and the workmen engaged in the trade of the silver shrines of Artemis were roused by their employer, Demetrius, who appealed to their covetousness and at the same time pointed out that Paul's teaching threatened not only their trade but the discredit of the great goddess Artemis. And the appeal was not in vain; it never is, save where grace makes known the truth.

Man, ignorant of God, will fight for nothing more keenly than for his wealth and his religion. Nor could it be denied that throughout much more than Ephesus, or even Asia, Paul had persuaded and turned away much people from their gods many and lords many. There was no doubt that he did really mean that those are no gods which are made with hands, that to as there is one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we unto Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things and we through Him. We ought not to think, therefore, that the divinity is like gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man. And that one God now commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent, because He hath appointed a day in the which He is going to judge the world, or habitable earth, in righteousness, by the man whom He hath ordained, giving proof of it to all in that He raised Him from the dead. So had Paul openly preached at Athens during his brief visit; assuredly his long abode in Ephesus was not less fruitful in the solemn proclamation of the truth. We need not have wondered if the silversmith had taken fire at the beginning of his stay. But grace knows how to make the wrath of man praise God, as well as to restrain the residue of wrath.

It was well ordered, however, that the outburst should come while the apostle was still there. Two of his fellow-travelers were actually seized; and Paul intended to go in to the raging populace in the theater, but the disciples would not suffer him. And very interesting it is to see the moral effect of Paul's teaching and life on certain of the chief officers of. Asia, who are distinguished from the disciples but expressly said to have been his friends. These sent unto him and besought him not to trust himself in the theater. What is more, the scripture shews that Paul, whatever his own courage or feeling, did not despise these friends, notwithstanding their position, but gave way to the

remonstrance of his brethren. He who on fit occasion knew how to wield on earth the power of heaven for the Lord's glory; he who wrote with divine authority for the saints here below till Christ comes, could graciously bend to others, as well as stand alone where this was of God. Only the Holy Spirit can give the discernment at the moment, where the eye is single to Christ.

Chapter 51

On Acts 19:32-41

Each was the uproar which pervaded the crowd in the theater at Ephesus.

“Different ones therefore kept crying somewhat different things; for the assembly was in confusion, and the mass knew not wherefore they were come together. And from the crowd they instructed (or drew together) Alexander, the Jews putting him forward; and Alexander waving his hand wished to make defense to the people. But when they came to know he was a Jew, one shout arose from all, crying for about two hours, Great [is] Artemis of [the] Ephesians. And the town-clerk after stilling the crowd, says, Ephesians, which of men is he who knoweth not that the city of [the] Ephesians is temple-keeper of the great Artemis and of what fell from the sky? Since then these things cannot be gainsaid, you must be quiet and do nothing rash. For ye have brought these men, neither temple-robbers nor blasphemers of our (or your) goddess. If then Demetrius and the artisans with him have a matter against any one, court-days are going on, and there are pro-consuls: let them accuse each other; but if you make any inquiry about other things, it will be settled in the lawful assembly. For indeed we are in danger of being accused of riot to-day, there being no cause concerning which we shall be able to render an account of this concourse. And having said thus he dismissed the assembly” (ver. 32-41).

In this book we have already had the Holy Spirit's account of religions excitement among the Jews, not only when it issued in the death of Stephen, but on other occasions where they were the chief instigators of the heathen against the gospel and its messengers. It was meet that we should have a living picture of a quasi-religions tumult among the heathen themselves, and this in the most capacious theater of which there are remains to the present day. Assuredly the Gentiles were rather more senseless than the Jews, though their convictions were in no way so deep. “Some, therefore, cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was tumultuous, and the most knew not wherefore they were come together.” Whatever the selfish motives underneath, their expression of wrath was about the great Artemis, of whom Ephesians boasted. Nevertheless, as we have seen, God wrought providentially through wiser men of high station among them; for the Asiarchs, whose chief or chiefs lived at Ephesus, had the easiest means and best position in the state, and by their very office would be expected most to resent any dishonor done to their religion. But kind feeling, if not conscience, made them tender the prudent advice to Paul, that he should not adventure himself into the theater. God need them to shelter His servant, where zeal and courage would have been unavailing, and might have exposed him to danger.

Here again we find the Jews putting forward Alexander. This, nevertheless, was a move, which, however craftily devised, did not benefit themselves, but rather inflamed the multitude so much the more. The instincts of the heathen resented such an apologist. Was it possible in common honesty that the Jews would have more respect than the Christians for their great goddess?

It was in vain, therefore, for Alexander to beckon with his hand, in the desire to make a defense to the people. It was enough that they perceived him to be a Jew, and therefore hostile to their idolatry. There was one voice from all, about the space of two hours, as they cried out, Great [is]

Artemis of [the] Ephesians. What a true reflection of the world governed by prejudice and feeling in what is of all moment, not only for the life that now is, but for that which is to come! God, the true God, is not in their thoughts, which are therefore open to any and every delusion.

The town-clerk, or recorder, now appears on the scene; a much more important person in that age and country than in most others, as we learn from ancient inscriptions and otherwise. He was a heathen like the rest; but his common sense was shocked by their objectless excesses; and his speech sets forth in plain and pointed terms their own folly and wrong, not as to God but as among men, and more particularly before their Roman governors. Having stilled the crowd, he says, “Ephesians; who is there of men that knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is temple-keeper of the great Artemis, and of that which fell down from Zeus (or the sky)? As these things cannot be gainsaid, ye ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. For ye have brought these men neither temple-robbers nor blasphemers of our goddess. If, therefore, Demetrius and the artisans that are with him have a matter against anyone, court days are going on, and there are pro-consuls: let them accuse (or prosecute) one another. But if you make any inquiry about other things it will be settled in the regular assembly. For indeed we are in danger of being accused for the riot of to day, there being no ground concerning which we shall be able to give account of this concourse. And, having said thus, he dismissed the assembly.”

Thus is man beguiled. He assumes as unquestionable what is a mere delusion of the enemy. No intelligence secures against the lie of Satan, nothing but the truth brought home by the Spirit of God! For this man; otherwise sensible, the great Artemis and the stone that fell from the sky, were things which could. not be gainsaid. On this supposition he insists on calmness as the only state of mind befitting his co-religionists. He urge that those concerned were neither temple-robbers nor revilers of their goddess. Why, therefore, should such men be brought before them? But he is more precise also, and sets before Demetrius and the artisans in company with him, that their procedure was irregular and dangerous for all. A charge must be laid at a proper time and place, and before the suited judge. There alone could there be a lawful result, Any other inquiry must be settled in the lawful assembly, which the present was not. More than that “we are in danger,” not they only, but “we,” of being accused of riot for this day's proceedings, no cause existing for which they could render an account of this concourse. The Romans, it is well known, were most jealous of such disorderly assemblages; which they often punished with bloodshed without measure. As his speech thus closed with a most significant hint, he had no difficulty thereon in dismissing the assembly.

Chapter 52

The Administration of the Fullness of Times

The good pleasure of God is to unite all that is created under Christ's hand. This is His purpose for the administration of the times in which the result of all His ways shall be manifested. It will be a grand spectacle, as the result of God's ways, to see all things united in perfect peace and union, under the authority of man, the Second Man and Son of God; ourselves associated with Him in the same glory as Himself, His companions in heavenly glory, as the objects of God's eternal counsels. Eph. 1 directs our attention to the communication of God's counsels respecting it, and not to the scene itself. The eternal state, in which God is all in all, is quite another thing. The administration of the fullness of times is the result of God's ways in government; the eternal state is the result of the perfection of His nature. In Christ we inherit our part, heirs of God, as it is said elsewhere, and joint-heirs with Christ. Here, however, the Spirit sets before us the position, in virtue of which the inheritance has fallen to us, rather than the inheritance itself. He ascribes it also to the sovereign will of God, as He did before with regard to the special relationship of sons unto God. In the inheritance we shall be to the praise of His glory; as in our relationship to Him we are to the praise of the glory of His grace. J. N. D.

Chapter 53

Christian Character

The courage, patience, firmness, and zeal of a Christian, are a perfectly distinct order of character from the courage, firmness, patience, and zeal of a natural man. Self-confidence, self-glory, self-preservation, self-exaltation, are the essential principles of one; confidence in God, self-renunciation, subjection to God, glory to God, abasement of self, being the essential principles of the other. So that the essential principles that formed the character of Paul as a natural man were destroyed through the cross, in order that his soul should imbibe the life of Christ which was the principle that formed his character as a Christian. “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

Though Christ was a Son; yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. In any instance that we give up our own will, without sacrificing conscience, we are gainers. If but my dog exercises my patience and makes me yield my will, he is a blessing to me. Christ never willed anything but what was good and holy; yet how often was His will thwarted? how often hindered in designs of good?

Chapter 54

Christian Service

Connect your service with nothing but God—not with any particular set of persons. You may be comforted by fellowship, and your heart refreshed; but you must work by your own individual faith and energy, without leaning on any one whatever; for if you do, you cannot be a faithful servant. Service must ever be measured by faith, and one's own communion with God. Saul even may be a prophet when he gets amongst the prophets; but David was always the same—in the cave or any where. Whilst the choicest blessings given me here are in fellowship, yet a man's service must flow from himself: else there will be weakness. If I have the word of wisdom, I meet use it for the saint who may seek my counsel. It is: “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” But also: “Let every one prove his own work, and then shall he, have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another,” There is no single place grace brings us into but is a place of temptation, and that we cannot escape, though we shall be helped through. In every age, the blessing has been from individual agency and the moment it has ceased to be this, it has declined into the world. It is humbling, but it makes us feel that all comes immediately from God. The tendency of association is to make us lean upon one another.

Where there are great arrangements for carrying on work, there is not the recognition of the inherent blessing which “tarrieth not for the sons of men.” I do not tarry for man if I have faith in God. I act upon the strength of that. Let a man act as the Lord leads him. The Spirit of God is not to be fettered by man.

All power arises from the direct authoritative energy of the Holy Ghost in the individual. Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13.) were sent forth by the Holy Ghost, recommended to the grace of God by the church at Antioch; but they had no, communication with it till they returned, and then there was the joyful concurring of love in the service that had been performed. He that had talents went and traded. Paul says: “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” When there is a desire to act, accompanied by real energy, a man will rise up and walk; but if he cannot do this, the energy is not there; and the attempt to move is only restlessness and weakness. Love for souls sets one to work. I know no other way.

J. N. D.

Chapter 55

On the Church: 11. Israel and the Gentiles: Part 1

I have read this chapter, not as professing to explain it in detail, but because it gives a summary of that which will happen at the close of this dispensation, at least the heavenly sources of these events, and the woes of the earth. My object this evening is to take up, in their order, the prophetic events which have been occupying us, as far as God shall give me ability.

But beforehand, dear friends, it will not be amiss to return to a few of the thoughts which were given out at the very beginning of these lectures. In treating of these subjects, let us be reminded of their great end—a double one. One end is that of detaching us from the world (though indeed the effect of every part of the word, when the Spirit of God is applying it): prophecy is peculiarly so adapted; its tendency must be to “deliver us from this present evil age.” The other end is to make us intelligent of the character of God, and of His ways towards us. These are two precious and wholesome fruits, which spring from the acquirement of the knowledge of prophecy.

Many are the objections made to its study; it is thus that Satan always acts against the truth. I do not mean objections against such or such a view, but against the study of prophecy itself. And Satan works in this way as to the entire word of God. To one he says, Follow morality, and do not meddle with dogmas; because he knows that dogmas will free a man from his power, by the revelation of Jesus, and of the truth in his heart. To another he suggests the neglecting of prophecy, because in it is found the judgment of this world, of which he is prince. But to allow weight to such objections, is it not to find fault with God, Who has given prophecy to us, and Who has oven attached a particular blessing to the reading of the part reputed to be most difficult!

Prophecy throws a great light upon the dispensations of God; and, in this sense, it does much as regards the freedom of our souls towards Him. For what hinders it more than the error, so often committed, of confounding the law and the gospel, the past economies or dispensations with the existing one?

If, in our internal fighting, we find ourselves in the presence of the law, it is impossible to find peace; and more if we insist on the difference which exists between the position of the saints of old and that of the saints during the actual dispensation, this again troubles the minds of many. Now the study of prophecy clears up such points, and at the same time enlightens the faithful as to their walk and conversation; for, whilst it always maintains free salvation by the death of Jesus, prophecy enables us to understand the entire difference between the standing of the saints now and formerly, and lights up with all the counsels of God the road along which His own people have been conducted, whether before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Again, dear friends, as we have before said, it is always the hope which is presented to us which acts upon our hearts and affections. There are thus always enjoyments in prospect which stamp their actual character upon our souls: that which occupies the heart of man as hope makes the rule of his conduct. Of what vast importance is it not, then, to have our souls filled with hope according to God? Persons say it is the idle curiosity of prying into hidden things; but if it were true

that we ought not to look into prophecy, the conclusion is inevitable, that our thoughts are not to go beyond the present. The way of knowing what God's intentions are for the future is certainly the study of that prophecy which He has given to us. Prophecy records things to come; it is the scriptural mirror, wherein future events are seen. If we refuse the study of what God has revealed as to come, we are necessarily left to our own ideas upon it.

The famous passage of the Apostle Paul has been quoted to some here (1 Cor. 2:2): “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” It is constantly used as an objection against the study of what is found revealed in the word. This arises from two causes. The one is due to that prolific source of error, namely, the citation of a passage without examining the context; the other, alas! arises from a greater or less want of uprightness—from a desire (unrecognized, it may be, in our own deceitful hearts) of standing still in the ways of the Lord, by making as little acquaintance with them as may be. It is not true that we are to limit ourselves to the knowledge of Jesus Christ crucified. We must also know Jesus Christ glorified, Jesus Christ at the right hand of God; we must know Him as High Priest, and as Advocate with the Father. We ought to know Jesus Christ as much as possible, and not be content with saying, “Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” So to say is to take the letter of the word and abuse it. The apostle, seeing the tendency that there was in the church at Corinth to follow rather the learning and philosophy of man than Christ (a thing not to be wondered at in a city renowned for science), points out, in leading their souls back to Christ, how foreign his entry among them was from earthly wisdom. He “was with them in weakness and in fear;...his speech and his preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom;” “he determined not to know anything among them but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” —Jesus Christ, and even Him as the most despised one among men. He is not speaking of the value of the blood, but of the condition of Jesus Himself, in order to bring down by the cross all their vain glory, and found their faith upon the word of God, and not on human wisdom. But in the same chapter he says that, from the moment he comes into the midst of true Christians, his conduct changes; he speaks “wisdom among them that are perfect.” He would have nothing to do with human wisdom; but as soon as he finds himself among the perfect [full grown], he says, “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect.” Desiring to confine ourselves to Jesus crucified, in the way it is urged, is, I repeat, to confine ourselves to as little as possible of Christianity. In Heb. 6 the apostle says that he is unwilling to do what they would make him say in this place; he altogether condemns that which is urged upon us. “Leaving the principles of the doctrine [the word of the beginning] of Christ,” says he, “let us go on unto perfection!'

After those observations on the study of prophecy in general, I proceed to recall, in a few words, how God has revealed Himself by it.

Revelation 12 presents to us the great object of prophecy, and of all the word of God, that is, the combat which takes place between the second Man and Satan. It is from this center of truth that all the light which is found in scripture radiates.

This great combat may take place either for the earthly things (they being the object), and then it is in the Jews; or for the church (that being the object), and then it is, in the heavenly places.

It is on this account that the subject of prophecy divides itself into two parts, the hopes of the church, and those of the Jews; though the former be scarcely, properly speaking, prophecy, which concerns the earth and God's government of it.

But before coming to this great crisis, namely, the combat between Satan and the Last Adam, it was Necessary that the history of the first Adam should be developed. This has been done. And in order that the church, that is, Christians, may be in a position to occupy themselves with the things of God, it was needful, first of all, that they should be in happy certainty as to their own position before Him. At His first coming, Christ accomplished all the work which the wisdom of the Father, in the eternal counsels of God, had confided to Him; this effected the peace of the believer. The Lord Jesus came, in order that the certainty of salvation, by the knowledge of the grace of God, should be introduced into the world, that is, into the hearts of the faithful. After having accomplished salvation, He communicates it to His followers in giving them life. His Holy Spirit, which is the seal of this salvation in the heart, reveals to them things to come, as to the children of the family, and heirs of the family estate. During the period which separates the first coming of the Lord from the second, the church is gathered by the action of the Holy Spirit to have part in the glory of Christ at His return.

These, in a few words, are the two great subjects which I have been opening; namely, that Christ, having done all that is needful, for the salvation of the saints—having saved all those who believe, the Holy Ghost now acts in the world to communicate to the church the knowledge of this salvation. He does not come to propose the hope that God will be good, but a fact—the fact, once more, that Jesus has already accomplished the salvation of all those who believe; and when the Holy Spirit communicates this knowledge to a soul, it knows that it is saved. Being then put in relationship with God as His children, we are His heirs, “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” All that concerns the glory of Christ belongs to ma and the Holy Spirit is given to us, in the first place, to make us understand that we are children of God. He is a Spirit of adoption, but more, a Spirit of light, who teaches the children of God what their inheritance is. As they are one with Christ, all the truth of His glory is revealed to them, and the supremacy which He has over all things, God having also constituted Him Heir of all things, and us co-heirs.

After Christ has fulfilled all that was necessary, the church, until the second coming of its Saviour, is taken from out of all nations, and united to Him. It has, whilst here below, the knowledge of the salvation which He has accomplished, and of the coming glory, the Holy Spirit (in those who believe) being the seal of salvation accomplished, and the earnest of the future glory.

These truths throw a great light upon the entire history of man. But let us ever remember that the great object of the Bible is the conflict between Christ the Last Adam, and Satan.

In what condition did Christ find the first Adam? In a condition into the lowest depths of which He was obliged to enter, as responsible head of all creation. He found man in a state of ruin—entirely lost. It was needful that this should be unfolded before the coming of Christ; for God did not introduce His Son into the world as Savior until all that was necessary to show (and how much was needed to show!) that man was in himself incapable of anything good was brought out. The whole state of man, before and after the deluge, under the law and under the prophets, only served as a clearer attestation that man was lost. He had failed throughout, under every possible circumstance, until, God having sent His Son, the servants said, “This is the Heir; let us kill Him.” The measure of sin was then at its height; but the grace of God did also much more abound, and gave us the inheritance—us poor sinners! the inheritance with Christ in the heavenly glory, of which we possess the earnest, having Christ in spirit here below.

But (to enter a little more into the succession of dispensations, and also into that which concerns the character of God in this respect) the first thing which we would remark is the deluge, because until then there had not been, so to speak, government in the world. The prophecy, which existed before the deluge, was to the effect that Christ was to come. The teachings of God were ever to this end. “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints.”

Let us pass on.

In Noah's time there was government of the earth, and God coming in judgment and committing the right of the sword to man.

After this comes the call of Abraham. Mark: the principle of government is not put forward by the word, but the principle of promise, and the call to be in relationship with God of that one person who becomes the root of all the promises of God—Abraham, the father of the faithful. God calls him, makes him quit his country, his family, bidding him go into a country which He would show him. God reveals Himself to him as the God of promise, which separates a people to Himself by a promise which He gives them. It is at this epoch that God revealed Himself under the name of God Almighty.

After that, among the descendants of Abraham, by this same principle of election, God takes the children of Jacob to be His people here below, the object of all His earthly care, and out of whose midst Christ was to come according to the flesh. It is in this people of Israel that God displays all His characteristics as Jehovah; it is not only as a God of promise, but as the God who unites the two principles of government and calling, which two had been each successively brought out in Noah and in Abraham. Israel was the called and separated people—separated indeed only to earthly blessings, and to enjoy the promise; but, at the same time, to be subject to the exercise of the government of God according to the law.

We say then, that in Noah was marked the principle of government of the earth, and in Abraham that of calling and election. And so Jehovah will accomplish all that He has said as God of promise, “Who was, and is, and is to come;” and He will govern all the earth, according to the righteousness of His law—the righteousness revealed in Israel.

We have shown that God (Exodus 19:4-9) made the accomplishment of the promises, in those times, to depend upon the faithfulness of man, and that He took occasion to prove him, and to represent in detail, as in a picture, all the characteristics under which He acted towards him. It was this which He was doing under priests, prophets, and kings. And it is to be particularly observed, that the bearing of prophecy, in the unfolding of this succession of relationships of God with Israel, and with man, is not alone the manifestation of the fall of man, but also, and chiefly, of the glory of God.

When Israel had transgressed in every possible way and circumstance, even in the family of David which was the last human resource of the nation—at the moment that family failed in Ahaz, prophecy commences in all its details. It had these two features: one, the manifestation of the glory, of Christ, in order fully to show that the people had failed under the law; the other, the manifestation of the coming glory of Christ, to be the support of the faith of those who were desiring to keep the law, but who saw that everything was out of course.

It is too late to take an interest in the prophecies when they are fulfilled. Those, to whom at the actual time the prophets addressed themselves, were the people from whom submission was expected. The word of God should have touched their conscience. It ought to be so with us. In the midst of all this, however, were predictions which announced that the Messiah was to come, and to suffer for ends most of all important.

Prophecy applies itself properly to the earth; its object is not heaven. It was about things that were to happen on the earth; and the not seeing this has misled the church. We have thought that we ourselves had within us the accomplishment of these earthly blessings, whereas we are called to enjoy heavenly blessings. The privilege of the church is to have its portion in the heavenly places; and later on blessings will be shed forth upon the earthly people. The church is something altogether apart—a kind of heavenly economy, during the rejection of the earthly people, who are put aside on account of their sins, and driven out among the nations, out of the midst of which nations God chooses a people for the enjoyment of heavenly glory with Jesus Himself. The Lord, having been rejected by the Jewish people, is become wholly a heavenly person. This is the doctrine which we peculiarly find in the writings of the apostle Paul. It is no longer the Messiah of the Jews, but a Christ exalted and glorified; and it is for want of taking hold of this exhilarating truth, that the church has become so weak.

Having thus briefly retraced the history of the different dispensations, it remains for us now to see the church glorified, but without the Lord Jesus having abandoned any of His rights upon the earth. He was the Heir. He was to shed His blood, which was to ransom the inheritance. As Boaz said (whose name signifies, In him is strength), “What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance” (Ruth 4:5). So it was necessary that Christ should buy the church, co-heir by grace (as Boaz, type of Christ, bought the inheritance by taking to wife Ruth) to whom the inheritance had devolved in the decrees of Jehovah.

Christ then, and the church, have title to the inheritance, that is, to all that Christ Himself has created as God. But what is the state of the church actually? Does it as a fact inherit these things? Not any; because until we are in the glory we can have nothing, and possess nothing, except only “the Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” Until that time Satan is the prince of this world, the god of this world; he accuses even the children of God in the heavenly places, which, however, he occupies only by usurpation (the way being made to him by the passions of men, and the power which he exercises over the creature, fallen and at a distance from God, although definitively the providence of God uses all to the accomplishment of His counsels).

And now, dear friends, having contemplated the rights of Christ and of the church, let us consider how Christ will make them good. The consideration of this will lead us into the discovery, in their order, of the accomplishment of events at the close. Perhaps, however, having arrived thus far, it would be better (as I have only been speaking of Jews) to turn for a moment to the Gentiles.

The nearest of kin after the flesh by the law refused. to take the inheritance along with Ruth. Christ risen, acting in grace, alone can or will re-establish Israel in the land, when brought to own that they need mercy like a Gentile.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 56

On the Church: 11. Israel and the Gentiles: Part 2

We have remarked that, when the fall of the Jewish nation was complete, God transferred the right of government to the Gentiles; but with this difference, that this right was separated from the calling and the promise of God. In the Jews the two things were united, namely, the calling of God, and government upon the earth, which became distinct things from the moment that Israel was put aside. In Noah and Abraham we had them distinct; government in the one, calling in the other.

With the Jews these principles were united; but Israel failed, and ceased thenceforward to be capable of manifesting the principle of the government of God, because God in Israel acted in righteousness; and unrighteous Israel could no longer be the depository of the power of God. God, then, quitted His terrestrial throne in Israel. Notwithstanding this, as to the earthly calling, Israel continued to be the called people; “for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” As to government, God transports it where He will; and it went to the Gentiles. There are, indeed, the called from among the nations (namely, the church); but it is for the heavens they are called. The calling of God for the earth is never transferred to the nations; it remains with the Jews. If I want an earthly religion, I ought to be a Jew. From the instant that the church loses sight of its heavenly calling, humanly speaking, it loses all.

What has happened to the nations by their having had government given over to them? They have become “beasts:” so the four great monarchies are called. Once the government is transferred to the Gentiles, they become the oppressors of the people of God: first, the Babylonians; secondly, the Medes and Persians; thirdly, the Greeks; then, the Romans. The fourth monarchy consummated its crime at the same instant that the Jews consummated theirs, in being accessory, in the, person of Pontius Pilate, to the will of a rebellious nation, by killing Him Who was at once the Son of God and King of Israel. Gentile power is in a fallen state, even as the called people, the Jews, are. Judgment is written upon power and calling, as in man's hand.

In the meanwhile, what happens? First, the salvation of the believer. The iniquity of Jacob, the crime of the nations, the judgment of the world, and that of the Jews—all this becomes salvation to the church. It was all accomplished in the death of Jesus. Secondly, all that has passed since that stupendous event has no other object than the gathering together of the children of God. The Jews, the called people, have become rebellious, and are driven away from the presence of God; the nations are become equally rebellious; but government abides there, though in a state of ruin indeed; but the patience of God is always there, also waiting until the end. Then what takes place?

The church goes to join the Lord in the heavenly places.

Let us now suppose that, in the time decreed by God, all the church is assembled; what will happen? It will go immediately to meet the Lord, and the marriage of the Lamb will take place. Salvation will be consummated in the seat of glory itself—in the heavenly places. Where will the nations be? The government of the fourth monarchy will be still in existence, but under the influence and direction of. its last head; and the Jews will unite themselves to him, in a state of

rebellion, to make war with the Lamb. Why all this? and why has not the gospel hindered such a state of things? Because Satan, unto this hour, has not been driven out of the heavenly places, and, by consequence, all that God has done here for man has been spoiled—whether government of the Gentiles, or the actual relationship of the Jews with God. All has been deteriorated by the presence of Satan, ever there exercising his baneful influence.

But God now, at the close, when the church is gathered and called up on high, takes things into His own hand. What will He do? Dispossess Satan and drive him from power. It is what Jesus will do when the church shall be manifestly united to Him, and He begins to act in restoring everything to its proper order.

Dear friends, as soon as the church shall be received to Christ, there will follow the battle in heaven, in order that the seat of government may be purged of those fertile sources, and of those active agents, of the ills of humanity and of all creation. The result of such a combat is easily foreseen: Satan will be expelled from heaven, without being yet bound; but he will be cast down to earth, “having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time.” Thenceforward power will be established in heaven according to the intention of God. But on the earth it will be quite otherwise: for when Satan is driven away from heaven, he will excite the whole earth; and will raise up in particular the apostate part of it, which has revolted against the power of Christ coming from heaven. It is said, “Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth, and of the seal.....”

Behold, then, the created heavens occupied by Christ and His church; and Satan in great wrath upon the earth, having but a short time. Under the conduct of Antichrist, the fourth monarchy will become the sphere upon which the activity of Satan will then be displayed, who will unite the Jews with the apostate empire against heaven. I do not enter upon the scriptural proofs here—they have been already spoken of; I merely sum up the facts in the order of their accomplishment. It need scarcely be said that the result of all this will be the judgment and destruction of the beast and Antichrist, the heads of evil among the Gentiles and among the Jews, the secular and spiritual heads of mischief and rebellion on the earth. Jesus Christ will destroy, in the last head of the Beast, the power of Satan in that government, which, we have seen, was confided to the Gentiles. This wicked one, having joined himself to the Jews, and having placed himself at Jerusalem, as the center of earth's government and religion, will be destroyed by the coming of the Lord of lords and King of kings; and Christ will anew occupy this chief seat of government, which will become the place of the throne of God on the earth. But although the Lord is come to the earth, and the power of Satan in apostate Rome is destroyed and the government established in the hands of the Righteous One, the earth will not be reduced under His scepter. The remnant of the Jews is delivered, and Antichrist destroyed; but the world, not yet acknowledging the rights of Christ, will desire to possess His heritage; and the Savior must clear the land in order that its inhabitants may enjoy the blessings of His reign without interruption or hindrance, and that joy and glory may be established in this world, so long subjected to the enemy.

The first thing, then, which the Lord next does will be to purify His land (the land which belongs to the Jews) of the Tyrians, the Philistines, the Sidonians; of Edom, and Moab, and Ammon—of all the wicked, in short, from the Nile to the Euphrates. It will be done by the power of Christ in favor of His people re-established by His goodness. The people are put into security in the land, and

then will those of them who remain till that time among the nations be gathered together. When the people are living thus in peace, another enemy will come up, namely, Gog; but he will come only for his destruction.

It would seem that in those times—probably at the commencement of this period—besides the personal manifestation of Christ in judgment, there will be a discovery much more calm, much more intimate, of the Lord Jesus to the Jews. This is what will take place when He will descend on the Mount of Olives, where “his feet shall stand,” according to the expression of Zech. 14:3, 4. It is always the same. Jesus; but He will reveal Himself peaceably, and show Himself, not as the Christ from heaven, but as the Messiah of the Jews.

Blessing to the Gentiles will be the consequence of the restoration of the Jews, and of the presence of the Lord. The church will have been blessed; the apostasy of the fourth monarchy will no longer have existence; the lawless one will be cat off, as well as the unbelieving Jews; in fine, the land of Israel will be at peace.

Afterward there will be the world to come, prepared and introduced by these judgments and by the presence of the Lord, Who will take the place of lawlessness and the lawless one. Those who shall have seen the glory manifested in Jerusalem will go and announce its arrival to the other nations. These will submit themselves to Christ; they will confess the Jews to be the people blessed of their Anointed, will bring the rest of them back into their land, and will themselves become the theater of glory, which, with Jerusalem as its center, will extend itself in blessing wherever there is man to enjoy its effects. The witness of the glory being spread everywhere, the hearts of men, fall of goodwill, submit themselves to the counsels and glory of God in response to this testimony. All the promises of God being accomplished, and the throne of God being established at Jerusalem, this throne will become to the whole earth the source of happiness. The re-establishment of the people of God will be to the world “as life from the dead.”

One thing is to be added, namely, that at this time Satan will be bound, and in consequence the blessing will be without interruption until “he is loosed for a short season.” Instead of the adversary in the heavenly places; instead of his government, the seat of which is now in the air; instead of that confusion and misery which he produces, as much as is allowed him to do; Christ and His church will be there, the source and instrument of blessing ever new. Government in the heavenly places will be the security, and not the hindrance, or the compulsory instrument, of the goodness of God. The glorified church-witness for all, even by its state, of the extent of the love of the Father, Who has fulfilled all His promises, and has been better to our weak hearts than even their hopes—will fill the heavenly places with its joy; and in its service will constitute the happiness of the world, towards which it will be the instrument of the grace which it shall be richly. enjoying. Behold the heavenly Jerusalem, witness in glory of the grace which has placed her so high! In the midst of her shall flow the river of water of life, where grows the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the Gentiles; for even in the glory shall be preserved to her this sweet character of grace. Meanwhile, upon the earth, is the earthly Jerusalem, the center of the government, and of the reign of the righteousness of Jehovah her God; indeed in a state of desolation she had been of His justice. She will be the place of His throne, the center of the exercise of that justice described in such language as “The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish.” For in that state of terrestrial glory—though indeed placed there by the grace of the now covenant—this city will still

preserve its normal character, that she may be witness of the character of Jehovah as the church is of that of the Father. God also will realize the fall force of that name— “The Most High God, Possessor of the heavens and the earth;” and Christ will fulfill, in all their fullness, all the functions of High Priest, after the order of Melchizedec, who, after the victory gained over the enemies of God's people, blessed their God on the part of the people, and the people on the part of God (Gen. 14:18, &c.).

Dear friends, you will understand that there is an infinity of details into which I have not entered; for example, the circumstances of the Jew who will be persecuted during the troublous times in Judea, of which we have some instruction in the word. This general sketch will engage you to read the word of God for yourselves on the whole subject. For myself, I attach more importance to the larger features of prophecy; and for this reason, that there is to be found in them, on the one hand, the distinction of dispensations, which become, by the consideration of these truths, very clear; and on the other, the character of God, which is in this manner fully unveiled.

However this may be, there is nothing to hinder your study of prophecy, even in its minute details. If indeed we attempt the examination of the works of man in this way, an abundance of imperfection is found; but it is the contrary in the works of God. The more we enter into their least or most minute details, the more does perfection appear.

May God perfect in you, and in all His children, true separation from the world. This ought to be, before God, the fruit of the expectation of the church, at the discovery of these—its heavenly—blessings in store, and of the terrible judgments which await all that which still binds man to this lower world. For the judgment will come upon all these earthly things! May God also perfect the desires of my heart, and the witness of the Holy Spirit!

(Concluded from p. 32.)

Chapter 57

The Revealed Truth of the Church of God

Having read the recent (30 Dec. 1886-20 Jan. 1887) correspondence of the Bp. of Winchester and Canon Wilberforce, I have thought that a few remarks which recall the word of God on the matter in debate might be profitable.

The Bishop, objecting to the Canon's preaching and otherwise officiating in a congregational chapel within his parish, takes his stand, not merely on the adverse legal opinion, but, on two principles. The first is, “that the church of Christ, not only an invisible spiritual company, but the visible living organism, is a gift of God, and has lived on in an unbroken continuity from the days of our Lord's bodily presence to this day. So the church is from above, not from beneath; and it is not possible for a single man, or body of men in recent times to constitute a new church at their own pleasure. Another is that, though the church is divine, it has yet human elements, and so may require pruning, prudent and careful pruning, if it runs into excessive or unhealthy growth.”

“Unless these two principles are true, the church of England is indefensible, her raison d' etre is gone. The church is one with the church of the New Testament and the primitive ages; the church is reformed (when corrupted) on the exact model of the primitive body; these two are the pillars on which she rests. To give these up is to give up all, for if they are not sound the church of England cannot be defended, either (1) for having separated herself from communion with the Roman patriarch, or (2) for not simply taking her stand as one of a number of Protestant sects.”

The argument therefore is, that, if these two principles be true as applied to the church of England, Canon W.'s action ignores it, breaks down all boundaries, assumes, if it does not assert, that the Anglican body is but one of a heterogeneous community of human origin, and thus deprives it of its vantage ground and the hope which springs from it of the ultimate re-union of orthodox nonconformists with it. If the principle be untrue or inapplicable, “if we and all the other Christian bodies in England are to be described as alike ‘churches of different denominations,' then we are the most schismatical body in 'the world,' assuming a position to which we have no right, unless we are indeed the ancient church of the nation come down in a continuous stream from the fountain head. To concede this is to concede everything which is worth living for and worth dying for.”

The Canon in his reply of 6 Jan. seeks to soften his ordinary by pleading that his “ministering among his non-conforming parishioners was one of his special monthly services for the people” (the last Sunday of every month), “when the regular seat-holders of the chapel agree to absent themselves, and an effort is made to gather in those who are not in the habit of attending any place of worship.” He affirms that the legal opinion “is certainly new to me,” and argues that it would forbid to the clergy conferences, united prayer meetings, Evang. Alliance, and the like. The Bp. subsequently denies the analogy of the latter with the service in the chapel, as he more fully states the legal opinion, which one might have thought notorious to all men of moderate information.

But as to the heart of the question the Canon, whilst owning his adhesion to the principles already explained, contends singularly that by his action he has in no sense repudiated either principle, any more than the Non-conformists repudiated theirs by receiving the Eucharist at his hands in St. Mary's Church. Canon W.'s defense is exactly, where the Bp's letter put him, on the ground not of Anglicanism as the church of God in England, but as of so many Christian corporations in the country, though of course the best, as compared with congregationalism on the one hand and, with popery on the other. “I am of opinion that her equal cannot be found. As a living limb of the majestic vine,” &c. &c. That is, he recognizes the other societies as “limbs” of the same vine, though not so grand and goodly as his own. It is plain therefore that the Canon, albeit, as he says, “brought up in the straitest sect of high churchmen, “and “credited with holding high church opinions and views,” is really on low if not broad church ground. Indeed he in a measure avows his private theory to be the late Dr. Arnold's, of Rugby, who, though a pious man, was assuredly as loose ecclesiastically and doctrinally as such a man could be. So is Canon W.; and the Bp. as a conscientious Anglican overseer could but blame the transgression. The conclusion is what one might expect: after a great deal of fencing the Canon declares, “I shall, pending the decision of a court of law (!!), loyally and unhesitatingly obey you.” It is not to be believed that the Canon or the Non-conformists will be indulged with an appeal to Caesar on a question which the Bp. no doubt regards as among “the things that are God's.”

Let us appeal for a few moments to the highest tribunal: what saith the Scripture?”

The church or assembly of God is there presented in two distinct aspects; which cannot be overlooked, still less confounded, without results serious to truth and holiness.

(1) By infinite grace it is the body of Christ, Who cannot fail as the Head for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4) “For Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” This cannot be set aside by the wiles of the enemy whose power is already null by His death and resurrection, as His ascension also triumphantly displayed. There is no such thought in Scripture as the rending of the body, though rents, divisions, heresies, there have been innumerable; nor still less can a member of Christ perish, though thousands who have borne His name have come to nothing. As a man never yet hated but nourishes and cherishes his own flesh, so Christ the assembly; because we are members of His body. (Eph. 5)

(2) The church is God's building, house and temple. Here man builds, and though the foundation be none other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ, he may build thereon not gold, silver, precious stones, but wood, hay, stubble; and as every man's work shall be manifested, so the fire of divine judgment. shall try every man's' work of what sort it is. There may be even worse than this, the corrupting or destroying of God's temple, which involves not only the work burnt and the workman suffering loss, but the destroyer destroyed: “him shall God destroy.”

Here then is the true solution of the riddle which Canon W. cannot explain any more than the Bp. The only “living organism” is Christ's body. The assembly was once visibly one. It “has lived on in an unbroken continuity,” not from the days of our Lord's bodily presence (Bp. Pearson might teach

more soundly here), but from the day the ascended Head sent down the Holy Spirit to baptize into that one body of Christ; and as He abides forever, so does that one blessed fruit of His presence on earth, the assembly. It is from above more fully than the Bp. puts it, not from beneath; and it is not possible for any man or body of men to constitute a new church, as God, not man, constituted it once and forever of old. Here the Bp. is feeble; instead of being too high, he is certainly even in his ideal below the standard of scriptural fact. And, still more, can he be serious in believing. that the established church of England is “One with the Church of the N. T. P”

One might have thought that all men of godliness and intelligence were agreed that there is painful contrast rather than even resemblance, to say nothing of the claim to be “one” with the primitive assembly of God. Is the Head or chief Governor the same? Is there the smallest approach to the rich system of “gifts,” and the manifold local charges as appointed by apostles or apostolic men? Was there the very least allowance of patronage, lay or clerical, with its results in the sale of livings, not to speak of the sanctioned pomp and vanity of the world, and most of all in the highest officials who should have been the lowliest expression of dignified superiority to the world? And what is there in common between the membership of the assembly of old, “washed, sanctified, justified,” —as is by the highest authority predicated of the. Corinthian assembly, disfigured though it was by worse blots of a practical sort than any other in the New Testament—what in common between them and “every parishioner” in England (unless living in gross scandal) admissible and called to partake of the Supper at least three times a year, of which Easter is to be one for a tangible but not very spiritual reason? Tested then by headship, ministry, and membership, the dissimilarity is complete. I am far however from thinking that popery, or the Roman patriarch, would mend matters; for I entirely agree with the Homilies, once respected by the English clergy and people, that Romanism, is drowned “in abominable idolatry.” Further, the Tridentine decrees, and yet more in our day the egregious ones of an impeccable woman and of an infallible man, place that system as a professing body in the farthest remove from Christian truth, not to say from the church of God, and prove its utter evil in doctrine, to say nothing of holiness, discipline, and order.

It is the house of God, the visible manifestation of holy unity, the outward vessel where the Holy Spirit dwells, and works in and by men responsibly to the Lord's glory—it is here, where ruin alas! speedily came, not because God is not faithful, but because man is now, as ever, failing and faithless. No one denies godly individuals through the dreary ages that succeeded the first becoming more and more dark (certainly from a Christian or church point of view) after the apostles disappeared; till the excessive enormity of the priesthood as well as of a like people rouged, not loud and deep complaint only, but what is called the Reformation, when the Protestant communities broke off from their old papal connection, the state generally assuming more or less the supreme authority ecclesiastical for ages usurped by the Pope, And now especially the license of making bodies arrogating the title of “churches” is thought to be so right and natural that one wonders not at the Bp.'s denial that it is within human competency. Yet to make out the true continuity of the Anglican body through the dark ages of unquestionable idolatry of saints, angels, the Virgin Mary, the consecrated wafer and the crucifix, to pass over heaps of pravity only less deadly, is a problem which neither he nor any other can solve justly. Even that the established church of England (reformed as it undoubtedly is from the grossness of Romanism) is on the exact model of the primitive church seems far from a sound judgment of the facts and principles of

scripture. Take one plain and essential instance—the assembly, as the apostle lays it down in the correction of the disorders at Corinth, the assembly in its principles and ground (1 Corinthians 12.), the necessary moral atmosphere of love which ought to animate each member (1 Cor. 13), and the decent order in which all things in it are to be done (1 Cor. 14): how can the Bp. pretend that this, the model of the primitive church, is even sought to be followed in faith by Anglicans, any more than by any one of the crowd of Non-conformists? No; they have all alike abandoned scripture in this all-important respect, the ecclesiastical administration of God's will; and have each hewn out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. No one denies saints of God, and servants of Christ in Anglicanism and in orthodox societies of Dissent. But it is a false pretension that any one of “the different denominations” even essays to follow scripture in ecclesiastical action.

Neither the Bp. nor the Canon has the least proper sense of existing ruin ecclesiastically, nor consequently of the path provided for the faithful in such a state of things. Yet scripture is plain as to both, as has been often pointed out in these pages. Ignorance of this falsifies their thought, feeling, and conduct: so much so that instead of our true hope—waiting for God's Son from heaven, they are both looking for a good time to come on earth for the fallen and guilty church, doomed in its outward and visible aspect to wax worse, till the evil is so unbearable that the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven in its unsparing judgment.

It is hardly honest to close this notice without a few words on the humiliating fact that the Canon marks “with peculiar thankfulness” Dr. H. Browne's “expression of opinion as to the extension of the merits of the Incarnation and Atonement” —not to dissenters merely, or Roman Catholics even, notwithstanding their dense superstition and idolatry, but to “the Mahomedan! or the Buddhist!! who in this life has never heard of Christ.” I agree with the Bp. that it is a bad and unbelieving principle (by no means confined to Dissent; as he seems to imagine), to ignore the unity of God's church for the fond invention of a merely spiritual unity by and by on high, which admits now of a multitude of unconnected sects. But I dare not be so loose in the face of scripture as to join in every, or any, human pattern of worship, s he says he has often done with Non-conformists or Roman Catholics. This is not the spirit of a confessor or martyr. But even such laxity does not seem so bad as to say, “I do not doubt that according to the teaching of our Lord (?) and Paul (?) many of those who never heard of Christ will yet be saved by the mighty power of His incarnation and atonement and resurrection.” The Bp. of Winchester is a professed theologian and therefore inexcusable for a wholly unfounded perversion of our Lord and His blessed servant; and yet here, where his Bp. stands committed to heterodoxy, the Canon breaks out into his loudest thanksgiving. Most Christians who know the truth will join in my sorrow for them both. It is a painful fact that a high churchman and a broad churchman will readily join hands in a notion which is purely human, without and against God's word. Justification for a sinful man can only be by faith of Christ.

Chapter 58

The Coming of the Lord Characterizes the Christian Life: Part 1

I purpose to take up a subject which I feel to be deeply important—the coming of the Lord Jesus; and to take it up, not proving it as a doctrine, but showing that it was originally a substantial part of Christianity itself. The groundwork is Christ's first coming, and His atoning death; but when we look beyond the foundation, then we see that the coming of the Lord Jesus is not merely a bit of knowledge, but a substantive part of the faith of the church of God, and that on which the moral state of the saints, and, indeed, of the church of God, depends. You will see, in going through the passages which I will now quote, that it connects itself and is mixed with every part of Christianity, characterizes it, and connects itself with every thought and feeling of the Christian. A person could not read the scriptures with an unprejudiced mind without seeing it: it presents itself to you in almost every page.

Some people have taken the pains to count how many times it occurs; but what I say is not merely this, but that it is so connected with every part of Christian life that, if you take it out, you take away what gives its character to the whole Christian life. It was identified with the system as announced to the world. I take conversion: people say what has that to do with the Lord's coming? That is part of what they were converted to— “to await God's Son from heaven.” This waiting for God's Son from heaven characterized their conversion. They were converted to serve God, surely; but, also, “to wait for His Son from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:10).

There are two subjects with which scripture is occupied, when personal salvation is settled: one is the sovereign grace, which makes us, redeemed from sin, like Christ in the glory (that is, the blessed portion of the church of God); and the other is the government of this world. The Jews are the center of the government of the world (Deut. 32:8). “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.” There we get, in the government of the world, Israel in the center; but Israel would not have Christ, and so was set aside for the time. God's throne was taken from Jerusalem at the Babylonish captivity, but a remnant spared and brought back, that the King might be presented to them; but Him they refused, and are now set aside till His return. There are only sixty-nine weeks of Daniel definitely fulfilled. The last week is not fulfilled; it is not come. So as to the great feasts: you have got the passover fulfilled— “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;” and the feast of Pentecost has its fulfillment in the descent of the Holy Ghost. But the feast of Tabernacles is not fulfilled at all: you have no anti-type yet whatever. But here the other blessed work of God comes in, that meanwhile God is calling out poor sinners to have a part with His Son, and be like His Son; for we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren. He has taken us poor sinners to have us in the same glory as His Son. This is another thing from prophecy, which gives us the portion of the world and the Jewish people. When He shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory.

The Christian's position, as to the coming of the Lord, is that he is waiting for Christ to come according to His promise. People say He comes at death; I reply, Do you make death the same as Christ? If this were the case, we should have Him coming hundreds and hundreds of times, whereas we only read of His coming twice (Heb. 9:28). Shall I tell you what will happen when Christ comes? Resurrection! This is quite a different thing from death. The coming of Christ is, for the saint, to be the end of death—exactly the opposite. I believe nobody can find a trace of the thought in scripture that Christ comes at death. Instead of Christ's coming being death, it is resurrection; we go to Christ at death, it is not Christ who comes to us. Blessed it is “to depart and to be with Christ;” “absent from the body, present with the Lord.” But I am to show that this thought of the coming of Christ mixes itself with and characterizes every part of Christian life.

In the first place, we have it in conversion, as already said. They were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven. I will turn to other passages in support of it, but I will go through Thessalonians first. In the second chapter of the first epistle, at the end, the apostle speaks of what his comfort and joy in service were. He had been driven away by persecution from the midst of the Thessalonians, and writing to them speaks of his comfort in thinking of them. But how? “For 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?” He cannot speak of his interest in them, and Joy, without bringing in the coming of the Lord Jesus. Again, as regards holiness, we next read: The Lord make you to increase and abound in love, etc., to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God and the Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints (1 Thess. 3:13). As to the death of a saint, they were so thoroughly looking for the Lord, that, if a person died, they thought he would not be there, ready to go to meet Him. They were wrong in this, and the apostle corrects their mistake. But now people say, when a saint dies, we shall go after him, we shall follow him. Here there is not a word about it. Suppose I were to go and say to a Christian now, who had lost some one dear to him: “Do not be uneasy, Christ will bring him with Him,” he would think me wild, or find it utterly unintelligible; and yet this is the way the apostle does comfort them: “Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him” (chap. 4.). He then shows the way He will do it: “They which are alive shall not prevent them which are asleep.” “Prevent” is an old word for anticipate or go before. The first thing the Lord will do when He ascends is to raise the sleeping saints. He is going to bring them with Him: if they have fallen asleep in Him, their spirits will have been with Him meanwhile; but then they will receive glory, be raised in glory, be like Him, as they had been like the first Adam, and, going to meet Him in the air, will be forever with Him; and when He appears He will bring them with Him, and they will appear with Him in glory. You get it in a general way in the fifth chapter, Where he desires their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This hope, then, is a part of the Christian state in every aspect. Conversion, joy in service, holiness, all are connected with the coming of the Lord.

Turn now to Matt. 25. The wise virgins take oil in their vessels, but they all go to sleep and forget that the Bridegroom was coming; but what I have specially to inquire here is, What was the original calling? The statement, clear and positive, is, that they went out to meet the Bridegroom; but, while He tarried, they “all” slumbered and slept. They all forgot His coming, the wise as well as the foolish. They got into some comfortable place; bivouacking in the open air is not pleasant to the flesh. But at midnight the cry is heard, “Behold, the Bridegroom!” The thing that roused them up

from their sleep was the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom!” The, original object, then, of the church was to go to meet Him Who came; but even true believers forgot it; and, further, what awakes them up from their sleep is their being again called out to meet Him at His coming. Then you get in “the talents” the same thing in regard to service and responsibility. He takes His journey and tells them: “Occupy till I come.”

Another very striking fact as to this truth is, it is always presented as a present operative expectation. You will never find the Lord nor the apostles speaking of the Lord's coming, with the supposition that it would be delayed beyond the life of those to whom they spoke. It might be at cock-crowing or in the morning; but they were to be waiting for God's Son from heaven: In the parables referred to, the virgins who went to sleep were the same virgins as those who awoke up; the servants to whom the talents were entrusted were the servants who rendered an account of them at His return. We know centuries have passed, but He will, not allow any thought of delay. “In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” “Blessed is that servant whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching.” Again, what was the cause of the church's ruin? It was, “My Lord delayeth His coming.” It was not saying, “He will not come,” but “He delayeth His coming.” Then the servant began to beat the men-servants and maid-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; and this brings on his judgment. If the bride loved the Bridegroom, she cannot but wish to see Him. Her heart is where He is. When the church lost this, she settled down to enjoyment where she was, and got worldly, and did not care about the Lord's return.

Turn now to Luke 12, and you will find how this waiting for Christ characterizes the Christian, and therewith the serving Him while He is away! “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” They were to have their loins girded, their lights burning—such were the characteristics of a Christian. They were to be as men that waited for their Lord to open to Him immediately; their affections in order and full profession of Christ, but watching for their Lord's return. It is not having the doctrine of the Lord's coming. The blessing rests on those who are watching, “like men that wait for their Lord.” Blessed is that servant whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching. They must be girded and have their lights bright while He is away, and watch for His return; and then He makes them sit down to meat, and girds Himself, and comes forth and serves them. Now they must be girded and watch. Our rest is not here. But, says the Lord, when I have things all My own way, you shall sit down to meat, and I will gird Myself and come forth and serve you; I will make you enjoy all the best that I have in heaven, and I will minister it to you: only be found watching.

Christ is forever, in grace, a servant according to the form He has taken. He is girded now according to John 13. They would naturally think that, if He, were gone to heaven in glory, there was an end of His service to them; but He tells them, “I am going away; I cannot stay here with you, yet I cannot give you up; but as I cannot remain on earth with you, I must make you fit for Me in heaven. “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.” It is water here, not blood. “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet.” Life-giving conversion, as well as salvation, is fully wrought; but if we pick up dirt, in the way, even as to communion and the walk, grace and advocacy is there to wash our feet and have us practically fit for being with God where Christ is gone. Growth there is or ought to be, and, as to the unchangeable cleanness of the new man, this is certain; but I have not been watchful, I shall pick up dirt in my path. I cannot have this, in heaven, nor be in communion with what is there, and the Lord says in effect, “I am not going to

give you up became I am going to God and glory and so I must have you in a state suitable to this, and washed as you are (though not all, for Judas was there)—keep you fit, restoring you when you fall. But you must be watching while I am away."

It is a comfort to me to know that all the virgins woke up in time, and I believe all His, saints will wake up before the Lord comes. The difficulty to the heart in looking around is that so, many do not receive it: But the true service of the Lord is connected with "watching." That is the State to which the blessing and the heavenly feast is attached. Then you find another thing, "serving" while He is away; and the result of this is, "Of a truth I will make him ruler over all that I have." It is far better to eat, as is said of Israel, of the finest of the wheat, and that in the Father's house; but if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him, With the stewing in His absence, we get the ruling; as the heavenly feast with watching. The Lord then goes on to what we had in Matthew, the saying: "My Lord delayeth His coming."

What the Lord is pressing as to watching and serving is, "I am coming again; you must be watching for Me, as men that wait for their Lord: that was to be their character as Christians. Supposing all the people in this town were actually watching, waiting for the Lord from heaven, not knowing the moment He would come, do you think the whole town would not be, changed? A person once said to me that, if everybody believed that, the world could not go on at all; and the Christian cannot in a worldly way.

If people were waiting for the Lord from heaven, the whole tone and character of their life would be changed. I may have the doctrine of Christ's coming, when I am really not looking for Him; but I should not like to be heaping money together when the Lord comes—I should, if possible, huddle it away out of His sight.

Turn now to Phil. 3 Paul was running a race, and he forgot all things else but the goal; and how does he speak of Christ at the close of that chapter? "Brethren, be followers together of me," etc., etc. "for our conversation (our living association) is in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ," etc. He had seen Christ, and would not be content till he was like Him in glory. To be with Him then was, no doubt, far better; but it was not the goal of his heart. People talk of going to glory when they die. There is no such thought in scripture as being in glory, when we depart to be with Christ. Most blessed and happy to be with Him! This I would surely press; but it is when He comes that He will change these vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body. I am waiting till I get my body changed, to be like Christ in glory; and, what is more, Christ is waiting too.

Chapter 59

The Coming of the Lord Characterizes the Christian Life: Part 2

The Lord's coming affects all the truths of Christianity. Christ is not now on His own throne at all. He is sitting now, according to the word in Heb. 10 (and often from Psalm 110.), at God's right hand, sitting on the Father's throne, as He says Himself in the promise to Laodicea. He has settled the question of sin for them at His first coming; and they have no more conscience of sins, they are perfected forever; and to them that look for Him shall He appear a second time without sin unto salvation. He is expecting in the heavens till His enemies be made His footstool. Why does He say “His enemies”? Because He is sitting down after He has finished all for His friends (that is, those that believe in Him). Have all your sins been put away out of God's sight? If not, when will it be done? That you grow in hatred of them all—all right! But if they are not borne and put away on the cross, when will it be done? Can you get Christ to die again? Can you get anyone else to do it? If it is not done, it will never be done at all. Beloved friends, if the work is not finished, it will never be done at all: but it is done, and therefore He says, the worshippers once purged “have no more conscience of sins;” “for by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

If you look now at Col. 3, you will find the same thing in its full result held out as our hope. “When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” The first promise He gave the disciples when going away was His coming again. Do not be troubled (as they naturally would be on losing the Friend for whom they had given up all); I am not going to be all alone in My Father's house. There, there are many mansions, and I am going to prepare a place for you: do not be uneasy. I cannot stay with you, so I must have you up there with Me, and the first thing is, “I will come again and receive you to Myself.” It is not one by one by death, but by resurrection for the dead, and change for the living, His actual coming to receive them, raised or changed, to be with Himself where He was gone, and like Himself, that we may be in glory with Him.

Again, at His departing from His disciples left down here, what was the last they saw of Him? They saw Him go up before their eyes, and the angels said to them, Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus shall so come in like manner.” His coming is wrought into the whole texture of the Christian.

What is scripture’s last word? “Surely I come quickly, Amen. Even so, COME Lord Jesus.” In the same way you get it at the beginning, with warning and threatening, Jesus Christ, Faithful Witness, the First-begotten, etc., etc. “Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him” (ver 7). Then at the end (prophetic instructions are over, we do not enter into them), “I, Jesus have sent Mine angel,” etc.; “I am the bright, the morning star.” Now learn what these saints who were watching, and those only, see: there is no stare to be seen when the sun is risen. They see the morning star, while it is yet early dawning; for the night is far spent, the day is at hand. Here He calls Himself “the, root and offspring of David; the bright, the morning, star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” If the bride has got the sense of being the bride of Christ, she must desire to be with the Bridegroom; there is not proper love to Christ unless she wants to be with Him. Abram

said of his wife, “She is my sister;” then the Egyptians, the world, took her into their house.

I just add that you get here the whole circle of the church's affections. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come (this is to the Bridegroom); and let him that heareth say, Come!” That is, the Christian, who has heard the word of His salvation, joins in the cry. Then those who thirst for some living water are called to come. The saints of the church can say, though they have not yet the Bridegroom in glory, that they have the living water, and so call, “Let him that is athirst, come,” and then address the call universally, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” This they have, though not the Bridegroom. What we find then is, that, in the word of God, the thoughts, and feelings, and conduct, and doings, and affections of Christians are identified with the coming of Christ. Take all these things, and you will find that they are all identified with the coming of the Lord.

Take the First Epistle of John, chap. 3, “Behold what manner of love,” etc. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God” (that is settled), “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.” Beloved friends, we are “predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.” This is what God has purposed for us. When are we to be like Christ in the glory? When He comes. It is not when a person dies, and the spirit goes to be with Christ; for then he is like Christ when Christ was in the grave; and if I die, I shall be like Christ as to that. But this is not what I want, though blessed in itself; I want to be like Him in the glory. When will that be? When He comes, He will change our vile bodies and fashion them like to His glorious body; so here it does not yet appear what we shall be, but when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. Now mark the practical consequences upon the man that has been in his faith brought up to God's purposes. “He that hath this hope on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” I know I am going to be perfectly like Christ in the glory; therefore I want to, be as like Him as possible down here. You find here again, what the holy scriptures are explicit in teaching, that holiness also is always referred to conformity to Christ in glory. I shall have that likeness to Christ in glory, and nothing else is my standard. You will find one passage already quoted, “That He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” The perfection of the Christian is to be like Him when He comes. What again we find, as to Christians, in the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is “It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.” We have the blessed assurance that accompanies true assured hope of the first resurrection and its results.

We shall be perfectly like Christ when we are raised from the dead. We give an account of ourselves but it is when we are like the person to whom we are to give an account. The fall efficacy of His first coming has been lost, and therefore people are not comfortable when thinking of His second coming. But for the saint “Christ is the firstfruits, then they that are Christ's at His coming.” Is Christ the firstfruits of the wicked? Surely not. Just as Christ's resurrection was the public testimony of God's approval of Himself and His work, the resurrection of the saints will be a testimony of God's approval of them as in Him. As we find in Luke 20:35, 36, “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor, are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more, but are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.”

Could anybody show me a single passage about a general resurrection? There is no such thought in scripture. You get the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew quoted for it, that the goats and sheep represent the two classes. But He has come in His glory down here. He is not sitting on the great white throne: before, this, heaven and earth flee away. Here He is come and sits on His throne. When He does come and sits there, He gathers all the Gentiles, the nations, to judge them. It is the judgment of the quick or the living. You have three sets of people, not two; and you have nothing of resurrection. You have sheep, goats, and brethren (Matt. 25:40). So far from its being a general resurrection, there is no reference to resurrection at all; it is quite a different subject. Further, the only question is, How have they treated His brethren? The ground of judgment does not apply to ninety-nine out of a hundred of those who are to be judged, if it were a general judgment. Those that have had the testimony of the kingdom, before He comes to judge the quick, will be treated according as they have received God's messengers; but such only are in judgment.

And now the point we return to is, that the coming of the Lord influences and forms the whole life of the Christian. You cannot separate anything in the whole course and ways of the Christian from the coming of the Lord Jesus; and there is but the first coming and the second coming. He has appeared once in the end of the world, and to them that look for Him shall He appear a second time unto salvation. It is true that He comes and dwells in us, but we speak, with scripture, of actual coming. If you take holiness, or service, or conversion, or ministry, or a person who has died, they are all connected with Christ's coming. He warns them to be found watching.

I might quote other passages, but I have quoted enough to show that the Lord's coming is connected with everything in the Christian life. When we see Him as Here, then, and then only shall we be like Him according to God's purpose. And now I only ask, Are you waiting for God’s Son from heaven?

His bearing the sins of many is the only ground of hope for any sinner; that is, the finished work which enables us, through faith, to look for Him when sealed by the Holy Ghost. Then, I say, what am I waiting for? I am waiting for God's Son from heaven. Can you say, I am watching for Christ? I do not know when He will come. Blessed are those servants whom their Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching. I do not ask you, Do you understand about the coming of the Lord? To wait for Him was the thing they were converted to. The thing that woke the virgins up was, “Behold, the Bridegroom!” Are you actually waiting for God's Son from heaven? Would you like Him to come to-night? Peter explains the delay. He says His longsuffering is salvation, not willing that any should perish. What would you think if He were to come to-night? Would it just be what your soul was looking for.? I am going to sit down to table, and He is going to gird Himself and come forth and serve me. People think that it would stop the gospel to be waiting for God's Son from heaven. Did the acceptance of God's testimony about the deluge stop the preaching of Noah? Far from hindering, it was what gave edge to all. May the Lord give us to be ready when He comes; found watching for Him! J. N. D.

(Concluded from p. 298.)

Chapter 60

Deborah

Deborah “judged Israel in those days.” This was not quite such a successor to him who was “King in Jeshurun” as we might have counted on. But the honor had passed into the hand of a woman, for Israel was out of order. Trespass had come in with a disturbing force; and the remedy must be applied if at all by God's own hand. And so it was. Therefore in her magnificent song she sings, “O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength,” a confession that the source of her strength and victory was all in God, and that in the energy of the Spirit, and that only, she had fought the battle of the Lord and conquered.

Chapter 61

Drawing Near to God

It is indeed very blessed to be enabled to tell a poor awakened sinner that in Jesus all things are ready which he needs for remission of sins, for righteousness, and for life. And it is not less blessed to be enabled to tell those who have so come to Jesus, that all things are ready for their worship in the holiest of all. That everything is there ordered by the blessed Jesus Himself for their entrance therein, and that He Himself has consecrated the way for their approach.

The time is coming when “many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3). But now is the time for believers to encourage one another to enter into the holiest of all—even into heaven itself, because Jesus is there and His blood is there. Come ye, say they, and let us draw near with a true heart.

Under the law much of the priestly ministry was outside the tabernacle, and open therefore to the view of the worshipper. If he brought a burnt sacrifice, he was to bring it to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation where he was to kill it, and then the priests sprinkled the blood, in his sight, upon the altar that was by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. This part of the priests' work was visible to the outside worshippers. But he who could approach thus far was never satisfied as to his conscience. He came indeed to these sacrifices, he saw them offered; but they were utterly inefficacious as to the purging of the conscience. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.” But now all on the outside has been once and for all accomplished; the priestly ministry is all within and invisible, and therefore only known to faith by the revelation of God.

Let us put ourselves in the place of a Hebrew worshipper taught by God's grace to know Jesus as the one sacrifice for sin, and as the ever-abiding. High Priest in the holiest of all. What a struggle must there often have been in his mind when approaching God, because he had no visible sacrifice to offer—nothing visible on which to lean—no victim today his hand upon! It must have required real trueheartedness to Jesus to enable him to draw near, and to look at everything with which he had been formally conversant as taken up in Jesus, so that all that he had seen before was now only to be discerned by faith as fulfilled in Christ. And are we not often false to Jesus in this matter? Do we not often harbor the thought that something yet remains to be done—either by ourselves or by Him—in order to our drawing near? Do we not often thus become occupied with the circumstantials of worship rather than with Jesus—the substance? Are we not often false to Him in questioning our title to draw near, because we find distance in our own hearts, as if it was the warmth of our affections, instead of the blood of Jesus, which brought near?

But oh, beloved, how false to Jesus has the church been! The worshippers are often pressed down by a burdensome ritual, and allowed neither to know that they are once and forever purged, nor that all is prepared for their entrance into the holiest. They are turned back again to that which is visible, and go through the daily routine of service, never getting farther in than the door of the

tabernacle. They are in the place of distant Jews, instead of that of priests sanctified for heavenly ministrations and worship.

And how continually do we see souls led to put the act of worship in the place of Jesus! Surely this is not to draw near with a true heart. A doubt harbored as to the all-sufficiency of His sacrifice, or the perfect efficiency of His Priesthood, or His tender sympathy and compassion, is not to draw near with a true heart. If we shrink back into a distant place after all He has done, are we true-hearted to Jesus? But what positive treachery to Jesus is it to set up an order of men as in greater nearness to God than others—virtually putting them within and virtually putting others without. To lean on priests, clergy, or ministers in Worship, as if they were needed to that end, is absolutely denying the virtue of the person and work of Christ. But such things are the necessary offsprings of departure from the truth of a believer's justification before God, by the one sacrifice of Christ. Distant worship necessarily follows imperfect justification. And if a sinner's justification before God by the blood of Jesus be not seen, much less will entrance into the holiest of all by the same blood for worship be allowed as the common portion of the saints. But even where the truth as to justification has been recovered and is preached, we still see a form and a ritual of worship altogether subversive of the truth. The access proclaimed in the gospel preached is not permitted those who have believed that preaching. Thus the saints are practically kept in a place of distance, and thereby taught to be, false-hearted to Jesus! Surely we might say, if every church and chapel in the kingdom were closed, and all the ministers of the gospel shut up in prison, that true-heartedness to Jesus would lead His saints to assemble themselves together to worship, by faith, in the holiest of all-knowing that there the ministry of the Great High Priest can never for a moment be suspended. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith!”

As to the expression, “fall assurance of faith,” it by no means conveys the idea of a certain standard measure of faith as a matter of attainment. The reference is not to the measure of faith, but to its bearing on the right object. The faith may be the weakest possible, but let that, weak as it is, be in full bearing on its own proper object.

We have another form of the same word in the New Testament. It is said of Abraham, “he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully, persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform.” So again—“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” The moment the soul has laid hold on Jesus, it is delivered from itself, and ought to be fully persuaded that all it needs is presented to it in the object before it—even Jesus. It is this single eye to Jesus which we need in worship. The very things, which man in his wisdom has thought to be helps to devotion, are really its hindrances. Which of the senses do not men seek to gratify in the circumstances of worship? Now, the very object of the apostle here is to turn away the worshipper from the things of sight and sense, to which he had been accustomed, in order to concentrate his soul on one single object, in which he was to find everything that he needed.

We can never look at our title to worship God, but we see our salvation. How blessedly has God linked these things together, and how perversely does man rend them asunder, either by calling on all to worship, believers and unbelievers, or by binding believers to a form which negatives the sense of complete justification! What we need in order to happier and holier worship is more simple faith in Jesus. Are we fully persuaded that Jesus has done all that is needed to make an

acceptable meeting-place between ourselves and God! Then let us draw near.

And what holy freedom and liberty attends this— “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience!” The leper to be cleansed, in order to restore him to the privilege of worship, needed to be sprinkled with blood (Lev. 14:7). The Israelite, who had touched anything which made him unclean, needed to have the water of purification sprinkled on him; but it only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh (Heb. 9:13). The priests at their consecration had the blood applied to them that they might so draw near and minister before God. And what is all this compared with a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of Jesus? It is no longer a purifying of the flesh, but a purifying of the heart by faith. The flesh purified for worship might co-exist with an evil conscience, but a sprinkled heart never could. How entirely is a good conscience alone maintained by that which is not of eight, even by the purging power of the blood of Jesus

Before Aaron could put on the Holy linen coat, he must wash his flesh in water (Lev. 16:4), and so it is now— “Our bodies washed with pure water.” We cannot put on our white robe, unless we know what communion with the death of Jesus really is. The old man must be put off ere the new man can be put on. And this has been done for us once for all, in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Yet how needful for us in our approach to our place of worship, even the holiest of all, habitually to remember that we have died, and that. e are alive in Jesus! We have to do with the living God, and He too a consuming fire. All that is contrary to life has been set aside by the death of Jesus. “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” And it is as alive from the dead that we alone can approach Him.

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” It is literally “of our hope,” not faith, and has reference to the sixth chapter.— “that we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set for us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.” Our hope is that we shall be there actually, the holiest of all being our own proper place as priests unto God: but by faith we now worship there in spirit.

But it is hard indeed to maintain a profession contradicted, so far as sight goes, by everything in us and around us. Jesus witnessed the good confession, before Pontius Pilate, that He was a king, without any mark of royalty about Him. His confession seemed contradicted by His appearance. Timothy had confessed a good confession before many. witnesses (1 Tim. 6:12), and he needed to be reminded of it. And so do we. For how constantly do we forget that we are what we are, in hope! We could not give satisfactory proof to another that we are what we confess to be. We can indeed give the soundest reason of the hope that is in us, because the Forerunner is for us already entered within the veil; but we cannot satisfy the restlessness of our minds, or the minds of others, by evidence. No—blessed be God—He has provided for our hope on surer ground than any evidences could produce, even on the ground of His own immutability and faithfulness; for He is faithful that has promised.

The word is of great force, “let us hold fast,” let us tenaciously grasp. And why? Because our hope is that which Satan would try by all means to wrest from us. And has he not effectually done this in the church at large, by making that their hope, which is in fact the ground of their hope—even their justification? Present righteousness in Christ is the ground of Christian hope. The holiest of all is open to those alone who have been once and forever purged. if our hope springs not from that

within the veil, where is our steadfastness? Everything short of that may be shaken, and will be shaken. If, therefore, we know not accomplished righteousness, fitting us now for the holiest of all, the peace of our souls racist be unsteady. An Israelite might approach the door of the tabernacle with a sacrifice to be offered, but the sacrifice had yet to be pronounced acceptable, and to be accepted; but it was on the ground of already offered and accepted sacrifice, that the holiest of all was entered by the high priest. Thus it is with our title to enter within the veil—the one offering of Jesus has forever given us liberty to enter there. How amazing is the craft of Satan in his devices against the truth! When he could no longer keep out of sight the doctrine of justification by faith, he has contrived to rob it of its real power, even where received, by having practically put it as the object of hope, instead of the present possession of all who come to Jesus. The peace of the gospel is thus practically unknown, although the gospel itself is truly stated. And this hope of justification by faith always opens the door for distant worship. In how many real believers is the peace of the gospel hindered by their very acts of worship!

Let us therefore, beloved brethren, grasp and maintain this confession as our best treasure. Having present righteousness by faith, our hope is nothing short of the holiest of all; and there we worship in spirit now. Our hope is independent of ourselves; it hangs on the immutable faithfulness of God; it is secured by the blood of Jesus, and it is already made fast within the veil, for Jesus is there, and there for us. Beware of mock humility, which is only the cover of unbelief and self-dependence. Look at yourselves, and you are hopeless; yea, nothing is before you but a fearful, looking for of judgment! Look at Jesus, and know your hope. Where is He? In the holiest of all, as the Forerunner! Let this check all wavering, and answer every doubt and every difficulty. In spite of all appearances, hold fast the profession of the hope without wavering.

“And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works.” Here we are reminded that we have also to perform our priestly work. The priest had to consider in cases of leprosy; and so, as priests, we have to consider one another, not whether we are cleansed or not, for it has been authoritatively pronounced of us by the Great High Priest Himself, “now ye are clean;” but we are to consider one another to provoke unto love and geed works. The expression is remarkable—“consider one another.” There is but One, even the Lord Himself, Who stands in the authoritative place of the Priest to the saints; therefore we are to consider one another. How entirely is this exercise of our common priestly function nullified by again setting up an order of priesthood to prescribe to us. What is a Confessional? What the Absolution?—but the priest again pronouncing the leper clean! And how effectually does such a thought hinder our considering one another! We can only do this as standing in grace ourselves, and recognizing others as standing in the same grace, and the same nearness to God. It is as together standing in the holiest of all that we are to consider one another. There we are thus to help each other to detect what is inconsistent with our high and blessed standing. There is no room for rivalry now—all are priests; but abundant room for love; and our love for each other is to be measured by the love that has brought us where we stand. And as to good works they also are to be judged by the same standard. No lower standard than the Sanctuary itself must now be taken to determine what are good works. What becomes the holiest itself, alone becomes those sanctified to worship therein. It is not what men call good works, but what God estimates as such, to which we have to provoke one another. The costly ointment poured on the feet of Jesus, wasteful and extravagant in the eyes of an ancient or modern utilitarian, was a good work in the eyes of Jesus; the two mites of the widow more costly

than the splendid offering of the rich. How little of what men think good is really so before God; and how entirely what God esteems as precious is despised among men! Hence Christ was despised and rejected of men; and hence really Christian works are now despised of them. How needful, then, is it for us to be in spirit in the holiest of all, to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God!

But not only is there to be this constant provocation to love and to good works, it is also added, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.”

When Israel came into the land, they were not to offer their sacrifices, or to worship, at any place they might select, but at the place where the Lord should put His name only. Jerusalem was the place whither the tribes went up. Put yourself in the position of a believing Hebrew on a solemn feast-day in Jerusalem—one of the three thousand converted by the first sermon of Peter. Multitudes from all quarters might be assembled around him—Jerusalem filled with worshippers—while he would be apart from all that which attracted them. But would not his soul have many a struggle in keeping away from the festive and religions throng? Would he not have almost appeared an enemy to his country and to the temple? But was it really so? Think farther of the contrast he must in his own soul have seen between the upper chamber, or any other unpretending locality, and the splendid temple. Must it not have needed much simple faith in Jesus, to meet together to break bread, and worship, with a number as unaccredited as himself, without any visible priest to order their worship, any sacrifice, any incense, any altar, any laver? Would, not the multitude keeping holy-day give as it were the lie to the worship he had been engaged in, as if it had been no worship at all? Surely there is great force in the words, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.”

Yea; some drew back from acknowledging that as worship which was without the outward form—some even who believed in Jesus. It cost too much to own Jesus as everything by disowning all the shadows. The assembling of themselves together thus was the great testimony against the religion of the world, and that Jesus was all. It was the profession that He was, the substance of worship, and that worship must now be according to the place and power of His priesthood. The despised company in the upper chamber were feeding on the substance, while the religious world, in their gorgeous temple, were bowing before shadows. That despised company had by, faith access into the holiest of all; they knew that Jesus, as the Forerunner, had entered there for them; and in this knowledge of Him, they could meet at any time and any place. For the name of the Lord was recorded in the place of their sanctuary, let the scene of their gathering on earth be where it might.

Hence we find that “on the first, day of the week the disciples came together to break bread” (Acts 20:7). They might or might not have some one to minister the word unto them—this was accidental; their coming together was for a positive and specific object. Paul came in among them and discoursed; but this was by the way. They came together as disciples. And if man puts a hindrance in the way of disciples coming together, is it not slighting the rights of the Son of God who has not only given them the liberty, but who has made their doing so the point of collective confession of His name? There is need of our exhorting one another as to this, for the danger is imminent of turning back to the old order. And the Spirit of God clearly saw the tendency of things that way, and that this would increase; that, as the day approached when the Lord Jesus would be

revealed, worship would become more and more worldly—more and more after the ancient distant Jewish pattern. Hence the exhortation would in the progress of things be increasingly needed, to stand fast as disciple! in the simplicity of grace. Nothing can be more gracious than the provision which the Lord has made against the increasing evil. Just in proportion as the thought in the mind of Christians has prevailed of a progression unto blessing in the world, has worship adapted itself to the world. But when it has pleased God to open the eyes of many of His saints to see the steady progress in evil, and the great assumptions of the flesh, He has thrown them back on Christian simplicity. And our exhortation the one to the other, as we see the day approaching, is to test everything by the light of that day, and to see that nothing will then stand. which is not of Christ.

Surely the Lord intends to make His saints sensible of all that they have lost; but in doing so to make them as sensible of the value of what remains. If He had to say to His people of old, “Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing” this was said not to enfeeble, but to strengthen them. All the outward glory was gone, but still the Lord was there. And therefore it is said, “Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not God remained unchangeably the same, and His original power in deliverance was real strength in the midst of weakness; so that out of weakness they became strong. And this is God's provision for the comfort and strength of the saints, as they see the day approaching, and everything unprepared to meet it, to exhort one another to the use of what remains unto them; and whilst Jesus abides in the holiest of all, and now appears in the presence of God for them, they can always draw near. Yes, it is our privilege to do so, now the dispensation has well nigh run its course, equally as much as in the apostles' days. Men indeed, have by their perverseness put many things between themselves and God, but that which gives nearness still remains; even the blood of Jesus in the holiest of all. Let us then draw near.

Beloved, how much is this exhortation needed at this day! Simple worship, although Our high privilege, is despised. Believers need something more than the presence of the Lord to induce them to come together. Jesus is not really to them the substantial ordinance of God. They are not glad when they assemble themselves together. Let us not forsake this; for if we do, we are in danger of forgetting that we are once and forever purged worshippers, and that our place of worship is the golden sanctuary itself, also once and forever purged. There we have such an High Priest, One Who can bring us in at once, to the throne of the Majesty on high, to us a throne of grace, although He who sits thereon is holy, holy, holy.

Beloved, it is your place of confession to contradict all assumptions of priesthood, all repetitions of sacrifice, and repeated absolutions, by drawing near. Your worship is to be characterized no less by confident nearness to God than by reverence to His name. The day is approaching. Its approach is marked by a return to ordinances. Hold fast your profession, and let it be Jesus against every pretension. For be assured, that whatsoever is not of Him is nothing better than a carnal ordinance, to be utterly disowned by the Lord when He appears in His glory.

If we look forward as to worship, what do we see there? All the shadows passed away, and only the substance presented. “I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” So again— “The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants

shall serve Him (worship him): and they shall see. His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever." They shall serve and they shall reign at the same time. They shall then be manifestly priests and kings. But now, in, the knowledge that grace has already made them so, it is their privilege to approach by faith that glorious place in which they will in due time actually stand. Our best instruction is gathered by looking forward. It is the reality which is to be our pattern now; not things on earth the patterns of the heavenly, but the substance known by faith stamping its impress on that which is present. Let us then draw near "unto Him that loveth us and washed us from our tins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Chapter 62

Thoughts on Ephesians 4:11-13: Part 1

Salvation is of God. This was held out from the first. The judgment pronounced upon the serpent was in view of salvation. By sin came death, and the first appearance of death was murder. But if the first death was a murder, the first soul that left the earth went straight up to heaven. Sin and death were there in terrible power, but God's mercy was there too. Self-righteousness, and its concomitants, hatred and murder, on the one side, and on the other, faith, righteousness, and divine grace. If Satan gave such early proof of the power he had acquired over man, God at the same time showed how salvation could come in long before the head of the serpent would be crushed. And all God's dealings with men shows that salvation is His purpose, though the fullness was necessarily not declared till Christ came. Man's utter ruin must first be proved; then was the due time. God is now declared to be a Savior God (see Epp. to Tim. and Titus): a name which has special reference to this present day, a day which began with the cross. He is saving, not judging. The world ignores this great fact, and is busy with its own purposes and plans, promising great things to itself, a millennium of its own making. Many of God's saints are occupied with its religious schemes and imagine they are promoting the happiness of the world, forgetting, and practically denying, that judgment already lies upon it. All Christians of course know that the unbeliever is eternally lost; but this regards only the individual. The truth is that the world as a system is judged and doomed to destruction; and God is now calling out and separating from it the heirs of salvation, i.e., all who believe. Hence His name—God our Savior.

Amid all the noise and bustle of men, the clashings of governments, the schemes of companies and of individuals, God is working quietly but certainly, and gathering souls for Himself out of every condition. Satan and men strive to hinder; but even as Jehovah has decreed that His anointed shall sit enthroned upon His holy hill of Zion, so also is it His purpose to have a redeemed people who are according to the same purpose called, justified, and glorified (Rom. 8:28-30). Let believers think of this and cease to be occupied with the advances of civilization and education, which are only a more refined way of committing sin, and very far from being a remedy (as some dream) for the evils of the world. On the contrary civilization and education bring their own special evils. Let us, consider this one great and immense fact—God is saving souls.

To be delivered from the wrath to come, through infinite grace, is only a part of God's salvation. The Salvation which we know is much more than being sheltered from the Judge by the blood sprinkled on the door-post, more even than the forgiveness of sins, though that is “according to the riches of His grace.” Forgiveness is only the first step in the career of glory to which we are predestinated. A far higher aspect in glory is the being conformed to the imago of His Son. And both the grace and the discipline of God are now in full activity in view of it. The inward man is renewed day by day; the Spirit's work in the soul is progressive, and so we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But one mighty word shall in an instant change these corruptible bodies into the likeness of Christ's body of glory; and so God's purpose concerning is will be accomplished.

It is now the daily renewal of the inward man, and for this not the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, but moral means and instruments according to His will and wisdom.

“And He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

The greater gifts, apostles and prophets, have ceased. They were the foundations of the household of God, “Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone (chap. 2:20). They were men inspired of God. The peculiar mark of an apostle was authority to act fully and finally in the church for Christ; as a prophet's was, revealing new truth, or applying the word already revealed to present facts and to events yet future. Paul was both, and also Peter and John. They stand foremost. In their writings both functions are manifest: authority, as when Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2); new truth, as in his Epistles to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4, &c) and in his other Epistles. So John in the Apocalypse. But if the foundation gifts are gone, others remain to carry on the building. Evangelists, pastors and teachers are the Lord's gifts, not to lay another foundation but to build upon that which is laid. “Other foundations can no man lay.” God's purpose in providing these workers. is for the perfecting of the saints individually, in ministerial work generally, and also that the body of Christ as a whole may be edified, till we all come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Pastors may be the least prominent and most rare, certainly not the least efficient and valued of the servants of Christ, nor the least needed. The pastor is a quiet and unobtrusive gift, his labor is with the individual saint, rather than with the assembly. He is qualified to enter into the more private sorrows and trials of saints. That which makes him a true pastor—one of the “gifts” is, that he is used of God to strengthen and administer comfort to the tried ones of the flock, and, also to rebuke where needed.

His is rather a secret work for the best part known only to the Lord, but which will have its public reward equally with the more prominent gifts.

Among teacher's are greater difference's than among pastors and evangelists.” The whole Word of God in its varied depths is their storehouse. Each according to His measure able to unfold and apply the word to the need of the assembly, braiding up in, faith, confirming hope, and raising the moral and spiritual tone of the Meeting. They who are thus used of God are truly His “gifts,” and the proof is that saints are edified and instructed; the church is consolidated by their ministry. Some are able to give the prophetic word its due place in the minds and hearts of the children of God. But we must remember that the Epistles are designated “prophetic writings” (Rom. 16:26). In a subordinate sense these might be called prophets, not as foretelling, nor as being “foundations,” but as helping believers to understand the drift and scope of the prophets, of the Old Testament as of the New. And the evidence of the Spirit's teaching in them will be that Christ is seen as the Object of all prophecy, His glory and exaltation the grand theme from first to last. Others teach in doctrine whether of the church and its calling and special hope, or of the first principles of our salvation. These last may be called teachers of the gospel; they are not necessarily evangelists. Nor is every talker in the meeting a teacher; the gift is known by the blessing which follows. So while there are some able to instruct in the higher truths (so to say) of revelation, there are others

whose sphere is the unfolding of the simple gospel for the establishing of young converts, yea, sometimes also of old believers; and these are surely of not less, perhaps of more general, importance for assemblies—looking at their present condition—than those who soar higher in the region of revealed truth. But God suits His gifts according to the need of saints. He has one end in view, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature, of the fullness of Christ.”

Now the teacher of the gospel differs from the evangelist whose special field of labor is in the world among the unsaved. He is a fisher of men; the teacher of the gospel is for the feeding of the babes in God's household; and these, though closely allied, are distinct gifts, having different spheres. It not infrequently happens that the gospel teacher mourns on account of the absence of conversions when he addresses sinners, and similarly the pure evangelist has not his usual freedom when his hearers are for the most part believers. But each “gift” is for a special work, to which he is appointed. Let then the teacher wait on his teaching (see Rom. 12:4-8), and the evangelist on his preaching. Rarely do we see both functions in the same servant. Paul was a “gift” in whom all these offices and qualities were combined; he was at once apostle, prophet, teacher, pastor, and evangelist, and most prominent and zealous in each.

What then are the marks by which the evangelist, as a distinct “gift,” may be known? Not necessarily by accurate enunciations of doctrine. His intense zeal for souls that sometimes carries him beyond the ordinary limits of earnestness is not conducive to, though not incompatible with, doctrinal accuracy of expression. The love of God to a lost world, the certainty of salvation to them that believe are his staple themes. And in urging faith on the lost, repentance is sometimes apparently lost sight of. But there is no true saving faith without repentance, Faith (so-called) without self-judgment is nothing more than the mere assent of the natural mind, not a Spirit-formed faith in the heart (see Rom. 10:8). When the sun of tribulation arises, this kind of human belief withers away. Sorrowful instances of such cases recur to the writer's mind, as doubtless also to the reader.

Another mark of the earnest evangelist is his fearlessness; boldness in speaking to every one, as well in the public street as in private. What think you of a zealous preacher accosting a man “of reputation” in the common thoroughfare with, “If you were to die to night, where would you spend eternity?” Certainly the world will, and does, resent such interference with its ease and pleasure. But while all servants are told to be diligent, and “instant in season and out of season,” I doubt if such a case as is alluded to can find a warrant therein: especially when we have the example of Paul who spoke of full grace privately to them of reputation (Gal. 2:2) of course in the church. Yet who of us would forbid the preacher? What are social proprieties in view of eternity?

But not the burning zeal, not the ever readiness to speak, nor boldness, however great (and the Pentecostal church prayed for boldness for the Lord's servants, Acts 4:29), are the only, or even the essential, mark of the evangelist who is truly a “gift.” A man may have all these, be abundant in labors, and have a real love for souls, and yet not a “gift.” He who is, has souls for his hire, he is used for their conversion. He may be comparatively unready in speech, not over bold, not clear perhaps as to doctrine on many points (I do not refer to fundamental principles) but if men are brought to God through his preaching, he is a “gift” in the meaning of this scripture. God brings hundreds of men to hear him preach, and by the power of His own word gathers heirs from among

them. In the judgment of men, yea, of saints, he may be accounted the weakest of preachers, but if God saves by his instrumentality, he is the one designated “evangelist” in the scriptural meaning of the word. There are preachers who are not evangelists.

The overflowing zeal which leads to a readiness to accredit the mere appearance of conversion, through his intense desire, unfits the evangelist in a measure to judge of the reality of conversions so as to bring souls into communion, and no one is more liable to be deceived than an evangelist in this. But receiving into fellowship is no part of the work of an evangelist, nor of any other “gift,” nor, of all the gifts combined. It is the assembly that must receive. It is the duty of the evangelist to bring those who have been converted to the church, that all, especially those best qualified, may judge, and that the assembly may receive into communion. The pastor, the teacher, and the evangelist, are of course part of the assembly, and have a voice as any other members. But the assembly, not the, evangelist, receives. Not even an apostle would receive or put away apart from the church. The apostle may, with the authority he has received from the Lord, command the assembly to put away or receive; and if Paul referred both these acts to the church at Corinth (see 1 Cor. 5, 2 Cor. 2) much more should a simple evangelist now defer to the judgment of the church. The Corinthian assembly was in a low condition, but it is commanded to act. Paul speaks by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit: we are bound no less. The ruin-state of the church does not enfeeble the duty.

This solemn responsibility which rests upon the assembly needs calm and spiritual discernment. How sorrowful if through haste one is brought in whom the Lord would not; nor less so when one whom the Lord would, is kept out through want of the power of discernment on the part of those who visit the newly converted! To visit such wisely is pastoral work, but not every visitor is a pastor. The one seeking fellowship may be so unintelligent as to appear very unsatisfactory; he feels the change wrought in his soul, but can only say he is happy; professes to know his sins are forgiven, but has not yet learned how to express it to meet the approbation of his visitor. The true pastor can discern where there is reality, where the unintelligent and undiscerning visitor sees nothing but human feeling produced by sentimental preaching, and on the other hand is ready to accredit one who has nothing more than intellectual knowledge of the truth. This is the defect of those who assume the functions of pastor without being a “gift.” These “visitors” cannot be ignored; but after due time given, unintelligent objections must not be allowed to overrule the voice of the spiritual and discerning.

These gifts are men of like passions, and the brightest has to watch lest the wily foe use the position of the “gift” against communion and singleness of eye in his service. The evangelist, for instance, may feel aggrieved if his converts are not received upon his own testimony. But this would be taking from the assembly what it is responsible for to the Lord. The evangelist may be sound in his judgment of any given case, and the assembly wrong: nevertheless he must bow to the assembly and not relax in diligent service. Let him spread the matter before the Lord, Who will, at the right moment, make all plain. (To be continued.)

Chapter 63

Thoughts on Ephesians 4:11-13: Part 2

(Concluded from page 531.)

The men that worked in the quarry and fashioned the stones for Solomon's temple, where there was no sound of hammer or of ax (1 Kings 6:7), did not place the stones in their position—that was the business of the builders. Both were necessary, but the quarry-men prepared the stones, and the builders carried on the building. Perhaps the preparedness of the stones is a figure of the saints when we all come “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” i.e., when we are with Him in glory. There will be no sound of hammer or of ax in heaven; all the shaping and fitting will have been done. But we can use the same figure for a present, though subordinate, application to the functions of the evangelist, and of the pastor and teacher.

A better than Solomon's temple is now rising, built with living stones; which “fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord.....for a habitation of God in the Spirit.” There are classes of workers, each with a separate function, but all in harmony, working together for one end, under the guiding power of the Holy Spirit. Evangelists are the Lord's quarry-men; as such they dig in the world's quarries, they preach the life-giving word. Faith comes by hearing, and quickened men receive salvation. The stones are ready for the builders. All are fitted together in the Spirit and the building increases.

For the edifying of the body of Christ.” The common idea of “edifying” is instruction of those within, and this is of equal importance to the Lord as the preaching of the gospel to the unsaved. When Peter was first called, the Lord said he would make him a fisher of men; when he was restored and had learned the much needed lesson of his own weakness, the Lord gave him a higher character of work. He said, “Feed my sheep.” But edification is a larger word than instruction. This excludes the evangelist; but he is a “gift” with others for the edifying of the body of Christ. The building up of the edifice of God is not only teaching for those within, but working for fresh souls to be brought—new material for the building. For how is the church to be added to if there be no evangelists?

“The unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.” Christ the Son of the living God is the object of faith, the one rock upon which the church is built. It is this knowledge which makes the unity of the faith. The “unity” and the “knowledge” go together. The possession of faith fits us for the knowledge, and again, the knowledge is the confirmation of faith; there is a reflex action, and each grows by the other. “I know Whom I have believed,” says Paul. He had believed, and therefore he says, “I know;” and because he knew, he is able to say, “and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.” That is, his knowledge led on to the fullest confidence. The faith and the knowledge, and also the knowledge and the confidence could not be more clearly and tersely given in their reciprocal relation. This knowledge is not a mere taking in of truth, it is a personal acquaintance with, or rather a knowledge of, the Person of the Son of God; and moreover knowing Him not only as Savior, but as Son of God. The world will know Him as Judge and King, the Jew as Messiah; our special privilege is very far above their

knowledge. To know Him as the Son of God takes in all His glories, and implies that we are able and fitted to understand what neither Israel nor the millennial saint can know. And we begin to have this knowledge while here, for the unity of the faith is bound up with this knowledge of the Son of God. Take any assembly, and where you discern among the saints any measure of this knowledge of the Son of God, there you may be assured is a proportionate measure of the unity of the faith.

All the errors that have troubled the saints of God, and marred His church, have had their root in the pretentious knowledge of the Son of God. Yea, the worst heterodoxies were always connected with a denial of some special glory of His person. It was so at the beginning, and was the occasion for the writing of John's Epistles. It has continued to the present day, and made its mark upon those who, after the first quarter of this present century, professed to have left the world-church and all its corruptions, and to have received grace to be separate from all their religious surroundings. The denial of His personal glory in this or that aspect cannot but divide the saints of God.

Sorrowful, shameful, as we feel this to be, we know it will—it must—cease. For the word says, “Till we all come.” Shall we all come to this unity and knowledge before the Lord come? When He comes, the unity of the faith will be perfect; will our knowledge of the Son of God be perfect? Yea, we shall know, even as also we are known. We shall be, we are, capable of learning indefinitely. Of some now it is said, “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” He, Christ, the Son of God is the Truth; and we shall have it perfectly.

“To a perfect—full-grown—man.” Each of us may take this as the goal to which we are, or should be, continually pressing forward. “That I may know Him,” &c. Was the apostle's prayer for himself? Did he wish less for all saints? He looks forward to the time when we all come, and all together be the full-grown than. It is the church looked at in its several members, perfect unity of faith making them as one. Each and all together will be brought up to a certain standard, the stature of the fullness of Christ. The corporate union of the church with Christ, as members of the body with the Head is not the thought here. We have that in chap. i. 23., “Which is His body, the fullness [the complement] of Him that filleth all in all.” Here (chap. iv. 13) it is rather likeness (as in 1 John). Scripture does not speak of the corporate body in its union with Christ as being like Him. Likeness is said of distinct things; we could not say the body is like the head; but the word does say that the believer shall be like Christ. Each will bear the image of the heavenly, and have bodies like unto the body of His glory. The believer in his individuality will be like Him: it is the glory of each. The corporate church is His body, is part of Himself, both together the Christ (1 Cor. 12:12).

“To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” This exceeds our thought; it is not a partial likeness, but complete. Here in this life through grace the Holy Spirit produces likenesses in some things, and would in all were we obedient to His leadings. Alas! in how many things we are unlike. In the circumstances of this present time where we should manifest the meekness, the lowliness, the patience, and the faith of Christ, for it is only now that we have opportunities for showing these, how much of the contraries suddenly and frequently break out! “When He was reviled, He reviled not again;” “in Whose mouth was no guile,” Whose “meat was to do the will of the Father Who sent” Him. What cause we have for self-judgment! How very far short we come in following Him Who has not only saved us, but left us a pattern how we should walk!

With gladness we look on to the time when our likeness to Him shall be perfect. “The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Can we add one word to this which would give a more complete idea of the perfection of the moral glory to which we all shall be brought, than those already given? The stature of the fullness of Christ! That is the goal in the mind of God for His church. There is nothing higher in glory possible for us. Again we say our minds fail to comprehend this fullness; not of course the fullness in Col. 1:19 and ii. 9, where the fullness of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—was pleased to dwell in the Man Christ Jesus, but His fullness as a perfect Man distinct from His Godhead, and apart from His glory as making atonement, a perfect and glorified Man, possessing every moral quality that can be the delight of God. He is the model before the mind of God to which we shall fully answer. We shall have a glory of position in the kingdom, kings and priests, reigning with Him over the world. The body too shall be glorified. But this glory—the stature of the fullness of Christ—is the moral glory of the soul, of the mind which is here renewed day by day; but there, when we have all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge least degree interfere with the blessing, common to one as well as the other, that they are priests unto God: “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father” (Rev. 1:6). “Ye are a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). The apostle Paul was a priest unto God, but not more than any of the individuals he salutes in his Epistles, or than the most uninstructed believer in the whole church. The diversities among the members, formed by the diverse gifts of the Spirit, must be carefully distinguished from their priestly equality. Our worship then is priestly worship, and consequently the heavenly courts are its sphere.

The fearful warning given by the apostle, which at one time or another has made every awakened soul tremble (Heb. 10:28, 29), is a warning against the fatal consequences of turning back to the old order of worship, as if it were to be the pattern of our worship, instead of the contrast unto it. True it is said (Heb. 9:23) that the ritual of the law was the pattern of things in the heavens, but surely in the way of contrast, as heaven is contrasted with earth—things made without hands, with things made with hands. To return, therefore, to the order of worship under the law, is to reject the heavenly order for a copy of the earthly. It marks the apostacy of Worship. And is not this the peculiar mark of the professing church It has followed the old pattern of the law, instead of the heavenly pattern. It has made again the difference between priests and people in its clergy and laity—a distinction unknown to the New Testament. Thus has the professing church put its priests in a place of comparative nearness to God, and its people at a distance—virtually making the clergy the church, when it is said of believers, “Ye are a spiritual house.”

And what is this but to trample under foot the Son of God? As if after all that He has suffered and done, we were at as great a distance as before, and as if with His priestly ministration we still needed the intervention of others in our approaches to God! God has cast out the outer court, and will not regard worship offered therein; but men have profanely sought to sanctify it, and in so doing have trodden under foot the Son of God. We have already noticed the command given to Moses to sanctify the people to meet God, and also that we by the will of God are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. But this return to the old form is characterized by the apostle as accounting the blood of the covenant wherewith we have been sanctified as an unholy thing—as that which would still keep us without, instead of that which entitles us to enter into the holiest of all, And what an insult to the Spirit of grace, Who witnesses to the soul of the wondrous grace of God, and of Christ, and Who is Himself in the once-purged worshipper the

power of nearness of worship (for God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit)—what an insult to that blessed Spirit to put ourselves back to the distance in which this flesh must ever stand before God! Hence, therefore, this solemn warning, Take heed lest, after having received the knowledge of the truth with respect to your priestly standing and nearness to God, ye willfully sin. For to worship God as we think fit, is of the essence of willfulness. God leaves nothing to our choice in the matter of worship: it is not allowed us to choose whether we will go back to the old pattern; God has set it aside, and to return to it is to choose the place of judgment. For nothing can await the outside worshippers but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. There remains no more sacrifice for sin to bring you nearer or to make you accepted. Jesus is not waiting to offer that, for He has done it once for all, but waiting till His enemies be made His footstool.

But even the priest's service in the holy place, near as it was, is but partially the pattern of the service of the saints now. For now all relative nearness is done away with, and we take the sphere of the ministry of the high-priest himself to complete the pattern of our standing now.

While the first tabernacle was standing, the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest i.e. laid open: “The Holy Ghost signifying, that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing; which was a figure for the time then present” (Heb. 9:8). The priests, though able always to enter into the holy place, could proceed no further. The beautiful veil concealed from their eye the most holy place. The veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with its cunning work of cherubim, all open to their view might indeed tell them of the glories concealed behind it; but the golden altar, the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, with the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, were all concealed from their sight. The immediate presence of Him who dwelt between the cherubim of the mercy-seat was unapproachable by them. That was accessible to the high-priest alone, and to him but once a year; and then not without blood, which he offered for himself and the errors of the people. Mark—the high-priest could not enter into the holiest of all at all times, as the priests could into the holy place; he could not enter there as a purged worshipper, for he went there on the very ground of sin not being put away forever.

But now all is laid open. By the blood of Christ the way is opened into the holiest of all. How significantly was this marked by the veil of the temple being rent in twain when Jesus hung upon the cross! Yea, Jesus Himself is the way, the living way. If there be a veil, He is that veil—not to conceal anything of God behind it, but to bring out all that may be known of God to view. And here the worshippers, once purged—have constant liberty to enter.

“Having therefore, brethren,” &c. The apostle does not take the stand of one in pre-eminent nearness himself to God, inviting others to draw nigh, as though he had been the priest and they the people, he on the inside, and they without; but he classes himself with those whom he addresses, calling them “brethren,” and three times repeating “Let us.” How different this from the order of old! Moses alone was to come near, the others were to worship afar off; but now it was equal nearness, equal liberty of access into the holiest of all.

What has the blood of Jesus left unaccomplished? In the shedding of it we have remission of sins. By the sprinkling of it we as lepers are pronounced clean, and sanctified as worshippers. And being carried into the holiest of all by Jesus Himself, it gives free access into heaven itself. There it

ever is, on the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat; for by it Christ once entered in, having obtained eternal redemption. His thus entering in is not an annual solemnity, nor one ever to be repeated. The blood of the sin-offering, carried within the veil by Aaron on the great day of atonement was that he might “make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins” (Lev. 16:16). This has now been done once forever. The atonement for the holy place is “unto continuance “: it is as much once and forever purged as is the worshipper himself. Yea, no worshipper there need fear lest he should bring defilement there, because the blood that cleanseth all sin away is there forever before God. Why are we so distant in our hearts from God? Is it not because we have so little sense of the real power of the blood within the veil as the gracious provision of God Himself for our holy and unhindered communion with Him? “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”

But mark the way of access. At Mount Sinai all was distance. “Thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, nor touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death” (Ex. 19). This distance ever characterized the worship under the law; there were constant bounds set, to pass which would have been death. Even Aaron himself could not pass the bounds of the veil at all times “lest he die.” The outside worshipping Israelite could not pass the bounds of the curtains which hung at the door of the tabernacle, “lest he die.” To see God and live was impossible under the law. But now Jesus is the way, the living way, into God's presence. To see Him is to see. God and live. He is not the barrier between us and God, but the way to God. All the distance and every bound is done away by Jesus. Did an Israelite on the outside gate on the beautiful curtain, and long to pass it? But death would have been his portion had he attempted it: let him look to Jesus Who says, “I am the door by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” Yes, the death of Jesus is become to us the living way into the holiest of all. But if, having proceeded within the curtains of the door, the veil seemed to forbid further entrance, let him again look to Jesus, and the veil, says the apostle, is His flesh. The very God with Whom we have to do is thus brought before us as fall of grace and truth. And if he perceived it rent, again let him look to Jesus and Him crucified, and the holiness of. God invited instead of forbade an entrance. What words of blessing to the once-purged worshipper— “By a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.”

But further—not only the work of Jesus and His character inspire confidence, but He Himself is the High Priest over the house of God. His ministry is never for a moment interrupted. He is in the holiest of all, on the very ground of atonement having been made both for the people and the place; and therefore the present is to us one continued season of worship. How needful is this promise to give us confidence in entering into the holiest! The High Priest has not to go into the house; He is there constantly, and has taken a place which Aaron never could take in the tabernacle; He is over the house of His own; He is Master of it; He openeth and no man shutteth.

The Lord pardon His saints for having so insulted His grace in the mode and character of their worship; and lead them by His Spirit into the only place of acceptable worship—the holiest of all.

Chapter 64

A Letter on Faith Healing: Part 1

Dear ——,

The unscriptural mistakes and unsound reasonings so abound in two small papers which commend the system before us, that to go through them in detail would be to write a book. To this, if able, one is not disposed; seeing that scripture is simple and clear against the universal application of a principle, which every believer must admit to be precious, when held and used as the Lord intended. To take any truth or gift out of its connection, and apply it absolutely, would be disastrous.

So with healing the bodies of all the children of God; for it is setting up some scriptures to the exclusion of many others. Not this only; for it practically sets aside the individual dealings of God with His beloved children, according to His own wisdom, love, and purpose.

Man now-a-days vauntingly speaks of God's fixed natural laws, whereas the believer knows, that He in grace exempts from their operation, when it pleases Him, not only as a miracle but in answer to prayer. Many an instance is recorded in scripture, for the faith and comfort of. God's people; yet it is not for such always to look for this in the path of faith, but rather to cultivate a daily walk with God in the things appointed as to either the body or circumstances. To the skeptic, nevertheless, the believer can ever testify that his faith for peace and a glorious inheritance rests on his knowledge that God has raised Jesus his Savior out from among the dead. The power of God thus displayed, is, not only a standing fact as to Him, but that which wrought in Christ (Eph. 1:2) toward believers now. It is not, therefore, a question of limiting the power of God as unbelief does; for the Christian knows the truth, and not less the divine love, both blessedly meeting in Jesus the Son of God. The coming glory, therefore, will never give a fuller, if so great a, proof of the love and power of God, as that already given, in the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It will be however the open display to the world. (John 17:22, 23.) On the point, therefore, of faith-healing the question is—Does scripture warrant all believers to expect bodies free from pain and infirmities? or, should they be thus afflicted, is it according to scripture for all sufferers to reckon on being healed? Is it either allowed sin, or lack of faith, that keeps back the blessing?

Now admitting that there may be much ignorance as to the ways of God, yet is it clear to upright souls that there is sad opposition to this teaching in many an instance, independently of the present period of our Lord's absence and rejection, which explains what the Christian should expect, not only in the form of tribulation, but as to the body that links him with a present scene of sorrow, sickness, and pain, whilst awaiting his Lord's return. The main argument of the writer is founded on our Lord's (when on earth with His disciples) having cured all manner of disease. Moreover, the apostles, after our Lord's ascension, continued to do so. Added to this there were the gifts of healing; and, finally, the standing word as to the sick (James 5:14, 15).

Now, if scripture is weighed, and the connections prayerfully considered, none of these facts will justify the conclusion, that faith-healing, as a system of universal cure, is established, but rather

the contrary. That there is a measure of truth none would deny, but to say it is the truth, or a standing principle, in the ways of the Lord with His own, I deny. Indeed I cannot but feel, much evil is being done by it, without weakening confidence in the resources and grace of the Lord.

All serious Christians feel the mischievous assumption of Romanism, in claiming the keys of the church for the apostle Peter. Weigh Matt. 16, and there is not a word about the keys of the church, but of “the kingdom of heaven,” which materially alters the thought; and this has nothing to do with Rome or after times.

In the matter before us the writer does not see the difference between the gospel of God's grace, and the kingdom of heaven; nor does he distinguish the position of John the Baptist announcing this kingdom as at hand from its being actually set up. When John was in prison, Jesus Himself began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand “; after which Jesus preached in the synagogues, and healed all manner of disease and sickness. The heavenly rule of the Messiah over the earth was therefore announced with accompanying power, suited to the promises made to Israel. On the other hand the physical condition of the people was a proof of their sins and disobedience. They had not enjoyed the conditional promise of freedom from disease with which Jehovah was prepared to meet them. His Anointed here below, and acting thus, was the proof. Moreover, Matt. 9 gave manifold samples, as a voice to the nation, of His gracious power and willingness when faith availed itself of His presence. If chap. 8 was evidence of Messiah's fulfilling Isa. 53:4, chap. 9 more particularly presents testimony to the truth of Psa. 103 which in its fullest sense applies to His earthly people when He reigns. Hence the forgiveness of sins, and healing of bodily disease were bound together—a truth no intelligent preacher of the gospel could openly claim now: it would be to confuse times and things that differ, and ignore the absence of the King.

If to the end of chap. 9 Jesus pursues His course of healing, in the next chapter He sends forth the twelve to preach “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Therewith He gives them power over all manner of disease; but they are sent strictly to the Jews, being forbidden to go even to the Samaritans: a fact of importance for having the mind of the Lord in their service, and indicative of its object and extent. All this was clearly in testimony of Christ as Israel's king.

But Matt. 11 shows, when suffering John sends his message and gets his significant answer from the Lord, that the mighty works He had done were all to no present effect, save to call forth the woes of the rejected Messiah. But higher and better things shine out of that evil day at the end of the chapter. For the Lord speaks of His higher glory as the divine Eternal Son, and invites burdened, souls to Himself, not for bodily cure; but to a far more blessed thing, soul-rest even now. If too the rule of our Lord's action as to disease is made the standard, why not go on to the raising of the dead which was part of the same privilege and power? The recorded cases were but samples oat of the many, both on the side of the Lord, and on that of the subjects healed, being given us for special purposes only.

With some their own faith appears; in others that of those who brought them; in some neither, but rather the sovereign acts of Christ.

Again, how different the dealing of the Lord with the nobleman's son, in John 5, from that with the two sisters at Bethany in John 11! Was it, therefore a mere question of faith and bodily cure? or

were there not fuller purposes, as in allowing the death of Lazarus? Surely it is the best of all (which believers would do well to remember) for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby, when sickness goes on to death, and death itself is swallowed up in the power of resurrection.

That Lazarus was both a testimony and a figure of the Lord's ways with His earthly people, can hardly be questioned; yet is it no less an encouragement to the believer, in the feelings and sympathy of Jesus, before the display of His power, as the Son of God, in raising the objects of His affection from the dead. It is incontestable that many miracles and cures were done by the apostles after the Lord Jesus ascended. Acts 3 is specially chosen to encourage those advocating faith-healing. This, if looked into, will be seen to be—a special and further testimony to those who had crucified their Messiah, giving evidence to the loving power in the name of Jesus. “Ye men of Israel,” &c. If convinced by it, and bowing to God's object in it, by judging themselves, and owning their sin, then the promised times of refreshing would come, and Jesus return from heaven, and earthly blessedness dawn under the rule of their Messiah. It was, a sample of the powers of the age to come, as spoken of in Heb. 6:5. Compare it with what is said in Heb. 2 of God bearing witness to the great salvation, spoken first by the Lord, and confirmed by those who had heard, and afterward received the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

That signs were given, and wonders wrought in the early moments of the church is most unquestionable; but were these to continue any more than the apostles themselves? This would be to lose sight of much unfolded in later inspiration, in those Epistles particularly which mark the corruption and apostasy of the last days. If the Lord Jesus is the same, and the presence of the Spirit ever-abiding, yet who would contend that the ways of God, as to outward power, are the same at the close of the church's history as at the beginning? It was not so with Israel even in Ezra's day—much less at a later; and shall it be expected of the church in its present ruin state, however truly God's purpose and our moral responsibility remain unchanged?

But, again, does the gospel of God's grace connect, with it (as the preaching of the kingdom of heaven once did) the cure of bodily disease? If so, let it be clearly shown in scripture. The great apostle of the Gentiles will surely furnish the character of things after the Lord was finally rejected by His people, both in His humiliation, and afterward in heavenly glory.

When Saul was converted by the light shining from Jesus on high, the Lord in sending Ananias to him declares, that he is a chosen vessel to bear the name of Jesus, before Gentiles, Kings, and Israel, adding “For I will show how great things he must suffer for My name's sake.” When the same Paul was before Agrippa, he speaks of his mission to the Gentiles— “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” Here then is the characteristic commission of his gospel to the Gentiles (such we are by nature), but not one word either from the Lord, or the apostles, about bodily cure being wrapt up with it, much less, as in these unscriptural papers, that it was part of the gospel. The great apostle of the Gentiles wrought all sorts of miracles as a sign to unbelievers; but not one in character with the kingdom of heaven by the Lord, and the twelve.

Are we then to set up one scripture to the loss of another, and assume what is not taught, rather than seek guidance and instruction from the Spirit of God?

What is said at the end of Mark's Gospel was accomplished finally, but is no unlimited, promise; nor is it given in Luke, or Matthew who looks on to the end of the age. Moreover, it is questionable if those who now seek to appropriate the truth in the universal form of Bethshan, would be ready to, take up any deadly thing, in faith that it would not hurt them.

But the apostle Paul fully declares his gospel in its nature and extent. In the Epistle to the Romans, where it is most of all unfolded, we never hear of the body freed from pain and infirmity, but rather the reverse. The question of sins, and of sin, is answered by. justification, followed by deliverance from sin (chap. 6.) and the law (chap. 7.), with the blessed “no condemnation” consequent on being in Christ (chap. viii.); but not a word as to change of the physical body, until the believer's full and final deliverance by the quickening of the mortal body. This from other scriptures is seen to take place at the coming of the Lord. (1 Cor. 15 and 1 Thess. 4) There is on the contrary plain intimation in Rom. 8 that the believer's body shares the weakness and sorrows of the present groaning creation, not that it has exemption from it. To lose sight of this would be to ignore a large part of the wisdom and love of God in His ways toward the Christian, yea more, the true position He Himself takes as to it. Moreover, what is the Spirit's reason for the co-heirs with Christ suffering with Him? And why are they to reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be considered? Does it not turn on the groaning creation—a state that would have been changed; according to both old and new tests, had Jesus been received, and His kingdom set up. Whereas; since His rejection, the favored land, and Jehovah's people, as well as the whole scene below, suffer still, as it is written, “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

(To be continued.)

Chapter 65

A Letter on Faith Healing: Part 2

There is added the Christian's promised part in it, “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves,” etc. Then God's word teaches, the believer's part in pain and sorrow because of a mortal body, and, it may be, a very suffering one; whereas the faith-healing advocate declares, contrary to scripture, that a Christian should have no part in suffering, but die at a good old age without pain, like the finished-up candle: an expectation in character with what the Corinthians vainly sought, “reigning before the time,” by confusing a suffering era with the coming day of glory, when Jesus shall reign from the river to the ends of the earth.

The cheer to the Christian suffering “with” Christ, which is the point here, rather than suffering “for” Christ, is the hope of the coming glory, when the sons of God will be no longer hidden but manifested. Then and not now will the creation, in bondage to corruption, enjoy the liberty of the glory. Till then no immunity, even for the believer, but a body of weakness and frequently of no little pain, but with wondrous inward joy in the Lord, if faith works to appropriate it. He has Christ Jesus as his High Priest on high, in all suited sympathy, and God the Spirit making intercession within him. This goes with sufferings and infirmities, which mean the reverse of freedom from bodily pain; neither can it here mean that the suffering is through the sin of the believer, as the writer insists.

The “Spirit helpeth our infirmity,” which could not be said if it were a direct consequence of the believer's sin; yet is it no less trial and suffering, calling for help and sympathy.

Moreover it is not of necessity removal of the suffering; for sympathy would then lose its place and object. Therefore to set aside these facts for universal healing would be to lose much of the present work of Christ as Priest, as well as much of the Holy Spirit's operation in the Christian.

The journey homeward to the eternal rest of God contemplates trial of every kind, and no less infirmity. Hence Heb. 4 is a blessed portion for such experiences in the active love and care of Jesus, the Son of God on high, sympathizing with His suffering saints.

That the apostle in 2 Cor. 12 had infirmity sent him is certain; though its nature is of purpose not told us, yet one may conclude it had to do with his body. This the Lord would not remove though he sought it thrice; but all-sufficient grace was promised him, so that he not only accepted the trial, but afterward took pleasure in infirmities, rather than gloried in having nothing about his body to try him.

This surely is a higher experience, than getting all bodily suffering removed, by the principle of faith-healing, even though, as is argued, health and strength might be given to the Lord. On this ground the Lord may have answered His apostle, for none so, devoted as he; but his Master knew the best thing for him.

The apostle from his own lessons could counsel others, as indeed he did his beloved Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake and his often infirmities, which had to do surely with his body, Then he, who had wrought so many miracles for others, let his genuine child in the faith go on, with his infirmity, using means which some absolutely condemn through yielding to human speculations.

Such is the school of God with its varied lessons for the scholars according to the knowledge, grace, and patience of the Master. He knows His saints and servants as none other, and deals accordingly; He is jealous that His will and work in us may be done, so as to bring glory to Himself which is with God the crowning point of our every experience.

This I covet for myself and His saints in a day of running to and fro, so that in the spirit of our perfect Pattern, when all around is so grievous, we may be able to give thanks as Jesus the obedient Son did in Matt. 11.

After sheaving the characteristic of present suffering even as to the body, need I give individual instances such as Epaphroditus, sick nigh unto death, but untouched by the exercised apostle; and Trophimus left sick at Miletus? for the greater in principle will include the less in practice. But for feeling convinced that you were truly desirous to know and do the Lord's will in this matter, I should not have written. Yet there is ever, in this and all questions of truth and practice, a grave responsibility to the Lord, and our fellow-believers. I therefore send what I believe scripture teaches as to the present fashion of faith-healing, that you may weigh all over before the Lord.

The system I am persuaded (notwithstanding all they allege) is a denial of the truth as to bodily suffering, even admitting much may be from failure, and given discipline in connection, for John 15 shows the Father has in view “more fruit.”

The word in James supposes an orderly state of the church with its “elders,” as in Jerusalem. I can only say, as to the miracles and gifts of healing in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, there is no warrant for a perpetuation of what was then given (even though the principle of faith and prayer remains), any more than for assuming that the legion of societies, or churches so called to-day, can claim to be “the church,” and put forward their officials as at the first. Neither the one nor the other will bear the test of scripture. And 2 Tim. 2 Peter, and Jude, as well as the Revelation, reveal otherwise, both as to the state of the church, and how to act in it. That the Lord unceasingly and unfailingly cares for His church, and raises up what He sees needed, for a time of unfaithfulness, is blessedly true. But to pretend to be in early days as to gifts, miracles, and the like, instead of in” the last days” characterized by weakness and confusion, is grave mistake, especially if we lose sight of the speedy return of our Lord, Who saith, “Surely I come quickly.” Would that this blessed hope fully formed all believers' hearts so as to fit them to be watching, if even in bodies of pain, and assured at His coming of a glorious deliverance, for all will then be fashioned like unto His own body of glory.

Till then, may you be kept walking and living in the patience of Christ with your heart directed into the love of God, persuaded that neither death nor life, height, depth, nor any creature, shall be able to separate you (or any believer) from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Yours, G. G.

(Concluded from p. 221.)

Chapter 66

The Fan and the Sieve: Part 1

What a separating process is needed in order to prepare “the bread which strengtheneth man's heart!” Great indeed is the toil of preparing the ground before the husbandman can “cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye, in their place.” But when the harvest has rewarded his toil, then, first, there is the threshing, to separate the grain from the ear—a laborious process, whether by cattle dragging over it, “the threshing instrument having teeth;” or by the flail, so dexterously wielded by the husbandman; or by the more scientific machine of modern days. After the grain is thus sifted from the ear, it needs another process to separate the wheat from the chaff, and this is effected by winnowing. In winnowing, there are two instruments specially used, the fan and the sieve. By the first, the chaff is separated from the grain; by the second, the stunted grain and any other refuse are separated from “the fat kidneys of the wheat.” Thus we get a good sample of grain, even as in the happier day in reserve for Israel. “Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth; and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures; the oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground shall eat clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and the fan.”

If we follow on farther, we shall find more labor needed: “bread corn is bruised” —it must be ground; a weary toil it was, especially for females. “Take the millstones and grind meal.” Neither can we stop here: if we would separate the bran from the flour, a fine sieve is needed, and the process of bolting at length brings out “the fine flour” with which God so abundantly fed Israel, and Israel gave to her idols (Ezek. 16:19), and which is marked also as a special part of the merchandise of Babylon (Rev. 18:13).

There is a beautiful passage in the twenty-eighth chapter of the prophet Isaiah, which shows that God Himself, as the husbandman, has constantly been carrying on a process analogous to the above, in “his husbandry” or “tillage.” (1 Cor. 3:9). Awful indeed is the judgment of God, pronounced by the prophet against Ephraim for their exceeding pride and presumption. Yet, in the midst of this denunciation, so as to interrupt and break its course, mercy rejoices against judgment, and the Lord's own sure foundation is announced as the only one which would stand, when “the hail would sweep away every refuge of lies.” God would “do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act.” “Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your hands be made strong.” For while Israel or men may mock at the thought of the judgment of God; yea, they may fortify themselves, as they suppose against them; they may sneer also at the idea of the grace of God, and despise the foundation; “mockers,” “scorners,” “scoffers,” marking alike the last days of Israel and Christendom—yet God has not all this while been acting without counsel and design; He may deal with man, Israel, or the great professing Christian body, in a variety of ways during His long-suffering, yet the appointed evil will come. It was fixed and settled, as to Israel, in the prophetic announcement: “I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.”

“Give ye ear, and hear my speech. Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin: but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.”

Surely we may say: “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge” —even all the preparatory means in agriculture, unto a definite end—does He not know how to manage man? how to make man understand that He is God alone, and man himself but the creature of His hands?

But the analogy will be found very striking if we regard the many processes of separation, whether by judgment or by mercy; or rather by the combination of mercy and judgment. “I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.” (Psa. 101) Ever since sin came into the world, separation has been God's principle of blessing. When God has separated to blessing, there have been two principles set in operation—separation from the corrupt mass obnoxious to the judgment of God, and separation unto God Himself. The character of this separation determines the character of the holiness of those separated. Thus it pleased God to separate a people (the people of Israel) from other people, to be His own peculiar people; and there was a sanctity connected with this, marking them both as separated from other people, and as separated unto God as worshipping people. “Ye shall not walk in the manners of the nations, which I cast out before you; for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people. Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowl and clean and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beasts or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people that ye should be mine.” (Lev. 20:23-26.)

The principle of separation did not stop here was followed by a separation of a class and also of a tribe. “And take unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.” “Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine.” (Num. 8) The “God of Israel had separated the Levites from the congregation of Israel, to bring them near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them.” But the priests were separated unto greater nearness: the very censers of the Levites, who presumed to burn incense before the Lord, were made “broad plates for a covering of the altar, to be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron shall come near to offer incense before the Lord.” Even in the priestly family there was further separation; the high priest was brought into greater nearness to God than his brethren, the father

and the sons. (Heb. 9:6, 7.)

In all this process, we are instructed in a deep principle, which is the root of holiness of every kind: it is God who separates, or sanctifieth unto Himself, whatever may be the order of separation. That order once was “only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation.” But it was ineffectual in keeping Israel “as holiness unto the Lord, the first-fruits of his increase.” Israel speedily adopted the gods of the nations, which yet were no gods, and by mingling this false worship with the worship of Jehovah, effectually destroyed their separateness as a people unto Jehovah; and not only so, but at the same time they presumed on their separateness in a spirit of self-complacency, and thus brought out that worse form of evil, which ended in saying, Stand by, I am holier than thou; and in rejecting God Himself in order to maintain their own character.

During the ministry of the Lord Jesus on earth, the question of, the day was about purification. It was mooted between the disciples of John and a Jew. The Jews wanted their ceremonial purification, so as to esteem one of another nation “common or unclean.” It was a higher crime in their esteem to come into contact with a Gentile than to meditate murder. “Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hell of judgment: and it was early, and they themselves went not into the judgment-hall lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the pass-over.” They please not God, and are contrary to all men. Such was the result of separating themselves, instead of being separated unto God. The ministry of John the Baptist was a direct inroad on the ceremonial purification. Born as John was of the family of Aaron, he found his place of ministry not in the temple but in the wilderness. He “came in the way of righteousness:” descent from Abraham, or observance of ordinances, did not meet the requirements of his ministry. Repentance was an inward moral purification—an order immensely beyond the Jewish ceremonial order, but still immensely below that new order of purification to which the ministry of John was but the introductory. Those who really justified God in John's baptism were prepared to justify Him further in the reception of Him to whom John bare witness—even Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, and the baptizer with the Holy Ghost.

It is the new order of purification from above to which John turns the thoughts of his disciples, when so many turned from John their master to Jesus. They appeared jealous for their Master's honor; John, on the contrary, quietly recedes from the scene, to make way for the display of the saving power of Him whose faithful witness and forerunner he was. John saw now that the time was come for superseding his order of purification, high as it was, compared with that of the Jews, by the introduction of this new and heavenly order by Jesus. (John 3:27-36.) God—who had secretly separated to Himself under every dispensation by His quickening power giving faith—now manifestly separated to Himself, by presenting Jesus as the object of faith. It is no longer separation by ordinance, or even by merely moral change; it is separation and purification by the blood of Christ, the Son of God, and the Lamb of God. We are “justified by His blood,” “sanctified” by His blood, and by it, from being afar off, brought nigh to God (Eph. 2:13). The blood of Christ is the power by which God Himself calls into peace with Himself.

In this view we see the same principle in action of God separating unto Himself: only it is now by a reality—even the blood of the cross of which all the previous ordinances had been but shadows; and those so separated are placed not in national or official nearness to God, but in real personal

nearness to Him. It is not only nearness of position, but inseparably connected with it is the positive power of recognized nearness by the quickening and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Jesus cannot be known as the Son of God and the Lamb of God apart from His being the baptizer with the Holy Ghost. And then a new ground of nearness of God is ascertained to the soul—it is nearness in Him, as well as by His blood. “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” It is therefore a heavenly nearness, heavenly pacification, a heavenly sanctity—which is our portion. God calls us to be saints, or we are saints by calling. “We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(To be continued.)

Chapter 67

The Fan and the Sieve: Part 2

It is evident that the maintenance of such nearness to God, which is the groundwork of “righteousness and true holiness” —connected necessarily, as sure nearness is, with a new order of being which can stand and delight in such nearness to God—must be attended with many difficulties. Such a calling and standing is equally threatened by a return to ordinances, the natural order of separation; or by using Christ Himself only as the conservator of the moral order, by which indeed man may be separated from his fellow, without being separated unto God. Now it is in immediate connection with His baptizing with the Holy Ghost that Christ is spoken of as the Winnower. “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” When threshing is used, it appears as the simple emblem of judgment; but winnowing conveys rather the double idea both of separation unto mercy and unto judgment, and this especially in connection with the fan.

“Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them.” So also in the passage which presents to us the Lord having the fan in His hand—the chaff is burnt up with unquenchable fire; and the wheat is gathered into the garner. Whilst this passage has its direct application to a future separation of the chaff on the earth—When all Gentile glory shall become as “the chaff of the summer threshing floor,” and the Lord's own floor (evidently on earth in connection with Israel) shall be thoroughly purged, and the wheat gathered into the garner—yet it has its present application. “What is the chaff and the wheat, saith the Lord?” may be a question at all times suitably asked, not only in the falsehood which mimics truth, but where there may be the form of godliness apart from the power.

How many there are who very consciously know the Lord, not only as holding the fan in His hand, but that He has used it in their case for severing them from many a long-cherished feeling, from many hereditary and traditionary ways, which have been blown away as chaff before the wind—when Christ Himself as a substantial reality has been manifest to the soul! Old habits and prejudices have dropped off one by one before the power of truth. Many have been astonished to find how many things they have cherished and clung to, which have no warrant whatever from scripture, and yet have been more tenaciously held than any scriptural truth. The fan of separation has been needed—and we have understood in some measure the remarkable expression of the apostle Peter: “For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

But after knowing the power of the separation of the fan from much of the chaff, and being brought to realize the liberty which we have in Christ, worship in the Spirit, and service in the Spirit

also—we are subjected to the far more searching process of the sieve—a process which goes on within—entering into the inmost thoughts, and proving that God requires “truth in the inward parts.”

It is thus the Psalmist expresses it: “O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou knowest my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways.” And when the Lord applies Himself in most searching dealing with Israel at a yet future day—with Israel as His people—this is the language used:” For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.” It is humbling indeed to come under the scourge of the Lord; yet “He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth,” and that because He loves them.

Yet to be subjected to the sifting process, although still a proof of the Lord's love, is more powerful to us than the very scourge itself. It is in love and mercy notwithstanding; it is to separate us into our own proper and peculiar blessings in Christ; it is to remove every obstacle in the way of our abiding in the immediate presence of God; it is to get rid of the refuse that the clean grain may be brought forth. The Lord is no less jealous of our blessings than He is of His own honor. He will sift us by circumstances, that the joy arising from circumstances may give way for joy in the Holy Ghost. How many have regarded all the most elaborate skill of man, when used in the worship of God, as chaff, by becoming true worshippers, in spirit and in truth! But, after so great a spiritual advancement, circumstances may have their influence and the sieve may be needed, and “singing and making melody in the heart to the Lord” may be learned by congregations being dispersed, and by the saints themselves being driven into loneliness.

It is the sieve which so fearfully lays hear the unchanged evil of the flesh in the saints, and its readiness ever to take its part. It would be an interesting inquiry whether the Lord resorts to the process of sifting on the failure of self-judgment, or whether it is necessary even when there is honest self-judgment, to search into that which self-judgment would fail to seek. “The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” This passage shows what discoveries may be made to the soul by the searching application of the word by the Spirit, so as to lead the soul into the practical sense of the need and value of the present priestly ministry of Christ (Heb. 4:12-16). The sifting process is also connected with the priestly ministry of Christ, as we find in that memorable passage: “And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

But that which appears to be so humbling, in the sifting process, is the agency of Satan. It would seem, both from the case of Job of old, and of Peter at the close of the Lord's ministry on earth, that Satan was allowed by God to take all advantage of circumstances to get at the weak point of individual character, as well as to manifest the counsels of the heart, and to bring out those reasonings and high things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God; so that every thought might be brought in captivity to the obedience of Christ. But there is something beyond this, the deep purpose of God in blessing, by Satan even being made the instrument of finding the grace of God at the bottom.

It is therefore probable that the Lord, in His infinite wisdom, not only uses the sieve when there has been failure of self-judgment, but even where it has been honest, knowing how much we are the creatures of circumstances. He may sift His saints, that they may, by the exercise of faith, get above that power of circumstances, and be occupied with realities. “Is thy servant a dog that he should do these things?” may have been the language of pure and honest intention, though betraying entire ignorance of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart. “The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be, king over Syria,” is the simple reply of the prophet, yet how full of meaning. The sifting of Job ended in a rich blessing. “The Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?” “Doth Job fear God for naught?” is Satan's reply; and then permission is given to Satan: “Behold all that he hath is in thy power only upon himself put not forth thy hand.” Satan was thus allowed full power over circumstances; but still he was only the sieve in the hand of the Lord.

In the dispute which arises in his lamentable condition between Job and his friends, more truthful and magnificent sentiments, as to the attributes and perfections of God, are not to be found in any other part of Scripture, than we find in the lips of Job's three friends. But they do not meet the case of Job, and are rather to be regarded as fragments which show the need of God in some special manner manifesting Himself, as He has done by incarnation and in the cross, than any vivid presentation of God to the soul. The soul of man cannot be satisfied by arguments on the perfections of God, neither can the dealings of God with man be satisfactory to the soul, where man, instead of God, is affirmed to be the end of those dealings. It was in this respect that Job had spoken more rightly of God than his three friends. They had asserted that Job's conduct was the solution of the strange dealing of God with Job; he, on the contrary, had referred the solution to God Himself—that God alone could explain the reason of His own conduct. Yet Job had “darkened counsel by words without knowledge.” Job had, in his own case, “contended with the Almighty;” he had “reproved God,” and this he must answer. But the mouth of Job is stopped in the immediate presence of God. He is not able to argue his case there. “Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer: yea twice, but I will proceed no further.” Now the end of all this terrible sifting was to bring Job into the reality of the presence of God, so has to have to do with God, instead of speaking even true things concerning Him, and thus from the immediate presence of God Himself, to learn even what “the perfect and upright man” was, as a creature brought there; in other words, to learn the truth of himself, by learning the truth of God. “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Surely, if the more close sifting in winnowing only bring out the perfect wheat, this close sifting of Job brought him to have to do with realities; and in his thus deepened knowledge, both of God and himself, instead of any longer arguing with his friends, he is put in the honorable place of “praying for” them, “for him (says the Lord) I will accept.” There may be even a complacency arising from the favor of God, from a, conscience approving that we do fear Him, from the approbation of others, which may in effect displace God from His rightful supremacy. We must then be sifted, that God may be God, and man be man. “No flesh shall glory in His presence; he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

(To be continued.)

(Continued from page 152.)

Chapter 68

The Fan and the Sieve: Part 3

In the case of Peter also Satan was allowed to take all advantage of circumstances against the disciples of the Lord; and if he prevailed to make one traitor, he almost succeeded in doing the same with another. But Satan could not prevail, with all the power of circumstances at his disposal, against the prayer of Jesus for Peter. Surely, Jesus had power to have hindered the sifting altogether; but Peter needed, and we all too need, the sieve. A deep practical truth was to be learned by Peter, and by Peter that he might instruct others, that no wit or wisdom of man, no honesty of purpose, no determinateness of resolution, can stand before the overwhelming power of circumstances! and that faith alone rises superior to them. “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Well might it fail when with the fondest expectations so rudely shocked by the arrest of Jesus, all appeared in the hands of “the power of darkness.” It seemed as though God had given up everything. “All forsook him and fled.” But when the power of darkness had so far prevailed as to lead Peter to curse and swear, and deny Jesus with an oath; when by the cock crowing this was brought to his sorrowful recollection; then, for faith not to stagger or fail is marvelous indeed. It was indeed a deep soul-trying sifting which Peter needed; but how pure and clear does the wheat come forth! What a gainer was Peter! His faith failed not. It was all that was left him. Where is Peter? “Lo, we have left all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” What is to become of his boast? “Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.” Peter is left without any ground of boasting. He can make no new resolve. He is stripped of everything, and brought back to know himself as “Simon, Simon.” But there was the same Lord, before Whose feet he had fallen at the outset, confessing himself a sinful man. His faith did not fail. He looked to Him still, and he knew the power of restoring grace. How well was he able to strengthen his brethren after this fall and recovery! It was the severe sifting he had gone through which gives such emphasis to his words, “Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” He could very feelingly say, “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith.” Satan had indeed, by the power of circumstances, brought out from Peter that which Peter little suspected to be in himself, and doubtless thought thus to ruin Peter and to dishonor the Lord. But Satan was but the sieve in the hand of the Lord: that which was defective was sifted away; and Peter comes forth from the painful process converted from self-confidence to confidence in the Lord, strong by knowing his own weakness, and by proving faith in Jesus to be a blessed reality indeed. There is one result connected with the sifting of Peter most blessedly brought out. The Lord knew what was at the bottom of the heart of Peter, for his grace had put it there. In a temperament naturally sanguine, under a mass of fleshly confidence and forward zeal, there was genuine love to the Lord Jesus Christ. After his terrible sifting, how readily can Peter answer to the challenge of his Lord, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.” Simon no longer voluntarily undertakes to be put to the test. He has no such thought now in his heart as, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended;” but he appeals to that very omniscience which had searched and sifted him. He knew that Jesus “searched the reins and hearts.” On all former occasions Peter had acted on his own presumed

knowledge of himself; now he appeals to the Lord's own perfect knowledge of himself. In this sifting, even though Satan was the instrument, “no grain fell to the ground;” but the precious grain, buried under such rubbish, was brought forth clean and unmixed. And is not this dealing with us according to the divine order in Psa. 139? “O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me: thou knowest my path.” And what is the reply of the soul to all the sifting through which it has consciously passed? “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts.” If such be the result, well may we, having the like spirit of faith, say, “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!” Brethren; beloved of God, are we conscious of the painfulness, the shame, the perplexity, arising from actual sifting? Let this precious thought comfort our hearts, that the Lord is thus sifting away much that we have cherished more than Himself, but only to bring out that which He knows. to be at the bottom of our hearts; for He by His Spirit has put it there, faith in Him, and love to Him. Let each one then bare His heart to Him that makes Himself known in the churches, as “searching the reins and the heart,” and say, “Search me, O Lord.” Granted that we have broken down under the very weight of the blessings conferred by the goodness of God on us. Granted that we have exhibited much weakness and folly. Spots have been discovered to mar the good report of a long career of usefulness in the church. Double-mindedness between Christ and the world, between faith and human resources, between the truth of God and human wisdom, has been made sorrowfully manifest. Humbling indeed is the process; yet we can justify the Lord in using it. “He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his words.” Much of the evil which has been concealed even from ourselves is now being made manifest; that which was rankling underneath is now on the surface. Enough indeed has been already done to make us feel that “to us belongeth shame and confusion of face;” but if faith fail not in answer to the intercession of Jesus, then will Jesus Himself be learned in a way He was never known before. The soul will be led consciously to have to do with Him: nearness to Him and intimacy with Him will take the place of things valuable in themselves, but hurtful in proportion to their value when used by the folly of our hearts to hinder Jesus from having the supreme place in our hearts. Much may indeed have passed through the sieve; the comfort derived from enlarged Christian intercourse, the honest desire for testimony against evil, the use of an enlarged platform of truth: but the “one grain” has not fallen to the ground-faith in Christ and love to Christ—this comes forth more simple and more unmixed than ever. The sieve has been needed to strengthen some of us, even as Peter was strengthened. To one choice servant Satan was used as a buffeter, lest he should be exalted by the abundance of the revelations vouchsafed to him. But in the case of Peter, Satan was used as a sieve, to show the impossibility of the flesh using aright the wondrous revelation made to him of the glory of Jesus, the Son of the living God—the unassailable foundation of the church. We need to be strengthened by experimentally learning the security of this Rook under us, when every confidence in which the flesh could possibly take part has utterly failed. The Lord alone can bear the glory. He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. Let Him be alone exalted. “No flesh shall glory in His presence.” “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” J. L. H.

(Concluded from page 166.)

Chapter 69

The Feasts of Jehovah: 1. The Sabbath

It is my hope to bring before you, in the scripture we have entered on to-night, the whole outline of the dealings of God with His people on earth, not of course in detail, but, first, the original purpose as before God; next, the foundation which He laid in order to accomplish this purpose; then, again, the ways of God in the application which He made of the mighty work thus accomplished; and, finally, the direct and full result.

It will be proved in the course of these remarks that God did really look forward far beyond His ancient people. These feasts had a simple and primary application, as no one doubts, to the Jewish people; they, at any rate the chief of them, served the purpose of gathering Israel around Himself where He had placed His name. But it is impossible to limit scripture to such an application. I hope to give you what the Holy Ghost contemplates in the types; for God was looking on to other things, and far greater than men are apt to allow. All was future in this point of view; and even now we may see what will be, as well as that which is, and what has been accomplished. He has anticipated that which would have an entirely different and superior character, indeed what we commonly call Christianity; He removes the veil from the age to come when He will establish the kingdom in glory. Thus we shall be able to trace the dealings of God, first, not merely in letter but in grace, and then, when it will be no longer grace but glory, and that not only for heaven, but mainly for the earth. It is quite a mistake to suppose that His glory is connected only with heaven. Undoubtedly He has allowed Satan to do his worst, but He has already won the victory morally in Christ, and efficaciously in His death and resurrection; and He will prove it before every eye in a day fast approaching. But now we walk by faith, not by sight; and I trust. that the scripture thus brought before us may contribute to strengthen the faith of those who believe, as well as to rebuke those who dare to disbelieve, the word of God.

I. The Sabbath.

The first thing I would draw your attention to is this, that the Sabbath is introduced in an altogether peculiar manner.

This is no mere idea of mine, nor of any one else. It is marked very clearly in the opening of the chapter before us.

“And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, concerning the feasts of Jehovah, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My feasts. Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein; it is the Sabbath of Jehovah in all your dwellings.” Thus the feasts open; but let us notice that the fourth verse begins again, “These are the feasts of Jehovah.” Hence we see that in the beginning of the chapter, where the feasts are introduced generally, the Sabbath is named in particular; next, in verse fourth, there is a fresh beginning, which excludes the Sabbath. Now there is nothing in vain in Scripture; not a word from Genesis to Revelation which God wrote could be changed but for the worse. I know certain minds find this

difficult to believe; and the reason is because they judge of God by themselves. If you or I had written it, there would have been many a word to change for the better; and we are apt to attribute our infirmities to God's word. No man can rightly reason on God's word from himself; nor is it sound to reason from nature up to nature's God. We must begin with God, and reason from Him, or His word, down to His works. If we begin with what we find in reason or things here below, we begin with what is frail, feeble, inconstant; and how can we reason soundly when we start from that which breaks at a touch? When we begin with God and His word, we are guided by that which judges all around. But the tendency of men is to take on them to judge the word of God; did they believe that the word of God judges them, it would be safer and more becoming.

Now if God has given a revelation of His mind, that revelation must be worthy of Himself; and He has taken particular pains to call it His word. Undoubtedly He wrought by various means; but He never calls it the word of Moses, of David, of John, or Paul's, but the word of God. Let us never forget this. It may be said that there is here a difficulty, and what appears even to be an irregularity. The Sabbath is introduced first as the beginning of the feasts; and then, secondly, we begin again, when the sabbath is left out. Why? Because the sabbath has a character altogether peculiar to itself. Evidently as a matter of fact, and merely looking at it from a literal point of view, all the other feasts were celebrated but once a year, the sabbath every week. There is therefore a distinct line of demarcation; and so the second beginning is justified. But still the sabbath has the character of a feast, and with a most important aim, if in a way that marks no other; for this feast, and this alone, was to be continually repeated, as the end of the week came round.

And here let us not fail to notice the difference between this and what scripture calls “the Lord's day.” Those who would and do confound the two understand neither. The sabbath day was historically and originally at the end of the week, when man had accomplished his ordinary round of toil. The end he gave to God. He had labored himself for six days, on the seventh He rested. According to God's law, it was not merely a seventh, but the seventh day. No other day of the week would have done so well, or at all, if one looked at it as truly fearing God. From an utilitarian point of view, one day was as good as another; and this is man's way of dealing with things. But. God knows that man is prone to forget Him even in creation, and above all to forget the gracious purposes of God pledged in the sabbath.

What is it that God means to bring in? A rest for His own, a rest worthy of Himself, and a rest which He will share with His people. When will this be? Not till the end of all things. I am far from meaning that every man will enjoy that rest. No one can think or say so who believes what sin is, or that God will judge the world by the Man risen from the dead and ordained for it. But while acknowledging that God must show His deep resentment against evil, we believe also that He has brought in a Deliverer and a deliverance for us; in due time a full and perfect deliverance for creation. This is precisely what God will make good in the day of Christ's coming; and His rest it will be.

Let me refer here to the great New Testament scripture on the rest of God. In Heb. 3 and 4 you find the Spirit of God (after pointing to Christ on high, Son of God, and Son of man, Who had died atoningly). introducing this rest. What gave occasion to it was the evident danger for the Hebrew believers of taking their ease now, and thus forgetting they were only passing through the wilderness. They were so accustomed to connect with the coming of Messiah a present rest, that

they could hardly understand that they were ushered into a scene of trial answering to His Who suffered without the gate, and were called to count it their privilege. They were in danger of seeking to make themselves at ease and comfortable here. The first Epistle to the Corinthians shows that they were not alone in this. It is a very natural snare to the heart of man, even to those who have found the Savior. After there has been doubt and anxiety, the soul knowing what the judgment of God on sin is, and its own utter guilt and condemnation, when deliverance in the Lord Jesus is once found, there is often danger of reaction. The soul is apt to settle down, thinking that the campaign is over, because the great battle has been fought, and the victory is given through the Lord Jesus Christ. They flatter themselves that there can be no trouble, because the deep soul-distress is past. It is sufficiently plain that these Hebrews were in some such state, and the apostle not only reminds them how joyfully they took their early spoliation and sufferings, but here instructs them that they are not yet after the pattern of Israel settled in the land, but like Israel passing through the wilderness. Accordingly we find that the whole argument of the Epistle supposes not the temple, but the tabernacle, from first to last; and thus hails from the camp, not from the throne or kingdom set up after the conquest of Canaan. Hence he says, “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” (ch. 4: 1). We see at once that the apostle is not speaking of believing in the Lord Jesus for present rest of conscience. Had this been the point before him, he would have boldly assured them that there was no need to fear.

If we speak of the blood of Christ, and then should exhort to fear, it would be the denial of Christianity. The gospel is the declaration of full remission, yea, of more than this, of justification, of salvation of souls (1 Peter 1) through the Lord Jesus. If forgiveness through Christ's blood was the question he would rather call on them to vanquish every fear; for, as the apostle John says, in discussing the point, “Perfect love casteth out fear,” not “perfect love” on our part (the law asked for that, and never could get it), but the perfect love of God, which is only revealed in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. What are we to be afraid of then? Not of the blood of Christ failing, nor of losing the remission of sins through any change of mind or at any moment from grace in God. But be afraid of settling down in this world, and coming short of the true outlook of pilgrims and strangers on the way to a better land. To have rested in the wilderness would have been fatal to an Israelite; and so we have to remember that this is not our home, and that to settle down would be virtually to deny ourselves the rest of heaven.

In passing let me remark that this epistle was written by the apostle Paul and no one else. Men may question, as they do everything now-a-days, but there is no real ground for doubting it. For Peter

proves it in his second epistle, where he says (chap. 15), “Even as our beloved Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you.” Now, as we know, he was then addressing believing Jews; so that Paul must have written to them also, and this can be only the epistle to the Heb. 1 refer to it now, simply because Satan is trying to undermine everything, and it becomes of growing consequence to meet lesser questions, as well as daring attacks on the word of God. It is high time that every man who is by grace a believer should declare plainly what he is. Does His goodness not claim it at our hands to be confessors if not martyrs?

I say then, that in this Epistle the Spirit of God brings before us the necessity of going forward to the rest of God; and I press this as the only genuine meaning, because it is often applied to soul rest, which it rather tends to enfeeble or destroy. That it is not within the scope of the passage in the text, we may see from verse 11, where it says, “Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest.” What sort of a gospel would it be to tell people they must labor for rest of conscience? Evidently it would be to upset the grace of God; for it means no other than salvation by works. On the face of it, all can see that the apostle here is addressing such Jews as professed Christ, and that they were then in danger of slipping into present ease, instead of pressing through the wilderness world on their way to that rest of God, the rest of His glory.

Do not suppose that I deny for a moment that there is in Christ a present rest for faith. The scriptures speak of it plainly Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This is the rest of grace now, not of glory. Then there is something farther too— “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” First, He gives rest unconditionally, in pure sovereign favor, to all the weary that come; and then, when walking in the path of submission to Him and obedience, the faithful find rest. For if one is disobedient; one tenet have (as John says) the heart ill at ease—it condemns one; and, then, how can there be rest? But there remains a third thing; not only rest given—by Christ as a present relief to the conscience, and, again, true rest of heart found in the path of Obedience and learning of Him; but, thirdly, the rest of God when it is no longer a question of man and sin and self-will and misery, but all the checkered scene of toil and suffering will be over, when God will rest in the satisfaction of His own love and glory, having brought His sons and people into His everlasting rest.

Doubtless, as the apostle argues, God gave the Sabbath at the beginning; but this was not His rest, for sin spoiled creation, and He says afterward, “If they shall enter into My rest.” “If” implies that they had not entered it, and might fail also. So again, after Joshua (the “Jesus” here) had put down, the Canaanites (he never completely conquered them), after Israel had settled themselves in the land, was this the rest of God? By no means; for the Psalm which speaks of that rest was written lone after Adam and Joshua. The conclusion, then, is that “there remaineth therefore a rest (σαββατισμ■ς, a keeping of sabbath) to the people of God.” Consequently it has not yet come. The apostle strengthens this from another principle, namely, that one cannot be both working and resting, in the same sense, at the same time. If one has entered into rest, one has done with works, even as is said of God Himself (ver. 10). But the bright day when we shall rest is not yet arrived. So that he is exhorting the saints to labor. Now is the time for work; and every one that has the love of Christ in such a world as this must feel it, for the simple reason that there is sin and wretchedness in the world. Divine love, whether in God or in His people, refuses to rest in the midst of evil. After Christ comes, this will not be so. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

It is not the same principle which we find in the Lord's day, for this is the intervention of divine power in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, after He had gone down into death to make propitiation for, our sins and reconcile us and all things to God. Consequently the Lord's day is an excellent day for spiritual toil, for the work of faith and the labor of love and no one acquainted with Christ, would think it wrong, if able, to preach a dozen sermons on that day, nor to take a dozen sabbath-day's journeys to preach them. Were it the sabbath-day, he could not do so lightly. Thus

they have a wholly different character. The source, nature, and end of the Lord's day is marked out by grace in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, as the Sabbath is by, creation and the law of God.

It seemed good to the Lord then, and it is necessary for man, that there should be first the great truth of the sabbath set forth before we enter on the ways of God. Before He accomplished the mighty work, He hung out clearly and distinctly this initiatory pledge of rest at the end. I am coming to have My rest, He says, but not to have it alone; you shall share it in glory with Me. The sabbath is to be fulfilled in a day yet to come; and that both for heaven and earth. But the rest is after all work is done, whether in type or in anti-type.

Chapter 70

The Feasts of Jehovah: 2. The Passover and the Unleavened Bread

But now we come to another thing: God laying the foundation of it all; and mark first, He does not effect it hastily. There are many who think it would have been exceedingly good if God had at the beginning given His Son to die for sinners. Instead of this He waited for 4000 years. Why so? In the word we get the key to the difficulty. “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son,” etc. It was not on the first day of the first month that the Passover was instituted, that great standing type of Christ slain for sinners, but on the fourteenth day. Was not God in this delay signifying the fullness of time?

First, He leaves man to his own way; and then, lest man should complain that he had gone astray because abandoned to himself, God took him in hand and tried him under law. So Israel, as the center of mankind, was placed under His government. What was the result? After all possible pains the bad tree bore more bad fruit. Israel at the close was worse than at the beginning. The end of man was the cross of Christ. They hated the Son and flit, Father. Therefore do we hear of Christ's death at the consummation of the ages. It is not a chronological expression; but God had tried man in various ways, which ended in nothing but wickedness and ruin. What does God do then? He displaces man's religion and his failure by the infinite work of redemption; and this is what we have in the Passover.

Verse 5, “In the fourteenth day of the first month, at even, is Jehovah's passover.” What was the great principle of this feast? God had come down to deliver His people from the house of bondage. It was not because of any good in them, for the children of Israel at that time were worshipping false gods, and were utterly indifferent to the glory of the True. But next, if God delivers them, He must deliver them righteously. Pay particular attention to this. It is not simply a question of mercy in forgiving those who are wicked, but He will have them before Him on a foundation of right. He is a just God and a Savior. Hence on that night He sent through the land a destroying angel to avenge sin. It was judgment of evil, and the first thing done. He came down by that angel to deal with whatever was offensive to His character. And there was but one thing which stayed the hand of the destroying angel. What was it? The blood of the slain lamb. Wherever it was not on the doorposts and upper lintel, death reigned. Not that God was yet judging all mankind. It was a sample, which testified what sin deserved, and what alone could screen from God's judgment. God declared, in that blood on the sprinkled doorposts of the children of Israel, that the death of a suited substitute only could stay judgment.

It was in the last degree solemn—the lamb judged for sin. But what wondrous grace! Judgment falling on the lamb; not on the guilty, but on their substitute! It was the judgment of God because of our sins which Christ had to endure, the spotless Lamb of God. What was it made the Lord Jesus sweat, as it were, great drops of blood? Was it the mere act of dying? This would lower the Lord below yourself, if you are a believer. Why, a Christian rejoices in the thought of departing to be with Christ, Who alone suffered and died for our sins.

What was the meaning of that cry, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” It was the judgment of sin which then fell on Christ. It was not what the Jews did, nor Pontius Pilate, nor Herod, nor what man in general laid on Him. I know the popular hymn says, “I lay my sins on Jesus.” But the truth is far better than that: God laid them there. If it had been you or I that must bring our sins for expiation, we might have forgotten many; but Jehovah laid our burden on Him. And hence the Lord suffered on the cross as never did before either any other or Himself. For if He had been bearing sins all His life, as some say, either He must have been forsaken of God all His life, or God must have acted as if sin was tolerable till then. Is either thought true? Neither; indeed, without even an appearance of truth. Christ suffered once for sins.

This judgment of God falling on the Lamb alone explains what sin is and deserves; and the sprinkling of the blood on the doors answers to the believer's application of Christ's blood by faith to his own case. In this and this alone was seen that which has made it a righteous thing to put away sin. God’s judgment fell on His Son, because He is His Lamb, Who was able to bear it. The blood of the Lamb is the witness of the judgment, but in richest fullest grace because it was on His Son it fell. This was God's view of it; and you must remember that in these types we are considering not what Moses or others understood, but what God said and faith receives in and through our Lord Jesus.

Do you ask my authority for all this? Turn to 1 Cor. 5:7, “For even Christ, our passover, was sacrificed for us.” Is not this ample authority? And God says this to those who had been Gentiles and now were His church; for He was looking far beyond the Jew on to another day, and this is the day in which we find ourselves. Christ's death is the groundwork of all our blessing, the blood of the slain Lamb, the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world. We may see too, that it was not a question of continuous or repeated offering; as is argued in Heb. 9:26, “For now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Further, “He bore,” as Peter says, “our sins in His own body on the tree.” The consequence of His work is perfect peace to the believer. If it were continually going on, one could not, one ought never to, have settled peace. The perfect efficacy goes with the singleness of Christ's offering, through righteousness as the apostle teaches in Rom. 5.

3.-The Feast of Unleavened Bread.

But there is another feature to be noticed. The Passover was followed immediately by the feast of Unleavened Bread. Not a single day was allowed to intervene.

Now, as an ordinary rule, there was a space between these different feasts; but here is an exception to the rule: And let me ask you, who could, save by God's power, have appreciated the force of this beforehand? Now that it is revealed, we may follow. Like Moses from the cleft of the rock, one can see Him as He passes before us; but who can go before Him? The Passover was followed immediately by the feast of unleavened bread. There was not the lapse of a day between them—one being on the fourteenth, the other on the fifteenth, day of the same month. Indeed, as the feast of unleavened bread in the New Testament is treated as beginning with the killing of the paschal lamb, the immediate response of the Christian to Christ's blood is to walk in holiness. God will not have him to take a single day to himself. At once he is called by the give of God to own himself responsible to put away all leaven. We know from 1 Cor. 5 that leaven is symbolic of corruption. Ver. 7: For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the

feast.” What feast? The Passover? No; but the feast of unleavened bread.

This feast again, we see, is not like the Passover; for one day was to be kept in the latter case, seven days in the former. I may assume that all here who have read their Bibles know the force of “seven. days.” It was a complete cycle of time, and also doubtless in connection with God's people on the earth. “Day” might be used of heavenly or earthly things, not “seven days.”

We may get important instruction in God's ways from all this. There are in scripture several applications of leaven. The Lord speaks of the leaven of the Pharisees, of the Sadducees, and of Herod. The Holy Ghost uses the expression “a little leaven” twice in the Epistles of Paul; but from this we do not well to allow the thought that they are parallel passages. Each has its own force, though there is of course a common character. But I feel very strongly, as to all such passages apt to be loosely huddled together and called parallel, that we should seek to discriminate. True wisdom is not manifested, as the sages say, in trying to see resemblances in things which differ, but in discerning the real difference among those which resemble one another. What you need to cultivate is a sound judgment, and you will never get it by hunting up so-called parallel passages. The habit is, on the contrary, destructive to intelligence in the word of God. Hence I believe it would be far better if such references were left out of our Bible, and the readers had to learn it thoroughly for themselves. I do not mean you should not have a concordance or kindred help; but the Bible should be printed alone, and is incomparably richer without than with these additions, which habitually mislead by confounding the distinctions which lie under phrases more or less verbally similar. The headings of the chapters and at the top of the columns are often worse than useless, conveying at best the mere views of men, and encumbering the pages which should give only what is divine.

It is written then that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Hence to many, as the same words appear in two different passages, the too rapid inference is that they point to just the same thing. So far is this from being true that the application is wholly different. What then is the bearing of each? Let me call your attention to the general principle, that, if you wish to understand any verse of scripture, you must always interpret it by its context. In 1 Cor. 5 leaven represents what is unclean and corrupting, and manifestly immoral. They were not to allow “the wicked person” in their midst, for evil spreads, and ever so little leaven, if allowed, sours and defiles the whole lump. In Galatia evil was taking what we may call a religious or legal form (Gal. 5:9). The Christians were observing days, months, times, and years. They were crying up circumcision as a desirable supplement to faith. This was the Pharisaic leaven, as the other was the Sadducean. The leaven of the Sadducees was the evil of free thought and licentious action. The leaven of the Pharisees was that of rigorous legalism and human tradition.

Keeping the feast of “unleavened bread” typifies the maintenance of personal holiness. So scripture insists: Rom. 6, 12, 13; 1 Cor. 5, 6; Gal. 5, 6; Eph. 4, 5; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 12:14, etc. If we do lift up our hands to the Lord, let it be piously, without wrath or doubting; let the walk and ways be under the sense of responsibility, as separate to the Lord; let love be without dissimulation and with incorruptness.

But is the person all? Not so. Leaven was to be banished from the house as well as from the individual. You will often find people careful and jealous as to personal walk, and to the last degree lax as to ecclesiastical impurity. The Lord calls us to beware of the allowance of leaven anywhere.

Corporate purity is worthless without due regard to personal holiness. Others bring their horror of clericalism or of the sects into shame and contempt by their carelessness about their spirit and ordinary walk. We are bound to eschew all evil, whether collective or individual. In short, what God has at heart is this—that we should please Him in every relation, in what is collective as well as in individual walk. The feast of “Unleavened Bread” takes in the entire pilgrimage, our whole course public as well as private. Thus we may see that if the feast was to begin on the first day after the Passover, the greatest care is taken to show that it was to be continued throughout our entire life here below. To keep this feast is ever our calling while, on earth.

Chapter 71

The Feasts of Jehovah: 3. The Wave-Sheaf and the Wave Loaves

I have already shown the character of the sabbath, and how God introduced it in a manner altogether peculiar. He presented it at the very beginning of the feasts, though in fact its accomplishment, viewed now as a type, will be at the end. It is the great purpose to which all lead. As a present witness to this God attached such importance to the sabbath, that, differing from all the other feasts, it was to be repeated at the end of every week.

Further, it is a mistake to suppose the sabbath is done with, for it is to be in force throughout the millennium. I am not speaking of the Lord's day, when we very properly meet together as Christians; and I believe, so far from its being a mere question of man or churches appointing that day, that it has the very highest divine sanction. So true is this, that a Christian in losing sight of the import, object, and character of the Lord's day, would be more guilty than a Jew that dishonored the sabbath day. But as the Lord's day came in by the resurrection of Christ for the Christian and the church meanwhile, it will be the sabbath, and not the Lord's day, when the Lord God establishes the kingdom and our Lord Jesus Christ reigns manifestly; when idolatry shall be abolished, superstition swept away, and every kind of iniquity that now raises its head will have met its end; when every creature in this world will be restored. For I pity the man who thinks the world was only made to be spoiled; certainly he who does not believe it is spoiled must be more lamentably wrong; but it is a gloomy and false thought that God made creation only to be ruined. As surely as the first Adam was the means of universal ruin for the creature, so the Second Man will be the great Deliverer not only of us but of it. He will reconcile to God all that He made, that is, all “things:” I say not all persons, for this is fatal error. In Scripture you never read of all persons being reconciled.

One little word makes all the difference between blessed truth and hateful error. What can be more false than the infidel dream of universal restoration? God will judge all whose sins have not been borne away to faith in Christ and His cross.

There is a day coming when all creation will rejoice, when the heavens and the earth and all in them will sing together. God has taken particular pains to express the earth's joy also, and it is a singular proof of the infatuation of man that he cannot see it though clearly revealed. This will be the rest of God; and, when it comes, the sabbath and not the Lord's day will again be the distinctive sign of God, which He will have observed and honored through the whole earth. You will judge then from this that I am anything but an anti-sabbatarian. Yet it is an indisputable fact now that all is changed. We do not keep the last but the first day of the week. And what principle lies at the bottom of the change? That the Lord is risen indeed, and not only so, but is gone to heaven; and the first day of the week shines from the person of the risen Lord Jesus in the heavens, now opened, on a heavenly people who are as yet here, but going to be with the Lord Jesus there. Hence it will always follow that, when men confound the sabbath and the Lord's day, they are earthly-minded. As the sabbath is bound up exclusively with the earth and an earthly people, so is the Lord's day with those who are heavenly.

The next feast, indeed the first of the feasts proper as here begun, is the passover. “In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is Jehovah's passover.” The foundation of all the ways of God for a fallen people is laid not in grace only but righteousness; it is the death, the efficacy of the blood, of the Lamb. Theology would have ordered otherwise, and made it the law or Christ's obedience of it. But mark it well: the first feast is not even a witness of the incarnation, nor of the Lord's path on earth; but His blood staying divine judgment. God begins with Christ's death: and no wonder; He could not overlook our sins; and there they were for the first time righteously met, and one may add, as far as the type goes, for the last time as well as the first. They were perfectly met for us by Him. It made no difference to the revealing Spirit whether the facts were present or future, so far as the communication of God's mind was concerned. All was before His eyes, though in Christ and after redemption the truth comes out with deeper and infinite fullness. But every scripture is divinely inspired, and it was just as impossible that God could lie before His atoning work was accomplished as when it was; and that is in part my reason for taking this chapter to speak on. It is high time for every Christian to stand for the word of God, and for every written word of His. The difficult times of the last days are come. Those that hesitate their dislike, or openly declare it, against what they call “verbal” inspiration, are apt to lose all right sense of God's word. It might be profitable, for such as shrink from the inspiration of the word, to say what remains for themselves to depend on. If you give up to the infidel the words of scripture, he will not leave you the thoughts of God. You may try to separate the truth from the words of God; but truth is communicated by words; and the apostle claims to speak “in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” The Bible is the only book which possesses such a character; and the Christian who is led by the Spirit in searching the word of God will learn how worthy of all confidence is the only and absolutely perfect communication of the mind of God.

On the paschal night God acted as Judge. This was necessary and righteous. And let me remark here how dangerous it is when people talk about His love, where they ought to think of their guilt and bow before His solemn judgment of sin.

I do not deny love for an instant; but even the boundless love of God cannot treat with sin, except by His own judgment of it. If sin were to be judged in our persons, we must be lost forever. But then grace provided an offering, the only adequate one, in Christ on the cross; and, accordingly, all the holy unsparing force of God's judgment fell on the head of the Lord Jesus there and then. It is not merely that He died in love in order to meet our need—this He did most surely; but there was far more and of deeper import, for He met the judgment of God. He suffered what sin deserved at the hand of God. And this is so essential to truth that one could not call a true believer in the atonement him who only sees Christ dying in love to man, and so only takes at the outward fact and human side of the cross.

It is patent to all that those who that day only saw Christ crucified were none the better, but rather worse. They were hardened at the sight, and afterward more careless than ever. Those whom grace gave to believe what God wrought therein were saved from wrath. Shelter from judgment was shadowed in the blood of the slain lamb.

Thereon immediately (and there is nothing morally more remarkable in these feasts) follows the feast of unleavened bread. Indeed, as may be seen elsewhere the two are so bound up together that they are both sometimes called the passover. Not one day is allowed to separate them; and

this because God will not allow that the remission of our sins brought in by the blood of the Lamb shall be forever so little separated from our responsibility to holiness. The moment the Israelite was under the shelter of the blood of the lamb, he was forbidden to eat leavened bread, or to have leaven in any shape within his house.

The Wave-Sheaf.

But now we come to another principle. It was not merely that God was at the cross as the Judge of sin. What was shown at Christ's resurrection? Without doubt, as it is written, that God, the very One Who smote Jesus, raised Him from the dead. Sin was condemned, not for every one, but for those who believed. For those who do not believe there will only be the greater condemnation; for their sins are aggravated by the fact that, in the face of God, they have despised and rejected the Son of God; and, more than that, the Son of God dying as a propitiation for sins. Thus the divine judgment of sin on the cross makes the case of the unbeliever incomparably graver; for he is not only a sinner, but refuses the grace of God that would save him.

Here we come to a new section, and indeed a new utterance of Jehovah to Moses, not precisely a new feast, but at any rate introductory to a new feast and indeed the whole pivot on which it turns. “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest” (ver. 10). What is the bearing of this? I am addressing those who, it may be taken for granted, believe that every word of God has a meaning, and a most important meaning. You do not require to be reminded that God's word before Christ is just as truly inspired as the New Testament.

The wave-sheaf then is introduced as quite separate from the passover and accompanying feast of unleavened bread. But in point of fact the wave-sheaf was waved on the first day of the week that followed the passover. So the Lord was crucified on Friday, lay in the grave on the sabbath or last day of the week, and rose on the first day or Sunday as the Gentiles called it. He was raised from the dead on the very day the wave-sheaf was waved before Jehovah. Little did the priest who waved it conceive the power and character of the truth set forth in the first-fruits he was thus presenting before the God of Israel. But the Risen One and Raiser of the dead had left the grave and broken its power for believers, whether they knew it or not; and if the Jews refused to listen, the Gentiles by grace would hear. Indeed there is no apter figure of resurrection in the Bible than that of the grain falling into the ground and dying, and then springing up. It is the Lord's own illustration in John 19: 24: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Of whom was it spoken? Of His own death and resurrection, with its mighty consequences. If He is not raised, vain is apostolic preaching, and vain the Christian's faith. But Christ is raised from among the dead, first-fruits of those fallen asleep. So here it is said, “And he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah, to be accepted for you” (ver. 11). Nor is salvation ever known without it, though souls may be born again. For it is the light of His resurrection which chases away all gloom and every tear of anxious sorrow. It is the resurrection of the Lord which brings out the acceptance of the believer without question before God. In His death our evil was dealt with atoningly, the sole righteous basis for the forgiveness of sinful man; but Christ's resurrection declares that the sins are forever gone for those who believe. “He was delivered for our offenses, and raised for our justification.” “On the morrow after the sabbath the

priest shall wave it.” The type is fully confirmed by the striking coincidence of the facts.

This then is what we have prefigured in the wave-sheaf: Christ raised by God's power and the Father's glory. For His power entered the grave of the Lord Jesus, after all that He felt and could do against sin was exhausted in the cross. Therein was God glorified so, that it was His right to raise up Jesus from the dead, never ceasing till He set Him at His own right hand in heaven; and gave Him a name which is above every name. As man He died; as than He is raised up and exalted. As a divine person, the Son has everything; but He became a man, and humbled Himself, yea, to death on the cross; and now, in resurrection, He is taken up as man by the power of God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.

With the wave-sheaf there was to be no offering for sin. This is a remarkable exception. If Israel or the Christian had been meant, there must have been a sin or trespass offering. Here it is Christ, and as fittingly there was no such offering. When it was a question of bringing Israel out of Egypt, blood was put on every door-post. The passover was thus a striking type of blood shed and sprinkled to stay divine judgment, with holiness following. Here is a fresh truth in the wave-sheaf. For there are two great principles: one displayed in the death of Christ; the other in His resurrection and they are so distinct that God employs two different types to show them forth in our chapter.

It is certain that this typifies Christ's resurrection and none but His; for we see there was no offering for sin connected with it. He was the only man since the world began Who could be presented to God without blood. An offering for sin was needed, even for the high priest, “as for the people, so also for himself;” but not so for Christ, Who died for our sins. Ver. 12: “And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf, an he-lamb without blemish, of the first year, for a burnt offering unto Jehovah: and the meat-offering thereof shall be two tenth-deals of fine flour, mingled with oil; an offering made by fire unto Jehovah for a sweet savor.” It is clearly then a question of Christ only. For here we have the two great offerings of sweet savor: the burnt-offering and the meat-offering, both speaking of acceptance personally in His perfection; and of a double perfection—perfection of life, lived in the meat-offering, and perfection of life given up, or of death, in the burnt-offering. As usual, there was of course the accompanying drink-offering, but not a trace of anything inconsistent with the savor of rest that God found in Christ; for it is of Him, and of Him alone, that the Spirit here speaks prophetically.

I would direct your attention for a little to the next verse, and for this reason. It helps to explain an expression in Luke 6:1, about which I dare say some here present have found difficulty, as certainly most people elsewhere. “And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first that He went through the corn-fields; and His disciples plucked the ears of corn and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.” What is the force of “the second sabbath after the first"? For this I fear it is of little use to send you to the commentators; for they are all at sea about it as about most real difficulties for which you want their help. Some have had recourse to a very harsh way of getting out of the difficulty, and that is cutting out the word (for in Greek it is only a single word) δευτεροπρ■τω: a very dangerous principle where the Bible is concerned. One celebrated critic thus guilty repented, virtually confessing the fault by replacing it. But it is no bad moral lesson for us to have to say, “I do not know.” This at least is true and, lowly; and if one looks up for light, it is well, for then God can give what is lacking.

Without saying more at this time about the critics, let us look at verse 14, for it is important, and helps to clear up a phrase otherwise dark. Now it is a vital claim of piety all through scripture that God must have His portion first, before the believer can becomingly take and enjoy his. One feels how right it is that God should be considered in the first place; it is due to Him, and true in everything; and if we do not render it, we must suffer the bitter consequence. So distinctly was this impressed on the statutes and ways of Israel, that no godly person there would have attempted to touch his corn before the first sheaf had been waved before Jehovah. How blessedly this applies to Christ, we all feel! Once Christ is the waved first-fruits, what may not follow?

For remember that Christ is a man (not only the eternal Son of God), but One Who having become man has accomplished redemption. To His resurrection the wave-sheaf pointed in type, and this for our acceptance. As man risen from the dead He goes up to heaven. He was not taken up in a merely exceptional way, as an individual, like Enoch or Elijah; He was head of the new family whose sins He had borne, going up into the glory of God, accepted for man, that is, for those who believe. By man, when He was here below, we know how He was rejected and crucified; but God raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.

And now the disciples were going with their Master through the corn-fields; and, being hungry, on that sabbath according to the gracious permission of Jehovah they plucked and ate the ears of corn. Now it is said here that this particular sabbath was “the second after the first,” or second-first. How striking that this should be the first sabbath on which it was allowable! It was of no use to show this to unbelieving Pharisees. For what did they care for the truth? Their only wish was through the disciples to damage the Lord, being blind instruments in the hand of Satan. But the Lord vindicates amply His guiltless followers. On this I need not enter, but will just explain the force of the term in question. The first sabbath of the paschal feast was emphatically said to be a high or great day (John 19:31). And no wonder when we take in what God foresaw. But so it was in Jewish estimate. Alas for man! It was the very day in which Christ lay in the grave, the only day, sabbath as it was, marked by that awful crime throughout its entire evening and morning. There was only a part of the other two days, out of the three, which was reckoned day and night. On that first sabbath, immediately before the wave-sheaf, as it was, no Jew would have partaken of the corn. The day after it was the first day of the week, when the wave-sheaf was offered. The following sabbath was “the second-first” immediately after the wave-sheaf. The one was the first, the next the second-first, because associated with it.

But why do I mention all this? Just to show how precious is scripture to explain scripture. Nothing else, as a general rule, can: but we need the Holy Spirit to give us it aright. The word “second-first” occurs nowhere but in this verse of Luke. We see the value of the Old Testament to understand the New, not only of the New to understand the Old. Holy scripture is inspired and profitable; yet it is a fact, as singular as it is sure, that we only begin to appreciate intelligently the Old when we are at home in the New. They both go together for faith and blessing, as they ought; and the key to both is found in Christ the Savior alone, but Christ, King of Israel, as well as Head of the church and of all nations too, for we must not limit or confound His glories.

Chapter 72

The Feasts of Jehovah: 4. The Wave Loaves or Feasts of Weeks

Next let us turn to the feast of verses 15 et seqq.: “And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering, seven sabbaths shall be complete.” There is the peculiar expression of fullness here, such as we hear of nowhere else. This feast only is marked out by seven sabbaths intervening. It is the feast of weeks, but among the Hellenists, or Greek-speaking Jews, the number fifty, as is well known, has given the name to this feast, which is therefore called “Pentecost.” What then was fulfilled when the day of Pentecost was fully come? The Father made good His promise, that incomparable promise of which the Lord Himself had said, “It is expedient for you that I go away.” What could outweigh the blessedness of His presence with His disciples on earth? The gift of the Comforter, not merely gifts but Himself baptizing them, no longer in hope but accomplished in fact.

Therefore they were told on that day to offer a new meat-offering. I daresay you are all familiar with the repugnance that many, believers even, have, to looking at the church as a new thing. They like to think of it as that which has always been and which shall always go on till eternity. Yet it is remarkable that not only does Paul give it the name of the “one new man,” but Moses here calls it a “new meat-offering?” There was a meat-offering before, unambiguously shadowing Christ, as on the day of Pentecost. What did “the new meat-offering” mean? I leave it to yourselves, to your own conscience and intelligence: the answer is so certain that one need not say, more about it. At that day began here below a thing so new that it was entirely without precedent.

Again, in verse 17, we hear of “two wave-loaves.” Mark the association with Christ. He was the wave-sheaf, and He alone: these were wave-loaves, and there were to be two. Do you ask if it be not said that the church was a mystery hid for ages and generations? How then can it be thus typified here? My answer is, God took care, though giving this type, not to reveal the mystery. He did show some important truths that meet in the mystery, but never disclosed itself. For instance, if He had meant to reveal it in this type, He would (as it appears to me, if I may reverently so speak,) have spoken of “one loaf.” Certainly, when the mystery was revealed, it was marked as “one new man,” “one body,” etc.; and in the sign of the Lord's Supper we have, not two loaves, but one bread or one loaf as one body. The time then had not come to reveal the mystery, for Christ had not been rejected nor redemption as yet wrought. Consequently the Spirit of God has only given us here the witness of our association with Him; what may be called a shadow, not the very image. The symbol was plain in the one loaf when the church began.

I am aware that some excellent men have supposed the two loaves to be the Jew and the Gentile; but it seems to me to be incorrect. No doubt ecclesiastical history will tell you as much; but I do not believe men but God. Ecclesiastical history may assure us that Peter and Paul founded two churches at Rome; but we know that the church at Rome was founded by neither apostle, and indeed by no apostle. It is perfectly certain from scripture that the saints in Rome were gathered long before an apostle went there; and it is very hard to learn on what ground they ever went there,

except as prisoners of the Lord. Peter may have been crucified there; Paul may have gone to prison and to death there; but as to founding the Roman church, they never did, and no claim is put in for any other apostle.

Further, in the Book of the Acts, so called, we have the fullest evidence of the care then taken to avoid having two churches anywhere. When Philip went down to Samaria, though people were converted and baptized, there was no church formed till the apostles Peter and John went down. Thus the link was kept up with the church in Jerusalem in the most careful manner. Of laying on of hands we hear not in Jerusalem, there being no necessity for it that day: in Samaria there was, or there might have been ground taken for an independent church, of which there is no trace in scripture. Geographically there may be ever so many churches, but there is only one church of God, only one communion recognized on earth. I know there are persons exceedingly sore as to that point: it is usual when people feel their weakness. What they need to see is that it is no question of opinion or will, but of submission to God and His word.

I say then, the two wave-loaves do not mean two churches, a Jewish and a Gentile: the very worst notion possible, one may add, as it kept up the old distinction; while the very essence of the Gospel, as well as of the one body, is to break all this down forever, as well as to save, in Christ.

When God gives a witness, His regular way is by at least “two.” So we read “that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” When there was to be a full witness, and not a barely valid or sufficient testimony, there were three. So the Lord was three days in the grave; there was the fullest witness to His death. Two witnesses were necessary. And so it will be by-and by, when things come to a serious pass for the Lord in Jerusalem. There will be “His two witnesses:” not that I understand this to be said numerically, but according to the figure of adequacy. Here Christ was risen—the wave-sheaf. What witness was given next of the power of His resurrection? Ourselves, as the two wave-loaves. The Christian company are witnesses, not to the law of God like Israel, but to His grace in Christ risen from the dead. Such is the contrast that Paul brings out in 2 Cor. 3, where he speaks of our having Christ written on us. He takes particular pains to show that it is not on tables of stone. He leaves this to the Jew, who, without doubt, was called to be a witness to the law of God, as the Christian is to a dead and risen Christ in the power of the Spirit.

The wave-loaves, we see, were to be of fine flour baken with leaven. Here are two constituents in the types, so opposed to each other that one who knew their use elsewhere might wonder what to think of them here. Fine flour!—why, that is like Christ, pure, without sin: and leaven!—that is like ourselves, naturally corrupt and corrupting; and is not this just what scripture teaches? Yet there is where so many find a difficulty about the two natures; but really I am unable to find an excuse for their want of light as to both scripture and themselves. I do not think that Christians ever so young in truth should find it hard to believe that they have two natures within them, one craving after what is evil, and old habits of self, the other delighting in the will of God and loving what is of Christ. We do not need to go to Epistles, like those to the Romans, Corinthians, or Galatians: here we have the type wrought out that the wayfarer may not err. I know that a short time ago some zealous folk came over from America to preach up that the Christian might be a perfect being without any sin. Moses refutes it all. Here we have two seemingly contradictory things mingled in what typifies Christians—fine flour and leaven. Experience tallies with it. Not that there is the least excuse for

sin; but sin is there, set out by leaven, not at work but baked in the bread.

Thus we see how truth all hangs together, and from first to last God only speaks perfect truth; and man, without Him, can only find out and utter what is not true in spiritual things. Our part in the things of God is not to theorize, but to believe. But the Spirit is as necessary to the understanding of the word, as the word is the necessary material for the Spirit to use. Yet I am sure that one safely finds the truth not as a student, but as a believer. God is dealing with the heart and conscience. You cannot separate real growth in the truth from the moral state of the soul: if we essay it, we may appear to get on very fast in learning the Bible, but it is to be feared that the next step will be a fall.

Again, in ver. 18, we read, “And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs, without blemish, of the first year; and one young bullock, and ten rams: they shall be for a burnt-offering unto Jehovah.” The Christian should have the sense of complete acceptance before our God and Father; and even this is not all. In verse 19, “Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin-offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace-offerings.” In the case of the wave-sheaf, as we saw, there was enjoined a burnt-offering and a meat-offering. It is just the same here: the church by grace has the same acceptance as Christ had in Himself. The object of redemption was that we might be even now as completely free from charge of sin before God as the blessed Savior; but He in His own perfection, we in virtue of His work for us. Nothing can be plainer than the type, unless it be the divine explanation in the New Testament. Consequently we have the same figures and similar language used; but now we come to a different thing, for there is a most striking difference. With the wave-loaf there was to be a peace-offering and also a sin-offering; there was none in the case of Christ. In Him was no sin. It is not merely that Christ never sinned, but in Him was no sin; and I particularly press this. He never had a sinful nature, else He must have required a sin-offering for Himself. But it was absolutely needful that an offering for sin should be essentially sinless. And again, when it was a question of Him or of His person, peace-offerings have no place. The peace-offering was when communion was restored, or in communion; but it followed the sin-offering of course. The application is to us and not to Christ.

On another word of the Spirit I must be brief. It is verse 22: “And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field.” What is the meaning of this? Does it not seem rather singular that, after the two wave-loaves have disappeared from the scene, good corn should be found still in “thy field?” The wave-loaves, we all agree, mean the Christian body. Some may go farther back than others, but none deny that they are Christians at any rate. How comes it, when these are gone, that we hear of grain left in the corners of the field? Can the wave-loaves typify all saints? Do you not see that such an instance as this proves that there will be true believers on the earth after the church has disappeared? There will be here below good corn. Of course they are not members of the one body; but God has other purposes, and purposes both for the Jew and Gentile; as here some corn was to be left for the poor and the stranger. The Apocalyptic saints may illustrate this—saints during the last week of Daniel's seventy, after we see the elders in heaven.

Tomorrow, if the Lord will, I hope to enter on the revelation of what is entirely future. We have had the past, and the present too, before us. This last verse touches on the cut-off week in the future, but it does not develop the great and distinct plans which God has unrolled that we may learn in

the closing feasts.

Chapter 73

The Feasts of Jehovah: 5. The Feasts of the Future and the Feast of Trumpets

The Feasts of the Future. (Leviticus 23:23-end.)

The last portion of the chapter which occupied us was (save verse 22) the feast of weeks, a distinct type of God's dealings with the Christian calling. It is hardly possible that any man possessing the slightest claim to the name of believer should question the fact. That is, the feast tallied to the very day with God's sending down the Holy Spirit, and beginning to gather together His children. No doubt they all were Jews at first, but along with it went this remarkable peculiarity: they were Jews that spoke every language under heaven; Jews that spoke not only the language of Canaan, but the tongues of the Gentile world. Surely this was a most significant fact! But more than that: not only were such brought in, but Jews of Palestine, yea of Galilee, were employed by the power of the Holy Ghost to address them in all sorts of languages never before learned. The miracle showed the widely-flowing grace of God that was coming and to come out. It was not as yet that all creation, groaning in bondage; was to be delivered, bit the whole of it under heaven was to hear the gospel. Hence the power of the Holy Ghost enabled the unlettered fishermen of Galilee thus to address their fellow-men in the language of every land into which the judgment of God had scattered them. Besides a gathering power to Christ as a center, grace was meeting men in the variety of tongues to which the judgment of God had doomed them at Babel. For it needs no reasoning to prove that God's work at Pentecost was not merely to save sinners. Those who say so have a most superficial idea of the great work done that day. Undoubtedly salvation was going on, and it was a new fact. Salvation before this was only held out in promise. Now the promise was accomplished. Clearly then those who suppose salvation to be no more than promised do not understand the immense step God has taken in His ways. It is really because of the low estimate they have, not perhaps of Christ, but of His work. The root of the mischief lies there; it may seem a distant point, but, when approached, it will always be found to be an inadequate view of redemption. There is not the reception of God's testimony within. Of course I am speaking here of soul-salvation, as we hear in 1 Peter 1: “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” The salvation of the body is not come yet; the salvation of the soul is as complete as it ever can be. This is Christianity, in fact; which comes in after the work of Christ was done, to save the soul before He again comes to save the body. It is exactly within that interval that we find ourselves now.

But there is another thing besides salvation, and that is the kingdom of God in mystery, for it is not yet manifested. The Lord Jesus is exalted, but not in a public manner. He is not yet on His own throne, but on His Father's. Thus, while there is now a kingdom of God, it is of course in a mysterious way with its own distinctive principles accordingly. None who bear His name can escape the responsibility of such a place of privilege; while those who are in the secret by the Spirit suffer with Him now, as they walk in grace and will be glorified together.

Besides salvation and the kingdom, there is a still more wondrous work going on at the same time—the calling of the church. Let me warn you against confounding these things. This confusion has been one of the early causes of the ruin of Christendom, and essentially characterizes popery, which could not subsist without it. Papists abuse the idea of the kingdom to get earthly power. But it is gross ignorance of the word of God. The Lord Jesus always draws a marked distinction between the church and the kingdom, as in Matt. 16, 18.

These three things then go on now: first, the salvation of the soul; secondly, the kingdom of God, or of heaven, as the case may be, which differ somewhat but are substantially the same great fact; and thirdly also, the church, the body of Christ. This last was in a general way intimated in the portion of the chapter we had before us ender the figure of the two wave-loaves.

We saw, further, that in the corner of the field corn was to be left. I do not mean by this that members of Christ will be left behind by the Lord when He comes for His own, but that God's Spirit will work and that believers will be called after the church is gone. They will be found in that little interval that follows in the last or seventieth week of Daniel.

If any one wishes to trace the history of this transitional space, the details of it will be found in the central parts of the Revelation and the latter half of Daniel. There may be read the full answer to the question of the corn which is to be left in the corners of the field.

The Feast of Trumpets.

Having given this brief summary of what was before us in the central portion of the chapter, we find ourselves in presence of an entirely new scene from verse 24: “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets.” So far from the gospel being a continuous work to the end of the world, as many suppose, we see here that the Lord will begin a fresh testimony with a suited instrumentality for this new work when the church is gone. Observe that it is said here “in the seventh month:” this was the last month in which Jehovah instituted a feast. He brings to a completion the circle of His ways on the earth and for Israel.

In the very beginning then of this closing period of God's dealings, we have what? “A memorial of blowing of trumpets.” God then is inaugurating a fresh testimony. The trumpet is always a figure of God's intervention to bring in some signal change. It may be for judgment, as we find in some cases; or it may be a distinct testimony in grace, as we know in other cases. It is clearly a loud summons from God to people on the earth. And here we find it is not merely a blowing of trumpets, but “a memorial” of blowing of trumpets. It is a recall of what had long passed out of memory. It is God calling to mind what had once been before Him, but long dead and gone. What can this be? It is the recall of His ancient people on the earth. The Jew is again brought into remembrance before God. No wonder that there should be such “a memorial of blowing of trumpets!” Hundreds, one might say thousands, of years had passed since they had stood before Him as His people. The return from Babylon was only a partial work: as a whole, Israel never returned but were dispersed all over the world. Where was the bulk of them? They were lost among the Gentiles; and so to this day they have remained in a peculiar condition, unlike any other since the world began. They are in all countries without possessing their own, and yet a people; they are without a king, and yet a people; without a prince, and yet a people; without the true God, without a false God, and yet a

people; a standing rebuke to the infidel, yet largely, deeply infidel themselves!

But that very people are yet to return to their land, and seek Jehovah their Lord and David their king; and shall fear Jehovah and His goodness in the latter days. But what does God do in the first place? He awakens them. The day of shadows is gone forever. The cross of Christ has closed unrealities. By the power of His resurrection the Christian is introduced into the new creation. The old is gone, the new come; and before God we have our place in Christ. When this work is finished, grace will begin to act in Israel, and they will be awakened.

Nothing more distinctly proves that God will have done with the Christian; for the gospel goes out to the Gentiles (though to the Jew first), and in the church, as in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek. The Feast of Trumpets is God's taking up Israel afresh to awaken them. Undeniably then this feast is after and quite distinct from Passover and Pentecost in which we have our interest; and the first thing disclosed in it is God's loud summons to a people who once had a place before Him and again come into remembrance for mercy, not judgment. It is evident that this could not consistently apply to the gospel that has been going out since Christ's death and resurrection. We have had our sacrifice and call to practical holiness and the gift of the Spirit long ago. But when God has done with our blessing, the chapter reveals that in the seventh month dead Israel is to be raised from the grave by God's trumpet, as Ezekiel predicted long after (chap. 37.). As this is clearly a new work, let us trace what light other scriptures throw upon it.

Let me take you to the Psalms. There you will find how truly they and the prophets agree with this figure in the law. See Psa. 81 There is a plain enough testimony as to its force: “Sing aloud unto God our strength; make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.” If men were not prejudiced, none would deny the application to Israel. The moon, that luminary which wanes and loses her brightness, once more renews her light. How strikingly is this to be verified in the Jew! You could not say it of the church of Christendom. The apostasy of the Gentile is fatal. Take Babylon; and what does Scripture teach as to this? Babylon never recovers her old light; Babylon is the corrupt woman that assumes the credit of being the bride whilst false to Christ, a mere harlot with the kings of the earth; and her end will be judgment and destruction: no renovation for her; no new moon shining out in fresh strength and brightness. Babylon will never rise again. Destruction is determined, and determined from the Lord God, but by the hand of the revived Roman empire and its satellite kings, avenging those she had corrupted too long. It is quite different with Israel, which never had the privileges of the church. The Jew was under the law: what did he know of being under grace as we are? By and by Israel will be put under the new covenant, but this cannot take place till the trumpets have blown once more, and the new moon is shining, as we hear in the Psalm, the new moon at the time appointed. The language is suited for Israel, and not for the church. They sing and make a. joyful noise to the God of Jacob. Why confound this with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Why deny their hope of mercy?

It is a mischievous perversion to apply everything of the sort (the blessing at least, not the curse) to the church. Are we not blessed in heavenly places? We are entitled to take delight in these promises, but then it is not truly to enjoy them if we appropriate them to ourselves. Let us rejoice to know them as yet in store for other people, even Israel, in the latter days.

If I know any converted, am I to be jealous of their blessing? Am I not to rejoice that the grace of God that visited me is thus going out to many others? that it will embrace a larger circle by and by? So here, when we see in the, Scriptures that poor guilty Israel is to emerge from the grave, from their long lasting and dense darkness of unbelief, why wish it to be for the church? Indeed it is to lower our character of blessing from heaven to earth. Let us rather rejoice that at length God will awaken His people and accomplish all His purpose in them here below.

And here let me briefly call your attention to a passage on this subject very poorly rendered in our translation. It is Luke 2 “A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.” It should be really “A light for revelation of [the] Gentiles.” I understand this to mean that Christ is a light for bringing Gentiles into divine view, and that it is accomplishing now, besides His being the glory of Israel by and by. The Gentiles instead of being in darkness as they once were in the ways of God, have, as privilege and responsibility, the true testimony of God. Not before the millennium will He be the glory of Israel. The Gentiles were once in the dark as the Jew is now; ere long the Lord will come for the glory of His people Israel. Luke's is the only Gospel where we have the coming of Christ thus viewed as present light for revealing the Gentiles and as future glory for Israel. I conceive this to be the true interpretation of the passage, and, when saying so, I do not mean in a half sort of way. It is important we should seize the intended real bearing of the word of God. We must not be too hasty in assuming it; but when we know that we have got it, let us hold it fast and use it for the Lord.

The eighty-first Psalm then speaks of the blowing of trumpets distinctly in connection with Israel. No one doubts there is the figure of a trumpet for ourselves—in general as in 1 Cor. 14, or precisely as in 1 Cor. 15; but then it is never in our case a memorial of blowing of trumpets. Thus the “last trump” is a blessed and solemn word as to us. What is its connection? It was a figure taken from the military usages of the Romans, then familiar to everybody. We must remember that the Romans were at that time masters of the world, and that people knew too well what their legions were. Few and distant were the places where men did not feel the grinding iron bondage of that imperial power. I think it is Josephus who gives an account of their encampment, and lets us know the various and successive signals given for the different movements of the army. But finally there was the “last trump;” and, the moment this sounded, they all moved off. This may serve to explain the Spirit's application of the phrase to the final summons of His people for meeting the Lord in the air.

It may be well to look at another Scripture, Isa. 27:12: “And it shall come to pass on that day, that Jehovah shall beat off from the channel of the river into the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.” This is the gathering not of believers to heaven, but of the children of Israel to their land. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land, of Assyria and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship Jehovah in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” Is not the application evident and sure? “Ready to perish” would not apply to the gathering of the church to heaven. We will be glorified in that day—a very different thing from their being ready to perish. It is clear that, just before God interferes, the people are to be in the last extremity of trial, being set upon by all their enemies.

As long as Israel is unnoticed or chastised by God, the Gentiles can be peaceable; but directly, there is any movement for good going on, and God is working to make Israel the head and not the tail, the old enmity will soon follow. In that day, then, they shall be gathered by God to Jerusalem. It is not Jerusalem above, where our portion is by grace; but Jerusalem on earth, where Jehovah in due time shall reign according to His goodness and promises many. This awakening of Israel then is clearly what answers to the feast of Trumpets.

It is written in Matt. 24:29, “Immediately after the tribulation of these days” —this may illustrate their being ready to perish— “shell the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great, sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the earth to the other.” The context proves that His elect here are of Israel, not elect Christians. This remark may not satisfy some, who, whenever they see any good thing held out in Scripture, instantly assume that it must be for the church. But we can afford to rejoice in the future gathering of Israel. Have our brethren learned the parable of the “fig tree"? What means the fig tree? Not more surely is the rose the emblem of one part of our land and the thistle of another I could name, than the fig tree was similarly used of Israel. “When its branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.” They have had their long winter, and now the Sun of righteousness is rising with healing on His wings. This may suffice to confirm the meaning of the Feast of Trumpets.

Chapter 74

The Feasts of Jehovah: 6. The Day of Atonement

Next, we come to a still more solemn feast, the great Day of Atonement, from verse 27: “Also on the tenth day of the seventh month there shall be a day of atonement.” And it is well that we should observe how events are crowding on during this eventful month. God is finishing His work on the earth. He is going to put out the evil that had so long ravaged among men, and to bring His ancient people into fullness of blessing.

On this day Israel are to be brought under the atonement of Christ. For first let me remind you how impossible it is to think that this day can be for us in the chronological scheme of the Feasts. We have seen Christ as our sacrifice in the Passover long ago, and do not want it a second time here: to repeat the work for us would be to impeach its everlasting value. It is really here the work of Christ applied to Israel. They had the testimony to the Lamb; but they refused it. We meanwhile by grace have been brought into the blessing. Are they to be left out? Assuredly for a time only. The day of Atonement in the seventh month, so long following the Passover, indicates, not that the work is to be done over again, but that there is to be a second application of that work, and of course to a different people. Do you ask me for scripture proof of this? My answer is John 11:51: “And this spoke he not of himself; but, being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” In this passage then we have most clearly put this double aspect of the work of Christ; but “that nation,” the Jews, refused it, for it was to the Jew first that the offer was made. Next, you notice, it is not only for this but to gather in one the children of God, who are both saved and also gathered into one. It is the church baptized by the Holy Spirit. But then there remains for Israel their blessing by and by. It is suspended for the present; but the precious blood, the death, of the Lord Jesus in all its efficacy cannot fail for them also—for the very people who of old refused it. How patient, yet powerful, the grace of God!

On the tenth of the seventh month, in God's time, the day will surely come; and you may find the most sensible difference in the language employed here from that which is used of us: “And ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah.” You do not find such words as these under the paschal lamb; and no wonder. God will make them specially feel their sins, as He could not be unobservant of their long unbelief; and when their day of blessing comes, do you think they will be insensible? Is it conceivable that Israel will regard themselves as other sinners? Certainly not. They will say, We are the guiltiest people on earth: the Messiah, the Christ of God, was sent to us, and we refused Him; He was not yours, yet you bowed to Him. It is the Messiah rejected by Israel Who is become the suffering yet exalted Son of man, and the Gentiles do hear Him, as Israel will another day.

Joseph rejected by his brethren was in another land exalted to the throne; and there too he had a bride unknown to his brethren, while next to the one who set him in the highest place. And when the true Joseph presents Himself to the sons of Israel, will they not afflict their souls as Joseph's brethren did when the house of Pharaoh heard? There never was so genuine a mourning as this

for the seed of Jacob. And so yet more, yea incomparably, will it be in the day that is hastening. And it could not he otherwise, if God wrought real repentance as He will in Israel. The day of atonement bears the distinct mark of what will only, or at least most fully, apply to His people in that fixture day, when God's plans for the earth are being completed.

But this is not all. In verse 28 we read, “And ye shall do no work in that same day; for it is a day of atonement to make an atonement for you before Jehovah your God.” Could this be said so fittingly and emphatically to any other people? Were they not the people of all others who boasted of their works, and so, going about to establish their own righteousness, “stumbled at the stumbling-stone"? Acceptable works are found only in believers. We know that those who have the Spirit of God working in them really show forth the fruits of the Spirit and do not boast. Where all is felt to be of grace, how could they boast? Others who slight faith and consequently talk of the law do in fact nothing. The Jew boasted but stumbled over the lowly Nazarene, the crucified Savior; but it will not be so in that day, when. the reality of faith will not only work repentance but exclude pretension to work. Not that works will not follow, but the day of atonement will shut out everything, if I may so say, but Christ, their propitiation and substitute; so that their self-loathing will be as complete as their abandonment of their own works. The very fact of their now believing what God had done for them in Christ makes them ashamed of the least reference to any works of their own.

There are the two effects: on the one hand, affliction of soul in the confession of their sins; and, on the other hand, no mingling any work of their own with that which Christ suffered for them before God. In verse 28 you see the same sentiment repeated: “For whatsoever soul it shall be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people.” Again, in verse 32, “It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls.” The two things, no work and affliction of soul, mark this day of atonement.

How blessed when Israel know and feel this! And here again I may appeal to other parts of Scripture. Let me refer you now to one of the prophets in connection with this day of atonement, Zech. 12:9: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.” You see the nations are now jealous of and hostile to Israel. “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications.” Is not this the day of atonement “And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.” It is a day of afflicting their souls: “As one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.” “In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart, and their wives apart.” Conscience leads one to be alone with God, that confession may be true and deep. Such is the effect of real Spirit-wrought sorrow; for the conscience, when it is thus really reached by the Spirit of God, always isolates itself—it makes the soul desire to go alone to God. To whom alas! could I tell out honestly all I am? What good would it do any one else? It might do harm. It is to God then we must go, and to God we must confess. And it is good for the soul; for God wants sterling honesty; He wants guile to be taken away; and this is accomplished by His own grace. It is the day of atonement, when Israel hide not like Adam, but their sins are poured out into the bosom of God.

“Every family apart.” So close, so real, is the work that it is said, even “their wives apart:” the nearest and closest relationships are apart, that there may be now, for the first time, “truth in the inward parts.” And what are the families named? “The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart.” Why David and why Nathan? Once there was a time when the king trembled as he stood thoroughly convicted, and the faithful prophet was strengthened of God to convict him: “Thou art the man.” Now what a change! It is no humbled king nor convicting prophet. All are convicted, and so profoundly filled with the sense each of his own sins, that they feel thoroughly the need to be alone with God. It is not only real but deep work; it is not the mere effect of feeling or sympathy fed by a weeping crowd. They go alone, each before God, that all may be out and clear And surely this should be a word of warning as to the danger in these days of multitudinous meetings, revivals, etc. I do not say it to weaken any one's confidence, but that all may see how momentous it is for souls to get alone with God as to their sins.

Nor is this the only picture; we have two others to complete the scene. “The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart.” The margin gives “Symeon” as the alternative, and so does the oldest version, the Septuagint. Of course there is a difference of opinion as to this as in all things; but it is a common thing in Scripture to find two names for the same person, as, for instance, Paul and Saul, Silas and Silvanus, Jude and Thaddeus. But if we accept the view of the Greek translators, they were two sons of Jacob painfully notorious in their earliest history. It was revenge then brought them together. No doubt the Gentile was guilty of gross wrong, and dishonored their sister; but their wrath was cruel, and their revenge as deceitful, as outrageous, and Jacob also full of shame at his unworthy sons, who had been united in deadly purpose under the guise of religion. But now they have found the Savior, or rather the Savior has found them, and they are confessing each his own sins. Thousands of years had passed over; but here are the descendants of these two fathers in Israel bowing down before the Lord who died for them.

This I do not doubt to be the true meaning of the Day of Atonement as applicable here to Israel; and let us rejoice that God will extend thus His grace, through our blessed Savior, even to guilty Israel, kept for this and other great ends of God.

Chapter 75

The Feasts of Jehovah: 7. Feast of Tabernacles

Then begins the last feast in verse 34: “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto Jehovah.” For seven days! It is to be remarked that we have had nothing about seven days since the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and this, as I showed, signified our walking in sincerity and truth, in Christian holiness, the true import of that feast, because Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. It is the whole course of those who are under the pilgrimage of grace. Now here are seven other days for a different purpose; and what are they? Seven days of glory on the earth. This may startle some; for there are very many Christians who, when they think of glory, always connect it with heaven. So they speak of souls having gone to glory at death. Now I am very far from denying that the Christian is destined to heavenly glory. We do belong distinctly to Christ on high; we depart at death to be with Him.

But I am far from thinking, with a valued countryman of yours, that the glorified church is to live and reign on the earth. It is not in a likeness of heaven we are to dwell forever; we are going to heaven itself. The Father's house does not mean the earth, however sublimated or etherealized, but heaven, and the brightest part of heaven. It is not some distant corner or outskirt of glory; it is where the Son abides, where the Father's love satisfied itself in receiving the Son. There shall we be with Him, in the Father's house of many mansions. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” It is where He is. The portion of the Christian is Christ in the Father's house; so we shall be ever with the Lord. He would not tell us so if it would raise our hopes too high. He did so tell us that He might inspire us with the same expectation that filled His own breast. The bride is to be with the Bridegroom. I reject the notion therefore, as unfounded, that the scene of our glory is to be on the earth; and, no matter what the piety of men who have such low views, I reject them as doubly injurious. They deny the church's glory to be distinctively heavenly, and they do not leave room for Israel's future glory according to promise on the earth. It is really therefore a mistake of grave consequence, which affects our interpretation of all the Bible, and confuses the entire scheme of God's ways. Hear what the New Testament teaches: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” We are blessed there in title already in Christ, as we shall be there in fact with Him after His coming for us.

But in the portion before us we have another thing brought out. Here it cannot mean our going to heaven, for we do not speak of “days” there. It is one eternal day in that sphere of unchanging light and blessedness; and by a figure it may be called very well the “day of eternity.” Indeed this is the way the apostle Peter does speak in the last verse of his Second Epistle “To Him be glory, both now and to the day of eternity.” But glory will assuredly come to the earth. Thus: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come,” etc. Where is that to be? In heaven? No; Zion is here on the earth; really it was that mountain on which the king's palace was built, and how significant of grace yet to build up the broken house and realm of Israel, when God will give them the true David!

Let me draw your attention here to two schools of theology, as the truth in question is of practical moment as well as doctrinal. It may be instructive to see how both fail and come short of what the Holy Spirit reveals for the glory of God. As to this then we find each of these schools in opposition. One says that the scene of future glory is to be the earth, where Christ died and God has wrought so graciously, and as to which He has promised such glorious things. Fully do I admit this; but their inference as to our being glorified there is unsound. The other school holds that heaven will be the only scene of glory, and this so exclusively as almost, if not quite, to forget the body and its future resurrection from the grave. They are in danger of thinking only of the soul, and of heaven as a place of pure spirit, which, I submit, is a poor substitute for the Christian's hope, and not at all what the word of God teaches. It is quite true and blessed that even now the separated spirit goes to be with Christ; and no believer should seek to weaken this truth. The recently converted robber was to be with Him in paradise. It is lamentable to know how little this is believed by modern theologians; and I doubt not that their feebleness here is due to their scanty knowledge of Christ and redemption. But this intermediate blessedness is not resurrection; though departed saints, when risen, shall be, as now, in the "paradise of God." As the paradise of Adam was the brightest spot on earth, so the "paradise of God" is the brightest region of heaven. Sinful man was cast out of the one; believing man is received into the other. Christ was the first-fruits, as was due to Him, the Son and Savior; afterward those that are Christ's at His coming.

But there is another thing, the kingdom of God, which has "earthly things"; and for these man needs new birth (John 3), as well as for "heavenly things." So it will neither be heaven alone, nor the earth alone, but both (com. Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:20). In scripture faith finds no real difficulty, though it be far larger than theology, which is invariably short of the truth of God. Theology is an attempt on the part of man to reduce the word of God to a science, and a science for man, converted or not, to learn. No wonder that this is always a total failure, as it deserves to be. You cannot squeeze what has life into this iron vice of theirs without destroying its strength and tissues and beauties. Both heaven and earth are to be under Christ, the distinct but united spheres of His reign to God's glory. In the fullness of the times God is going to gather "all things" under Christ; not all persons, for this will never be. Alas! those who despise the Lord Jesus will, at the end, be cast into the lake of fire. But "all things," the groaning creation, guilty of no sin but suffering from the sin of man, will be delivered through the victory of the Second Man. For this we and it are waiting.

It is not true, therefore, that the earth is the only scene of glory, but also heaven. I might prove this from other scriptures besides Ephesians and Colossians. But I would remind you that it is no good sign to require many passages. One, if plain, is conclusive. Who would admire the state of soul that, when one scripture is given, asks for another? Even if you had only to do with a man's word, do you wish him to repeat the same thing half-a-dozen times over? In fact, if he were to do so, it, ought to arouse suspicion. Bit, if such is the case with man, is it not most dishonoring to God to look forever so many assurances from Him? I grant that in certain cases He may present the same thing in various forms; but this is only pure grace in consideration of the weakness of man.

But I direct you to Psa. 73:24, and I do so in order to clear out a singular mistake of our translators. There we read these words, a favorite text with many: "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory:" very good Christian doctrine; but is it the object of the Psalm to teach anything of the sort? Let us be subject to scripture. You see the word "to" is inserted. And what is the reason for it? "To" or "with" would require authority, for it cannot be inserted or left out

in this sort of way. The truth is that our translators could not understand the meaning of the words as they stand, especially as it was taken for granted that the Psalm was speaking of what we Christians want for our comfort; and so they thought it must mean, “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me, [to] glory.” They never thought of the peculiar hopes of Israel, and so they could not find out the bearing. It is confusion if you apply these words to the Christian. But then they did not know anything worth mentioning of God's ways for the future, when Christ shall reign over the earth.

Now, let me tell you, people are learning to translate accurately, whether they understand the meaning or not. This may not be pleasant, still it is more honest; and thus grace may the sooner use the some one else to help them to the meaning. But, further, I may say that one of our American kinsmen has lately brought out a new translation of the Psalms. The late Dr. J. A. Alexander, of Princeton, was a man not to be despised. His book on the Psalms, as a version, is respectable, though some of us would think its exegesis rather dark. He did not understand what he was writing about; yet he was a scholar, and translates uprightly his text. But let me add, that being a scholar will never enable one to understand the scripture. The one and only means of understanding it is by the Holy Ghost, Who gives us God's mind in it. If it is the church in the New Testament, I must see it in its relation to the Head; if it is Israel in the law or the Psa. 1 must see them as they are related to their Messiah.

Now the late Dr. Alexander never saw the true distinction between Israel and the church, but being honest and competent, though he did not know what the passage meant, he translated it as it really stands, “In (or by) Thy counsel Thou wilt guide me, and after glory Thou wilt take me.” Now what is the meaning of this? The last clause is obscure, he says; and no wonder: he had no notion of the special hopes of the ancient people of God.

The Christian, no doubt, is received now, and will go up at the coming of Christ to heavenly glory; but His dealings with Israel are quite different. He will come in glory to the destruction of their enemies, and bring them in deep penitence to Himself; and then they will be received as His people before the universe. This will only be “after glory.” The glory will have shone first. Take Saul of Tarsus for instance, though he was a pattern not only of the Jew but for the Gentile. All will remember that he had a vision of the Lord in glory, and after that he was brought into acceptance before God.

When we see this, it helps us to understand how the children of Israel will be brought into their blessedness. There were to be seven days of suffering, as we have now (that is quite a distinct thing), and seven days of glory in the age to come. This will be the Feast of Tabernacles in its ordinary character for Israel on earth.

Then, further, verse 39: “Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto Jehovah seven days.” When they had gathered in the fruit of the land, when the harvest was past, and the vintage over; what is the meaning of this? God's judgment will have taken its course. The harvest is that character of judgment where the Lord discriminates the good from the bad. The vintage is where He will trample down wicked religion unsparingly. It is the infliction of divine judgment, and, mark, it is of the living: the judgment of the dead is at the end of the kingdom, which is not spoken of here. This is the judgment of the quick at the beginning of the Lord's reign.

Now we get something further (verse 32): “Ye shall keep a feast unto Jehovah seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.”

It is not only that there is a complete term of glory as we are now going through a complete term of grace. In one feature, we may see, the Feast of Tabernacles stands distinct from all the others; and what is that? The eighth day. There has been no mention of this in the other feasts. The seven days we saw were glory for the earth; but there is the “eighth day too.” This is heavenly and eternal glory! So it is not “days” now, but this one “day,” “the eighth day;” and therefore it has a beginning, but it will never have an end.

We have seen then in this chapter—first, the purpose of God generally sketched; next, the mighty work of the Lord Jesus, with the holy call it involves for all blessed by it, and the witness to Christ's resurrection for those risen with Him. But the application of that work is first to the Gentiles now called in. By and by, too, Israel will be awakened and confess their sins, when the days of glory dawn on earth, and not only this but with a glance at that which is heavenly and eternal in the eighth day.

May the Lord bless His own word, so that you may be simple and clear and wise in the truth unto salvation! And may you have your faith strengthened as you see how God has given a complete cycle of His ways in one of the most ancient books of the Bible. When the theological professors of our day are misusing their position to give currency to the cavils of unbelief, which have lost much of their acceptance even in free-thinking Germany, it is time for men whose fathers valued revealed truth to wake up to these insidious efforts at undermining their faith under the pretentious claim of learning and science. The best of all answers to Satan is a deepening entrance by the Holy Spirit into the truth, and an enlarged sense of that divine wisdom and grace in the word, which is as much superior to Elohistic and Jehovistic theories, or such like vanities and speculations, as the Second man is above the first. “Sanctify them by Thy word: Thy word is truth.”

Chapter 76

The First and the Second Man

As we read the opening verses of the Gospel by John, the mind instinctively recurs to the commencement of the Book of Genesis. Both speak of the beginning, the former of Him Who already existed, the latter of what was then first called into being. “In the beginning was the Word.” “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” But the similarity between these two books does not end there. With different themes for their subjects—Genesis treating of the first Adam and his descendants, John of the last Adam, His words and works—there is, nevertheless, as is attempted in the following paper to be pointed out, so marked an agreement in the subjects of the first few chapters, and the order in which they are narrated, as to lead the reader to the conclusion that He, Who sees the end from the beginning, was so directing what should take place from the commencement of this world's history, that, when the events of Genesis and John should be recorded and compared, the master mind, the guiding hand, should be discerned. Nor this only, but all that is related of the first Adam when compared, or contrasted, with what is told us of the last Adam, should bring out the surpassing glory and excellence of the latter, and the rich grace of God in sending Him into the world.

The earth prepared for man, all the animals over which he was to rule having been created, the first chapter of Genesis tells us of his appearance fresh from the creative hand of God. “God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.” A creature representing God on earth, and like Him, pure, free from spot and sin—such was the one placed as head over this then new creation. And God expressed His approval of this His latest work. He had on the previous day blessed the work of His hands, the fowls and all that moved in the seas; now He blesses man that he may fill the earth and subdue it. It was man's place to rule over it.

Turning to the first chapter of John, we have mention of the appearance of another man on the earth, a head like Adam, but a head of another race—the Word made flesh. And as of Adam and all His works God had expressed His emphatic approval, so we get a no less decisive mark of His delight in the Word made flesh, when the Spirit of God descended like a dove and rested on Him The firstborn of every creature, His only begotten Son, when He appears must be signaled by the special favor of heaven. On Him the heavens opened.

But what comparison with any of the sons of men can bring out His excellency or delineate His glory. There must be contrasts to show what they had not, and what He has. Adam was made after the likeness of God; He was God. Adam was made in the image of God. Of Him it could be said, He was the image of the invisible God. All creation could see in the first Adam one representing God on earth. All who had opened eyes and prepared hearts could discern in the Lord Jesus “a glory as of the only begotten of the Father:” moreover He declared the Father (1:1), which Adam, though made in the image of God, could never do. Again, Adam was created. The

Word was made flesh. Both had a beginning in flesh on the earth. The first had none before he lived here. By the Second, the first was created. Adam appeared on a scene prepared to receive him; He entered a world ready to reject Him Adam walked about surrounded by the works of God's hands. He came to His own things εἰς τὰ ἴδια, and whilst He came to give grace upon grace, and to give authority to become children of God, Adam was to receive the unqualified submission of God's creatures on earth and to be lord of all here below. This is next brought out. It was God's expressed will when He created him. It was carried into execution by God Himself when He brought all creatures to be named by him. “And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.”

Placed in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it, all acknowledged his sway. To own Adam was to submit to God. To receive a name from him was as if it had been pronounced by the Lord God Himself. Beautiful picture of order and subjection to the one set over the works of God's hands! But he was only the type of Him Who was to come (Rom. 5:14). So when He came He could not do less than give names likewise; to Simon He gave the name of Cephas, signifying, as head of the new creation, the use to which He would put him. Afterward the sons of Zebedee He surnamed Boanerges (Mark 3:17). By and by He will give to His saints each a new name, which no man knoweth but he who receiveth it (Rev. 2:17). And just as we have Adam in the garden surrounded by all the living creatures, and owned by them as head of that creation, so we have the Lord Jesus presented to us as King in His kingdom, enforcing the subjection of all to His authority and will. The second chapter of Genesis gives us the one, the second of John the other. Alike in this, each one the center appointed by God, how great is the difference. The glory of Adam seen that day in Eden passed away never to be restored. The glory of the Lord displayed in earth in a brief passing way can never pall, never decay, “He shall be great to the ends of the earth,” “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Mic. 5:4; Isa. 9:7).

And, differing as Adam did from the Lord in the transient character of his glory, we may trace a difference in the circumstances connected with it. The former had to subdue the earth, but had no rival to dispute his sway, and no unruly spirit to reduce to subjection. The latter came on this earth on which His glory is one day to be revealed and His kingdom established over all, with every opposition to encounter and the ruling spirit of evil to overcome. In Eden there was real subjection to God; in Jerusalem it was professed subjection to Him, coupled with the strongest manifestation of personal hostility to the One He had appointed, and the most determined opposition to the authority of God's King. Yet as God's anointed He must exercise the rights of sovereignty over the world. The second chapter of John gives a glimpse of what it will be. The happiness of Eden gone, and gone forever, we learn how happiness can yet be enjoyed on this earth. The Lord provides the wine for His disciples and those who called Him to the feast. But it is when their provision is exhausted that He comes in and gives sufficient to last throughout the feast; for what He provides can never end, depending as it will for its origin and continuance on the work and everlasting acceptance of Him Who provides it. The happiness of Eden, brought to its climax when Adam received his bride, was soon alloyed with trouble, the fruit of sin. In the happiness of the kingdom His people will know no admixture of bitterness, for “the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off the earth, for the Lord hath spoken it” (Isa. 25:8; Rev. 7:16, l 7).

Passing from Galilee to Jerusalem another work presents itself to be accomplished. He must vindicate God's authority where it has been denied. He purges, therefore, His Father's house. Oxen, sheep, doves, their vendors, the money-changers, all must depart at His bidding. He drives them out with a scourge, acts as none had acted before Him, and as none did after Him. For to Him, and Him alone, this place of pre-eminence belongs. Such is a brief glimpse of the double work of the Second Adam in His kingdom. To both the first was a stranger. He sat in Eden to receive the homage of God's creatures. The Lord will give of His bounty to make glad the hearts of His saints, a more blessed position surely than Adam ever occupied (Acts 20:35), and will act in judicial power to assert the just claims of God. At Cana inanimate creation owns His power. At Jerusalem, living creatures, men, beasts, birds, obey His will, a foreshadowing of what the Psalmist predicts, “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet” (Psa. 8:6).

This display of power, as of blessing, loads to the consideration of the need of such a work. Gen. 3 tells us of the entrance of sin, which caused it, and the sad consequences of disobedience. John speaks of the remedy and its blessed results. In both chapters we get God and man brought face to face. In the former is the last meeting before they parted never to meet as they had done on earth again. In the latter we learn how they can meet so as never again to part, if man will only hearken to God. At that meeting in Eden God passed sentence of death as the penalty of disobedience. At this interview between the Lord and Nicodemus He spake of everlasting life as the gift of God. And here another parallel comes out. In both cases we have the mention of a third party. But again we have a marked contrast. For in the one, the third party is the serpent, the seducer of Eve and destroyer of Adam and his race: in the other, the third party is the woman's seed, the Son of man, the Savior of the lost; and what formed the chief topic of the serpent's conversation with Eve, and the snare by which he entrapped her, is the subject the Lord takes up and deals with when Nicodemus comes to Him. The serpent persuaded Eve that God had withheld something from them they ought to enjoy. He made her doubt the reality of God's love. The Lord, when teaching the master in Israel, tells out the exceeding greatness of that love which stopped not at the giving up of His only Son for a ruined, sinful, world. Adam and Eve ought to have resented any doubt thrown over the reality and fullness of God's love. What they failed to do, that the Son of man takes up and carries through. They had proofs abundant of His love to them, and the very presence of Eve was enough to show that what was good for Adam to have, God would provide. “It is not good,” God said, “that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” He saw his need and let none but Himself supply it. Would He act differently about that tree, concerning which He had given such a particular injunction? Should any one of His creatures be allowed to supply the lack which God, conscious of it, had left unfilled? They failed to repudiate the insidious attack on their Creator. It remained therefore for the Son of man to show how entirely contrary to truth it was. And how does He do this? By pointing to what Adam and Eve had received and the place they had occupied as sinless creatures? No: but by showing God could love a sinful world. Adam had evidences of God's love in plenty to adduce; the Lord gives a new proof in coming to die for him and his descendants. And so after four thousand years had rolled by, the lie of the serpent is contradicted. God could so love the world, as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should net perish, but have everlasting life. As far as the misery and ruin of Adam's sin had reached, so far could the remedy now announced go forth. Wherever there was a child of Adam, there was one for whom God in His love had provided” a Savior. Now God

and man could again meet on terms which could never be altered. No longer on the ground of man's innocence, nor on the ground of man's responsibility, for that had signally failed; but on the ground of a gift which God had given, and a work which the Son of man would accomplish.

Another point in these two narratives must be noticed. Gen. 3 tells us of a voluntary act on the part of Adam, and an act of necessity on the part of God—the driving him out of paradise, lest he should take of the tree of life and live forever. John 3 tells us also of a spontaneous act, and an act of necessity. The spontaneous act was on the part of God, and the act of necessity on the part of the Son of Man—the being lifted up on the cross. Adam's act was a gratuitous assumption that he knew better than God. God's act in driving him out of Eden was one of mercy to His rebellious creatures. In John 3 we get something more than mercy—we get grace, God showing favor to sinners in giving them what none would have dreamed of, and no child of Adam have dared to ask. Adam, in Gen. 3 stands forth as the author of the ruin of his race. The Son of Man appears in John 3 as “the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.” It was needful to banish Adam from Eden, lest he should perpetuate his sinful condition forever. And the same God, so grossly misrepresented by the devil, and who appeared to pronounce sentence in Eden, is brought before us by His Son in a different character, as a gracious God, able and desirous to save the world.

The next subject the historian of Genesis takes up is the family of Adam, and the respective sacrifices of Cain and Abel. How to approach God with acceptance is a question of immense importance to fallen creatures, and of necessity follows closely on the fall. How to worship God aright is a question which must follow closely on the unfolding of God's grace. These questions are respectively taken up in Genesis and John, and the first fully answered in the sacrifice of Abel, and God's acceptance of it. He brought of the flock. He owned thereby his condition and desert—death, and that life for the dead sinner could only be procured at the expense of the life of a substitute. Did the consequences of the fall stop here—the solution of the question how to approach God with acceptance—how many a dark and blood-stained page of history had never been written. But sin being in the world, its fruits are quickly made apparent, not only in entailing death on Adam and his children, but in inciting Cain to stain the earth with the blood of his brother Abel. Worship and death are the prominent subjects of Gen. 4. Worship and life are brought before us in John 4. And here we get more than the acceptance of an offering. It is the Father seeking worshippers. “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.” Whether or not the head of the fallen race told Abel how to approach God, we know not; but it is revealed and we read of it, how the Head of the new creation communicated to a poor abandoned woman, by the side of Jacob's well, the true principles on which the worship to God must now be founded. And further, He unfolds to her, the last person in the world, we in our ignorance would have thought of, the relationship in which God will now stand to all who believe on His Son. And as we read in Gen. 4:8, 23, of man taking the life of his fellow-creature, the contrast would not be complete unless we had set before us the Lord restoring to life one who was nigh unto death, and in the next chapter, re-invigorating the limbs of one who had an infirmity for thirty and eight years. How great is the difference here between the offspring of Adam, begotten in his own likeness after his image, and the virgin's Child, begotten of the Holy Ghost.

This leads us on to the following chapter in Genesis, where the sentence pronounced in Eden is seen carried out on Adam and all his descendants till the days of Noah. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Cain could shorten the life of his brother Abel, but sooner or later death must overtake him, “It is appointed unto men once to die.” This is the solemn record of Gen. 5 “He died,” is the simple statement of the inspired historian appended to the lives of all but one herein named. “There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war,” is the word of the preacher (Eccl. 8:8). And the one exception to the common lot of man forms no exception to the rule, that none can deliver himself from death; for we read, “he was not, for God took him.” It was God's act, not Enoch's efforts, which kept his body from the grave.

Turning to John 5 we find death and the grave brought before us again; but how different is the way in which they are presented. It is not the common inevitable lot of man that we are called to meditate on, but the power of the Son of Man over “the king of terrors.” The grave closed on Adam and his descendants, and hid them one by one from the gaze of their families and friends. The grave shall one day open at the voice of the Son of Man. None could escape the consequences of Adam's transgression. None can remain in captivity to death, when the Second Man shall speak. “For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves, shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.” Death by Adam's fall obtained the mastery over all his offspring. By Jesus it shall be swallowed up in victory, and finally be destroyed. “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:21, 22, 26, 27). How cheering that the enemy which entered the world by one man has been overcome by another. Yet what profit would that be to us if we had not the hope of sharing in the victory. This too is presented to us. And here again comes out the difference between these two heads in a bright and glorious contrast. Adam involved all in death, not merely of the body, but also of the soul. The Lord can give life in resurrection to the body, He can also quicken dead souls. “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” How this work is carried on is unfolded in vers. 24, 25, of the chapter: “For as the Father hath life in himself: so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.”

With Gen. 5 the history of Adam closes. Of his career after the fall Scripture says nothing. We read in Heb. 11 of a catalog of worthies; but his name is not in the list. His future position is shrouded in mystery. Before the Second Man, Whose genealogy in Luke is traced up to him, he will one day stand. His voice he will one day hear and obey. But of Him, before Whom he will stand, there is no uncertainty now. He like Adam passed out of this world by death. But we know He lives, and lives for evermore. He has life in Himself, and He gives of it to others. And this John 5 discloses at once what He has, and Who He is. Son of God and Son of Man, He has full authority from God, and all shall honor Him as they honor the leather. He has full power too, for “what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” And the place of pre-eminence from which Adam fell is filled, and more than filled, by Him. He quickens whom He will. He will judge all. His voice when heard now gives life. His voice as Son of Man, when heard, shall raise the dead. Another Man is found to be set over the works of God's hand, worthy to be there, able to maintain His

place. For He seeks not His own will, but the will of the Father which sent Him.

From Adam what have we received? Of what have we to boast? A nature wholly corrupt, flesh not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; for an inheritance, a life of sorrow and vexation of spirit; for a prospect, death, “and the house appointed for all living” (Job 30:23). What did he give creation? By him the living creatures, indeed, were named. But by him the whole creation was made subject to vanity, and because of him the ground was cursed. Blessed be God this position is not irremediable, because another Man has been found Who was obedient to death. From Him we receive, but how unlike that which our first parent entailed on us, a nature which cannot sin, an inheritance which cannot fade away, and a prospect of life beyond death, nay the assurance of everlasting life, which the grave cannot cheat us of, the great enemy cannot deprive us of. And this is unchangeable to those who possess it. And the universe too shall rejoice in Him. The curse shall be removed, and the groaning creation be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Ruin, misery, death, follow the track of the first man. Blessing, happiness, everlasting life, flow from the Second. He gives—gives to the unworthy, gives to the unclean, gives to sinners. This characterizes Him. Of Adam we have to say; he entailed on his posterity the consequences of his sin; of the Lord we have to record, He gives everything the sinner needs, everything the saint throughout eternity can enjoy.

Chapter 77

The First-Begotten of the Dead

Christ in obedience subjects Himself to the last and absolute putting forth of Satan's whole power over men and in death, a power sustained too by the pronounced judgment of God. But it is with the former we have to do here, though it were nothing without this latter. But the prince of this world was judged. By death Christ brought to naught the power of him who had the power of death. In the resurrection He comes up in that power of life which left no trace of Satan's power behind. Indeed, according to His trust in Jehovah, no corruption passed upon Him, no moment's trace of anything that was not the power of the Holy Ghost. He gave Himself up to death, His spirit to His Father, and never saw corruption. In Him, so to speak, resurrection and transmutation were united. In resurrection, according to divine righteousness, He took the condition to which power belonged in grace. He died and rose that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living, being competent and having the title to have all power in heaven and in earth.

In the passage we are considering, His ascension is not touched on, but His coming forth from the whole result of Satan's power through sin, through the work which gave Him the place and power of man in the new estate in which the power of God would place Him. He is the first-begotten from the dead, the Man who has made good, in this final and conclusive conflict, the title of God in spite of sin, and against sin; and baffled all Satan's apparent success, so that God is perfectly glorified in respect of that in which man has dishonored Him, and in which, so to speak, to the creature's view, all that God was, all His moral glory, was brought into question. Christ has taken thus the place divinely prepared for man, the headship of man according to God, the whole question of good and evil having been resolved by His subjugation to the whole power of evil in death (in life He had ever kept it at a distance in the power of the Holy Ghost), and, divine judgment being glorified, made it possible, yea necessary, for God to bring up Him (and, blessed be God! all in Him) into the perfect place of blessing, where divine goodness could have its absolute flow, and that in righteousness—yea as due to Christ, and so to others as redeemed. But here, we take it as the place of power and right, according to God's counsels, in man. The head of every man is Christ, and He will take all men out of the power of death, and Satan's power, though for the wicked it will be for judgment. He is the first-begotten from the dead. J. N. D.

N.B.—It is hoped that Scripture Imagery may be resumed soon, D.V.

Chapter 78

Fragment: Difference Between Blessing and Giving Thanks

1 Cor. 14:16, 17. There is a difference between blessing and giving thanks. Blessing goes out toward, and is swallowed up with, the object of praise; while giving of thanks refers rather to the motives for gratitude in him who litters the thanks. Blessing is unlimited; while giving of thanks is measured by the feelings of the one who offers them. Nevertheless they are hath necessary and essential parts of worship.

Chapter 79

Fragment: Isaiah 53:11

It may be well to learn that Isa. 53:11 stands faultily in the A. V. The R. V. rightly gives “and (not “for") He shall bear their iniquities.” The error here was due to “justify” in the preceding clause, which means really as in Dan. 12.,” instruct in righteousness” —Christ's service, and atoning death. Here the R. V. is still wrong.

Chapter 80

Fragment: the Veil Rent

Christ's work being accomplished, the veil is rent, full grace goes out to the world, and those who believe have boldness to draw near into the holiest. It is no more a people without, with priests drawing a little nearer on their behalf, under the law which made nothing perfect.

Chapter 81

Fullness of Time and Times: Part 1

The believer is assured that all truth and blessing center in Christ, and that it is consequent upon what He is and has done, that the Christian is what the word of God plainly declares Him to be. No less is it so as to the glorious future of blessing yet to be manifested, both as to the heavens and the earth. The present privilege of the family of faith, and the coming reconciliation and gathering together of all things above and below, are the subjects heading this paper. One has to do with the, first coming of the Lord Jesus, and the other with His exaltation, coming kingdom, and glory. It may be profitable to look at both these points with the state of man and things as they were, are, and will be.

In “the fullness of the time,” and that to which it refers, does it not imply clearly certain times or periods which had ran out, so that the time had come for God to bring forth His promised resource in the person of His own beloved Son? To touch upon one or two periods before this moment, there was that of innocence, when God created and blessed man, and set him in paradise. Sin soon entered, and then for the first time is mentioned “The Seed of the woman,” One who should bruise the serpent's head.

After this promise there was the period from Adam to Moses, as stated in Rom. 5, when death reigned, although no actual law was given. It was during that time God called out Abram, who became the chosen vessel of promise, both as to the inheritance, and the blessing of the families of the earth in him. This was confirmed to his Seed in Gen. 22, when Isaac was figuratively raised from the dead. Thus there was the Seed of the woman, and the Seed of promise; but before the answer to both came, it was necessary for another period to come—that of the law which raised the question of man's righteousness and actual state. This period is referred to in the Epistle to the Galatians, where the state of the believer, then is contrasted with the state of the believer now. Then the liberty of grace was not known, seeing that the flesh was being tested, the law applying to man in that condition. Bondage to the law; with the fear of death, marked their state as a principle, even though brighter things and heavenly hopes may from time to time have been given. The believer during the law-age is spoken of as being under tutors and governors until the time appointed, yea, children under age treated as servants as to the thoughts and ways of the Father, even though they were called children. All this marked the closing period before God was about to send forth His very best gift in the Person of His Son, when the promise both of the woman's Seed, and also of Abraham was about to be fulfilled. This therefore is “the fullness of the time” when, after all else had failed on the one hand, and God had spoken according to promise on the other, it is written, “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”

Christ incarnate therefore is the time referred to, when the day of innocence, the reign of death from Adam to Moses, and finally age of the law, were all superseded by God sending forth His Son. This of necessity was a new era in the ways of God, being a further, yea, a full, revelation of Himself in love by giving His Son, together with His blessed purpose toward man in redemption. If God had pledged Himself by promise both as to the woman's Seed to bruise the serpent's head,

and to bless the nations of the earth in Abraham's Seed: if too, law had come between promise and fulfillment, God's love had anticipated and provided for all this in Him Who came in the fullness of the time, the One in Whom alone promise could be made good, as well as the people fitted in state and title for the inheritance.

The Son of God was made of a woman, and made under the law. Thus the place in grace taken as to His manhood embraced the whole of Adam's race, as well as that of those under law. Infinite grace indeed for the Son of God to come of a woman, conceived of the Holy Ghost, but born truly of the Virgin Mary, yea, further to take His place under law, and this in view of redemption. To accomplish redemption was the grand and blessed object of God in sending His Son. Though made of a woman, and under the law, nothing short of His death could meet the case of man fallen and ruined, or of a people under law which they had fully broken, and hence were guilty and condemned. There could be no room therefore for boasting, much less insisting that Gentiles must be circumcised, seeing the one needed to be redeemed as much as the other. The solemn question of sin must be settled by Jesus, Who in the fullness of time came for that end. The love of God the Father in sending, and the love of the Son in coming, are alike seen; although it rested wholly with the Son to die for the ruined sinner, and no less take the curse and exhaust the judgment of a broken law. Thus, and thus only, was justice satisfied, holiness met, and a glorious salvation secured, giving the unmistakeable proof that at Calvary alone was the work done as to sin, for the glory of God, and the need of the guilty.

Redemption being accomplished by the Son of God, privileges corresponding to it are made known, such as distinguish the believer from those before Christ came. This is the important and decided reasoning of the apostle in relation to believers under law. Indeed, none knew what is now revealed and established. They were in bondage, with no indwelling power, either as to liberty or relationship. Promises as to the inheritance were theirs, given as they were to Abraham, and confirmed to his risen son Isaac; but as is shown in Gal. 3, Christ is the true Seed in whom all centers. Whereas now, faith in connection with Christ (Who has made good by His death that which established the promises in Himself) has come, whilst the believer in the past was shut up, kept under the law. It is no longer the tutor or schoolmaster, but Christ; and those believing in Him are, not only delivered and in holy liberty, but children of God. These two privileges were not known till Christ came, neither could it be said, there was neither Jew nor Greek, for these distinctions existed even with believers who were of Abraham's seed, hence of the promises. They were children, that is to say, in infancy, as to the inheritance, and the Father's mind about it, with no real fellowship with Him respecting it, although heirs. Now, on the contrary the Jew, under law, and the Gentile without law, when believing it Jesus, have equally received the adoption of sons, a precious gift freely given of God, in virtue of an accomplished redemption.

The believing Jews, now having Christ, are no longer in the place of servants, but in the knowledge and happy liberty of “sons of God;” moreover as to the believing Gentiles the apostle adds, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” Life, liberty, and relationship in the power of the Spirit of God mark the present period, rather than what marked the past. They are Abraham's seed, therefore, on the principle of like faith (but faith as now revealed in connection with Christ and redemption accomplished) yea, sons and heirs of God. Is not this wondrous vantage ground, though in true character with the result of promise, relationship, and heirship, being made good in Christ risen from the dead? He it

is Who is the sole and worthy cause of the believer's present state, being a contrast to those before He came, even though the principle of faith as to promise and blessing is ever the same.

How sad to find many true believers not knowing or enjoying their true privilege of adoption and heirship in conscious association with Christ risen. If free from law-righteousness by owning Christ, yet are they often following some good forms of the flesh so termed, with works in character with such a state. They either excuse, or teach, a condition of bondage and doubt, confirming it by turning to the experience in the Psalm and other portions, to the cost of receiving and standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free. Such a state of life and grace is not according to the gospel of the grace of God, and is most dishonoring to the finished work of Christ, the holy and righteous basis of it. Let the reader ponder this, and if under bondage in the mingled experience of doubts and fears, may he see that abiding peace with God, and complete deliverance from the Adam state of sin, crowned with the Spirit of adoption, begetting the happy cry of Abba, Father, are alone true Christian liberty. (To be continued.)

Chapter 82

Fullness of Time and Times: Part 2

The apostle Paul unfolded to the Galatians the nature and result of the “Fullness of the time.” Their state in returning to the immature era of bondage demanded that they should know, not only that God had sent His Son, but that He by purchase had brought liberty for the believer, with the privilege of present sonship, and heirship of the future inheritance. This rich blessing is declared to be the common ground of grace, open to Jew and Gentile apart from all former questions of law, circumcision, etc. Beyond this the Galatians are not carried; whereas in Ephesians there is that which is altogether special and heavenly. There the full truth and character of the divine family, and the nature of the church as God's habitation and the body of Christ, are fully brought out according to the counsels of God in Christ. He, the Son, Who when on earth revealed the Father, came no less to do all His blessed will. This He did perfectly, crowned with the blessed fact of having vindicated at Calvary's cross every attribute of the divine nature and majesty in presence of and by sin. Therefore, it is written of Him respecting that moment: “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.” Such a work could have but the immediate result of Christ exalted on high in the highest heaven. There He was placed as the glorified Man, the head and center of all God's purpose and action, which is the basis and spring of the Epistle, giving out God's counsels of present and future blessing.

Thus the believer has only to take the attitude of David, when he went in and sat before the Lord, worshipping at the extent and fullness of blessing which passed before him. It is the action of God in the known estimate of His beloved Son and His work; and the blessing must follow in full character with it. Therefore here it is the question of what is being done, and will be done for Christ and those in Him. It is no wonder, therefore, that the “fullness of times” should be found in Ephesians, seeing that it refers to the setting of Christ as head over all things; in established exaltation and glory, with an unbounded sphere both in the heavens and on the earth. Such being the revealed truth, those so deeply concerned may well learn, before entering into a measure of detail as to the coming event, what is said of such as are then fully and intimately associated with the destined head and heir of all things. If the Epistle to the Galatians establishes life, and relationship in holy liberty in Christ for believers, that of Ephesians blessedly starts with the fact that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. This therefore precedes the naming of the persons as to their life and relationship of children. Choice, as to a nature of holiness, without possibility of blame before God, then, children before the Father, or unto Himself, according to His own delight and pleasure: language of love and purpose, worthy of Him who utters it, nevertheless found only here, and not in the Galatians where the Father's good pleasure is omitted, and the point of sonship and heirship is finally reached, consequent upon the Son having been sent in “the fullness of the time” to buy us out.

Now that the time has come to tell forth what God is doing, and will do for Christ, those blessed, and in holy relationship, are stated to be brought into favor in the Beloved. Thus, their eternal interest and heavenly blessings may well be wrapped up in His, seeing too that it is all to the

praise and glory of His grace. Redemption also, even the forgiveness of sins, is said to be according to the richness of His grace, riches providing for the depths of misery into which their sins had plunged them. Yea, it is added, “Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.” This divine goodness meets human badness gloriously, in Christ and in the cross, for the believer. All the good in life, relationship, and blessing is everlastingly established in Him, and no less redemption by His blood giving present full forgiveness, setting free those once in their sins, so as to enter into God's wondrous purpose concerning Christ His beloved Son. This purpose was ever in His mind. Scripture everywhere, either in type or promise, sets forth that Christ the second Man and the last. Adam was, and is, the great purpose of God; but the revelation of it was reserved until the Son had come. Indeed, not till after He had died, was raised from the dead, and ascended, did God make known the mystery of His will respecting Him by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. God's hidden purpose being now revealed, it behooves us with unshod feet to listen to what this precious secret embraces in Christ the God-appointed center. Is it not Christ and His church, that spiritual Eve formed out of the womb of death to be His body, companion, and bride? If God has set the Second Man on high, it is, as the same chapter states, to be the head over all things to the church which is His body and fullness.

The secret now revealed therefore is, that Christ has a body on earth, new, heavenly, formed for Himself, which, when completed, will be His “fullness” to share His exalted position as head over all things. Infinite wisdom, and most marvelous fact!—that those brought into favor in the Beloved (formerly hell-deserving sinners) should be destined to such a place of union with Christ by the Holy Ghost; and ere long the body be completed according to eternal purpose, fitted to share the coming blessedness of Christ’s rule over all things, both above and below! If the apostle to the Galatian believers speaks of the heirs being sons in liberty, here he speaks of the mystery of God's will connected with His good pleasure and purpose in Himself. The divine side is now unfolded as to how He is acting, and will act, in, by, and for His well-beloved Son. He will, therefore, “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, in Him.” This promised purpose awaits “the fullness of times.”

Having seen that now is the time, when the body is formed for Christ its Head, and the co-heirs are being gathered out of the world to share the coming glory, it may be well to see from scripture, what the times now are, in contrast to what they will be. When it is understood that the position of Christ decides and defines that of His people, it is important to be clear that whilst He is accepted, and exalted by God at His right hand, He is rejected by Jew and Gentile. Therefore the world as a system is at issue with the heavens, Christ being earth's rejected one but heaven's accepted one. Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, until His enemies are made His footstool, marks this time or hour of rejection, yet will it soon have run its course in due season.

In Luke 21, the time of Jerusalem being trodden down of the Gentiles is stated, although the limit or end is also given “Until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” The world-power that began with Nebuchadnezzar, the first divinely appointed empire under the God of heaven, is still responsible, even though its responsibility was sealed for judgment when Pilate gave up Jesus to be crucified. It was also the time when Israel is cut off, and blinded through unbelief, which will continue until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. (see Rom. 11) The world being condemned for having crucified the Son of God, those that are Christ's are called to share the rejection of Him for whom they are left in it. It is therefore the time of suffering, both for the name of Christ, and for

righteousness sake, a time which must continue until the “fullness of times” comes, when God will introduce and establish His Son as Sovereign Lord and Ruler. Since the cross and rejection of Christ, the great enemy and deceiver has had the solemn title of the “god of this world” ruling in the hour of night-time, his grand object being to blind the minds of unbelievers, lest the light of the gospel of the glory should shine upon them and they should be saved.

Further, creation's state is spoken of in Romans 8 as one of universal groaning; pain, sorrow, suffering, death being the abiding marks, with blight upon the whole scene, declaring that the heavens and the earth are far from being one, as will be the case when the lower scene will be filled with the glory of Him who sits in the heavens. For this the world waits, according to promise and prophecy, when the sure mercies of David will be made good, by Him who is both David's root and offspring; then will appear the striking contrast to what exists now.

In seeing from scripture how this new and glorious state will be brought about, when the fullness of times shall come, it raises a solemn warning to those living in and for the world, without Christ. Deceived by Satan, as to the pending judgment of the world, together with that which outwardly professes Christ's name, the cry of peace and safety, with the mere form of godliness without the power, will only add to the awfulness of it in its surprising reality. Both 1 Thess. 5 and 2 Thess. 2 with many other scriptures plainly declare what is coming, all being connected with the stated fact, both in Old and New Testament, that judgment is to close the times of the Gentiles, Israel's unbelief, and the apostate professing church. Rev. 18 records the solemn and sudden fall of religious Babylon and chapter 19 gives that of the nations. The smiting of Nebuchadnezzar's image in Dan. 2, and the smiting of the earth in righteous judgment given in Isa. 11, also declare what awaits the earth before the blessed time of Christ's universal glory. In this way, and not by the precious gospel now preached, will the earth be cleansed, so as to make way for the gathering together in one all things in Christ. Indeed it is the blessed God Himself who will effect it for His worthy and only beloved Son by judgment.

If Psa. 110 made known the present seated position of Christ as the Royal Priest before the enemies are overthrown for His rule, Psa. 2 likewise declares what Jehovah will blessedly do for His Son, as it is written, “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” Moreover, His only begotten Son shall receive “the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.” Psa. 8 alike declares that the Son of Man is to have universal dominion, when all things shall be under His feet. Who this Son of Man is Heb. 2 plainly answers, while much of it awaits its fulfillment, even though He is on high, “crowned with glory and honor.” The King having His throne on the holy hill of Zion is clearly future, and Psa. 48 sweetly declares the result, when Jerusalem, now trodden down by the nations, shall be declared, as it shall become, the city of God, having there the mountain of holiness— “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” As Son of Man, His name (now despised and rejected) will be excellent in all the earth, in harmony with what it now is in heaven. Then according to Dan. 7 will the combined title and glory of Christ as Ancient of Days, and Son of Man be fulfilled (as already stated of Him in Rev. 1), when the last existing power of the Gentile image in the form of a powerful and terrible beast will be overthrown, and the rejected Jesus will receive His rights. Universal dominion and glory will lie His, and all peoples, nations, and languages shall serve Him, who is God's alone center for the earthly rule in connection with the heavens, and the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ will have come.

The full results of David's song then will be realized, “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice” (Psa. 96). The true David's feet will have touched the very Mount of Olives where He once stood as the rejected One; when, in the place of weeping over the city guilty of His death, living waters will, in that day, flow out of Jerusalem, and the blessed truth be established, “And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and His Name one” (Zech. 14:9). What a glorious contrast to the present groaning creation, with a world, and professing church, ripening for the pronounced judgment! Notwithstanding their boast of advance in outward power and greatness, yet, if tested by the person and work of Christ and the unchanging truth of God, they are “wanting” in a fuller sense than Israel, or Belshazzar of old. Thank God, despite of what exists below, faith can turn upward and know that Christ the center of all God's purposes is already in heaven, having, as Eph. 1 states, been made to sit at God's right hand. There, as the exalted Man He is “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.” The age to come therefore, when the “fullness of times” shall have arrived, will make manifest the glorious exaltation and universal dominion of Christ. But the church of God in given grace and privilege is called to enter, even now, into God's purpose about the administration of all things above and below, rejoicing too in the already existing truth, as stated in another place concerning Him, “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to Him” (1 Peter 3:32).

Thus, where and what Christ is, together with the approaching future, as to the varied glories, may well create, in the hearts of His loved people, a deepening desire for God's purpose to be made good, so that. the heavens and the earth, now separated, may be brought together, under the universal rule of God's beloved Son, Israel's Messiah, and the Son of Man, in the establishment of righteousness, peace, and blessing. Moreover, as co-heirs and companions in the coming inheritance and kingdom, may the true and properly heavenly hope possess and govern those who are called to await the gathering together on the cloud to meet Him in the air, and so be with Him, and like Him, forever. G. G.

(Continued from page 167.)

Chapter 83

Gideon

Gideon was not of Judah, to whom such honors had by ancient right belonged, but of Manasseh; and his family the least in Manasseh. But such an one is called away from his threshing, to bear that sword which was soon to distinguish itself as “the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.” But what was this sword of such renown? Three hundred men with trumpets and pitchers! Strange weapons of war against the host of Midian. But Midian ran before them. A cake of barley bread tumbled in and overturned the tents of the enemy. For it was the Lord Himself who was in action, and the treasure of Israel's strength might therefore well lie in an earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:7).

Chapter 84

God's System of a Church: Part 1

The origin of most of the differences in opinion which exist among the saints is secret infidelity as to the sufficiency of the provision made by God for the instruction and guidance of His people in the Scriptures. To enumerate all the evil fruits springing from this unsanctified root were both difficult and unprofitable. For our present consideration let one suffice; and that one, full of the deepest interest, to even nominal Protestants, because as well the confessed subject of endless divisions among themselves, as the taunt and jeer of the Roman Catholic Church system, who can define? Who can describe? Who can even count the number of the systems of churches) in England alone, differing in every respect, except alas! their inconsistency with the instructions and patterns given us in Scripture. Yes, this is the real source of all the evil self-confidence refusing to acknowledge its ignorance, and search the oracles of God on this topic; and therefore we have been given up to our foolish minds. For what matters the Protestant motto being “the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible,” if, in direct opposition to this; it has been refused (practically at least) by all, in the modeling of the churches, to go for wisdom to the very copious instructions given on, the subject in the same Bible?

Yet this accusation (of a hardy refusal to bend to Scripture) is perhaps too strong, and it has only been erroneously assumed through ignorance of the written word, that the mind of God has not been expressed concerning church system, i.e. that no order or plan has been laid down by the great Head of the church, for the standing together of His saints, in any given place, whilst (from the day of their conversion) they are looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the Lord Jesus. To meet this supposed ignorance, the present tract purposes to show chiefly from that part of the Book of truth, which is peculiarly the directory of the present dispensation (the Acts, Epistles and Apocalypse),

1.-That the divine wisdom has laid down a certain principle for the communion of the saints, whilst on the earth, viz.

The sovereignty of the Spirit in the mutual dependence of the members and

2.-That this principle is found developed in practice, in a system appointed by God for the churches; the details of which system are most minutely revealed as to the mode—

1st.-Of edification,

2ndly.-Of government, and

3rdly.-Of discipline.

For He who knew what was in man left nothing to be dependent upon the petty accidents of time, but detailed in the word, a plan for the collocation of His saints, and that plan so obviously founded upon one great and important principle, as thus to contain within itself a check to all the minutiae of its several parts.; no other changes of details, save that revealed, being possible, without a direct violation of the said principle.

SECT. 1-If it be asked, on what general principle the communion of saints is enjoined? the answer is obvious— “On a supposed participation of the Spirit.” Such, at least, was the argument of the apostle Peter before the church at Jerusalem: having freely yielded himself in communion to some who, as Gentiles, were deemed unworthy of such high privileges, and being called to account by the apostles and elders of the church, he exculpated himself by showing how those, to whom he had gone, had (though Gentiles) received the Spirit, and, therefore, this being the sole prerequisite to communion), had as good right to it as themselves, the Jews.

Acts 11:17.— “Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift (i.e. the Spirit), as He did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God?"

Secondly, the particular case—These have the Spirit.

Thirdly, the result—They have right to communion.)

Would to God that this, which is nothing else than unity in the Spirit, had been remembered! many a rent, many a schism, would it have saved the body of Jesus; but men have sought out many inventions. Look at the churches of Rome and Greece—what is their principle of communion, yea, the very essence of their existence? unity indeed, but unity in error; on the assumption that the church makes the Spirit, and not the, spirit the church: in other words, that because their system has been called “The church” from the time of the apostles, therefore it must have the authority and power of the Spirit which was in the primitive church—instead of that, the body which has the authority and power of the Spirit which was in the primitive church alone deserves its name. The Reformed churches, Lutheran, Genevese and others—what their bond? Unity again, but unity in knowledge only: blessed indeed when the, gift and consequence of the Spirit; but most evil when, as with them, “assent and consent” to any truth (beyond free pardon and salvation by faith in the Lamb) became the watchword of the citadel; for what is this but the appointing of a word which the weaklings of Christ are often, the strong ones of the adversary never, unable to pronounce?

The standing of the third great division, those called dissenters, is unity in difference; for the great strength, perhaps life, of their systems, rests, by confession of their wisest supporters, on the opposition their dissent produces. The church militant, in truth, is nothing but the manifestation, in this world, of the saving effects of the gospel; uncertain perhaps, by reason of the thick and deluding mists around. How wise and reasonable then, that the only term of admission to its privileges should be the apparently real manifestation of that. Spirit, Who (present in whatever weakness) gives by His presence the power of fellowship.

Let us now investigate the peculiar development of this principle in its application to the assembled body. We shall find that the Holy Ghost's presence is made manifest in the assemblies of the faithful, not so much by dwelling in any individual, as among them all—so as to form a structure, the chief feature of which is mutual dependence, even as it is written (John 17:22), “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they also may be one in us, that the world May believe that thou hast sent me.” And again (Matt. 18:20), “Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

The following proofs of this, are offered from the word—

1.-(Rom. 12:3-9.) “I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think (of himself) more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we (being) many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, (let us prophesy) according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, (let us wait) on (our) ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth (let him do it) with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.”

2.-See what Paul says of this church (Rom. 15:14).

3.-1 Cor. 12:4, &c.—see (chap. 13) love as the apostle describes it, a church gift; i.e. one which could not be fully developed save in communion with others.

4.-1 Cor. 14:1-5, and 23-25.

5.-Eph. 4:1-16.

6.-Eph. 5:18.

7.-Col. 2:19. (See also 1 Cor. 1:4, 5; 2 Cor. 8:7; Col. 3:16; Heb. 3:13; 10:24, 25; 1 Peter 4:10, 11).

Thus, when the Lord first put His saints together, we see how the principle of His system was the casting of them one on the other, by the Holy Ghost's presence, and free circulation, without restraint, through the whole body. This truth, and not justification (which touches the individual only), is the true “articulus stantis vel cadentis ecelesiae." For a church is not merely a congregation of faithful persons accidentally assembled together (ready like some heap of stones for the laborer to pile one upon the other); but such an orderly arrangement of them, according to the mind of the great Master Builder, as to be in mutual dependence. In masonry but one way has yet been discovered, in which mutual dependence can be distributed to each part, namely, by the arch; so in things spiritual, one order has been developed by God Himself, and who shall find another?

Chapter 85

God's System of a Church: Part 2

SECT. II.—Our next position is, that this same principle is found as the basis of the most minute details of a system, appointed by God for the church, in its mode

1st—of edification;

2ndly—of government;

3rdly—of discipline.

1. We have indeed but one account in Sacred Scripture of a church meeting under ordinary circumstances, which can be quoted in proof that the Spirit's presence among the members, the spring of mutual dependence, is the basis on which church edification should rest—yet it will be sufficient, because 1st., a very full account in itself; and, 2ndly—this, its grand feature of peculiarity, springs not from anything accidentally present, but from that which is most essential in the structure of a church, viz. the Spirit; and it may therefore fairly be considered a property of all the churches.

See 1 Cor. 14:22-33.

See also Eph. 4:1-16. So perhaps 1 Thess. 5:11, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

Thus is embodied, in practice, the mind of. Jesus concerning the regulation of congregational meetings, and this is the only recognized mode of edification; Glorious privilege, indeed, for the Holy Ghost Himself to be the teacher in the congregation, speaking now by the mouth of one, now by the mouth of another, as seemeth good to Himself, and exercising among them the various powers Himself has bestowed! The works of the elders were the helps and governments (1 Cor. 12:28); and, as sacred history testifies, were not as such for the edification of the assembly.

II. Again, in government, the same principle is found as the basis of judgment; even the Spirit's presence among the members, the spring of mutual dependence.

Correctly speaking, the government is an absolute monarchy, the Holy Ghost in the churches being sovereign. The idea, therefore, common among many, that the principle is that of a democracy, is totally wrong; although, of course, as a number of those who (not being prepared by the Spirit, either for helps or governments) exercise no office in the congregation, far exceeds that of those so gifted; and as all are supposed to have the apprehension of the Spirit's mind (see 1 Cor. 5 and 10:15, “I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say,” 1 John 6, &c.).. the responsibility rests mainly with the many, even though God inform their judgments through the few. The only officers, found in the churches, are elders and deacons; for the apostles were for the building, and not continued dwelling, in these congregations. In each of these two offices, then, we shall find the same principle of mutual dependence preserved by the appointment of a plurality of the officers.

1st, elders. This office, in some sort, is of very long standing. Ere the Israelites came out of Egypt, we read of their elders. Ex. 3:16; Deut. 27:1; they are mentioned up to the captivity, and again after it, Ezra 10:7, 8.

Throughout the Gospels they are mentioned as an ecclesiastical government, though a wicked one; as also occasionally in the Acts; and afterward, as officers appointed by the Holy Ghost among the saints. (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22.)

See also chap. 16:4; and chap. 21:18; and 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:17—Compare 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:7, 17, 18, 24; 1 Tim. 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1.

The word translated “overseer,” Acts 20:28, occurs moreover in Phil. 1:1 in the plural number, and 1 Tim. 3:2, where it evidently corresponds with the bishop, or overseer.. (1 Tim. 3:1.)

2ndly, Deacons. The first nomination of such individuals we find in Acts 6:1-6. (See also Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-10.)

III. Again, in discipline, the basis is the very same; mutual dependence in the Spirit's presence among the members. (See Matt. 18:17-20; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2:6-11.)

A panegyric on this, the Lord's plan, would be needless; yet we may draw near in admiration of the lovely effect, as to the power of service it is able to supply to the redeemed, whilst in their weakness, as set forth in Acts 32, 33, 34.

How lovely also is the mutual subjection pointed out in Acts 15:2, 22 Cor. 11:33; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24, 25; James 2:1-9. 1 Peter 4:8-11;

How strongly also is this equality set forth by the fact that such was the relative position of the members and officers-bearers in the church, as that the epistles are addressed not to the pastors but the whole body. Note this especially in the case of a controversy about carnal things (1 Cor. 6:1—8). See also the marked pre-eminence of the body to any one or two (Acts 15:1-4 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:18, 19, 23; Philem. 2-25).

The wisdom of this arrangement, as bearing upon the glory of God, is manifest; the power and splendor of the Spirit are not concentrated in one, but seen among many, each in himself like one out of many staves, weak, feeble; by himself unfit to contain anything, associated with others and bound by the golden ring of eternal love, a vessel fit to bear the presence of God; thus it is still true, that no flesh can glory before Him. So also, in reference to the experience of the individual saints, will the same pre-eminence of wisdom be obvious, if we consider the object, concerning them, of a church. A church then is the field ordained by the Lord for the Christian initiation into, and exercise in, the science and art of the spiritual warfare: it is God's first class, for the braising of self, and development of love. The gospel finds man buried in carnal selfishness and forgetfulness of God, and there meets his cry, “What must I do to be saved?” But as the great object of God is, to lead His saints from this, to the perfect likeness of Jesus, “in loving the Lord God with all the heart, and all the mind, and all the soul, and all the strength, and loving our neighbors as ourselves,” that is, the total annihilation of self, by the restoration of the creature to its true place of dependence on its Creator—self (as unconnected with the glory of God and our fellows) is not recognized in the church. In our separate identity, the rudiments of God's character can be communicated. We may be required to learn and to enunciate the alphabet of the language of

God, the religion of Jesus; but He teaches not and hears not His children their lessons beyond the first rudiments separately: the lesson is ordained for a class, and though each may have his own peculiar part in the repetition, the effect produced is of one whole. No man ever understood the Epistles, none ever felt their power, and the force of their contents, without standing in a church. Without it, love and forbearance, the great Christian duties, are not (we may say, cannot be) displayed; for where this is not, men do not, and will not, save with very few exceptions, take up the infirmities and weakness of the feeble. And lastly, as a witness to the world, though preaching is profitable as the publication by word of the love of Jesus, a church is more profitable; because it is the publication in action of the beauty, and glory of that gospel lived out. The beams of the sun of righteousness are not only bright and beautiful in themselves, but they have overcome the accidental fogs and mists, which hide their glory from the earth, and have found, in the still waters of a church, a spot whence their splendor is reflected. True indeed, that every saint has some light and some heat from the love of Jesus, but most true also that the celestial caloric, like the natural, may be so widely disseminated as to give neither light nor warmth. In the kingdom of nature, as in that of the Spirit, every isolated existence contains caloric, the wood, the iron, the flint, &c.; yet, for light, and warmth, unless it be concentrated, what its value? what its use?

To say that all this was only binding in the then circumstances is little less than infidelity; for it is magnifying the changing and accidental trifles of time and country above the unchanging realities of the spiritual world. Our circumstances are in truth exactly what theirs were; in ourselves as feeble as were they; foes the very same in person and artifice; the object of the conflict the same; the same Spirit, the same Captain of Salvation, the same prize. If the order founded by divine wisdom included strength and mutual support (as it did), it is nothing but madness to have left it; for our only difference in circumstance from them is, that in the increase of the power of the flesh, the strength of the Spirit has been withdrawn, and the strength of Satan in subtlety and malice fearfully augmented.

Oh! that saints had grace to try God's own plan. The effort, though in feebleness, would be blessed—the very position would call out a sympathy of love, a subjection of self, and a harmony, which would be God's testimony of approval, and the church would again become as some conservatory filled with evergreens, and redolent with scent, laden with fruit, even in the midst of the winter of cold selfishness around. Its walls would again become lively stones, knit together by the cement of the Spirit of love; and again would a dwelling-place be found on the earth for the Holy Spirit of the blessed Jesus, in a family at peace and harmony as a witness of the love and holiness of the risen First-Begotten, and men should praise the Lord for the gift of Jesus, saying—(Psa. 133:1, 2), “Behold how good and pleasant (it is) for brethren to dwell together in unity. (It is) like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, (even) life for evermore.”

G.V.W.

Chapter 86

Greek Tenses

The following extracts have been sent for a brief examination, which is appended.

P. 56 “The chief peculiarity lies in the Aorist: we have in the English no tense like it. Except in the indicative it is timeless, and in all the moods indicates what Krueger styles 'singleness of act.' As some of our readers may be disposed from dogmatic reason or prejudice to dispute our inferences from this tense, we proceed to fortify ourselves by the following authorities.”

“Says Buttmann in his recent New Testament Grammar, ‘The established distinction between the Aorist as a purely narrative tense, expressing something momentary, and the Imperfect as a descriptive tense, expressing something contemporaneous or continuous, holds in all its force in the New Testament.' Says Winer: ‘Nowhere in the New Testament does the Aorist express what is wont to be: we cite a few specimens.' All exhortations to prayer and to spiritual endeavor in the resistance of temptation are usually expressed in the Present tense, which strongly indicates persistence:

Matt. 7:7. 'Keep asking (present) and it shall be given you, seek (pres.) again and again and ye shall find, knock (persistently) and it shall be opened unto you.'

Mark 11:24. 'All things that ye perseveringly pray (pres.) and ask for (pres.), keep believing that ye received (aor.) and ye shall have them.'

Luke 13:24. 'Persistently agonize to enter in (aor.) once for all at the strait gate.'"

P. 59. “The next fact which impresses us in our investigation is the absence of the Aorist, and the presence of the Present tense, whenever the conditions of final salvation are stated.

Our inference is that the conditions of ultimate salvation are continuous, extending through probation and not completed in any one act. A careful study of the Greek will convince the student that it is a great mistake to teach that a single act of faith furnishes a person with a paid-up non forfeitable policy, assuring the holder that he will inherit eternal life, or that a single energy of faith secures a through ticket for heaven, as is taught by the Plymouth Brethren, and by some popular lay evangelists. The Greek tenses show that faith is a state, a habit of mind into which the believer enters at justification.

John 1:12. 'As many as received (aor.) him (by a momentary and definite act), to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that are believing (pres.) on his name.'“

P. 61. “John 3:15. That whosoever is continuously believing in him, should not perish (aor., once for all), but be having everlasting life.'

Here again the Present and not the Aorist participle of the verb, to believe, is used, as it is again in verses 16 and 36.

John 5:24. 'He that is always having my word and constantly believing on him that sent me, hath eternal life, and is not coming into condemnation, but has passed over (perfect) from death unto life, and so continues.' Says Alford, ‘So, in 1 John 5:12, 13, the believing and the having eternal life are commensurate: where the faith is, the possession of eternal life is, and when the one remits, the other is forfeited; but here the faith is set before us as an enduring faith, and its effects described in their completion' (see Eph. 1:19, 20). Thus this great English Scholar rescues this great proof-text of the Plymouth Brethren, and the Moody School of Evangelists, from its perverted use to teach an eternal incorporation with Christ by a single ant of faith; and he demonstrates the common sense doctrine that the perseverance of the saints is grounded on persistent trust in Jesus Christ. A wise generalship does not destroy a captured fortress, but garrisons it.

John 6:35. He that is perpetually coming to me (pres.) shall not by any means (double negative) once hunger (aor.), and he that is constantly believing in me (emphatic) shall never by any means (double negative) feel one pang of thirst.'“

P. 63. “John 6:54. Whose eateth (pros. keeps eating) my flesh, and drinketh (keeps drinking) my blood, hath eternal life.'“ &c., &c., &c.

Though from circumstances away from books, one can see at a glance that there is no force in Dr. S.'s reasoning. The general bearing of the Greek tenses, according to the grammarians cited, has often been set forth in these pages. Only there are other principles, which none ought to ignore, unknown, apparently, to the American divine, who writes under the influence of strong prejudice, as little versed in scriptural truth as in the views of those he controverts. Nor was even the late Dean Alford always reliable in doctrine, any more than ripe scholarship.

But to the proof. No one doubts that continuous action, as in exhortations to prayer and habitual moral duty where constancy enters, is expressed by the present tense. The mistake, a very serious one, is overlooking what is called the ethical present, which is of frequent occurrence, especially in the N. T. Time in this case is merged; and here no more glaring error could be than importing into the tense persistence or the like. As an early example take Matt. 2:20: are we to render ο■ ζ. as Dr. S. contends? “They that keep seeking” would wholly mislead. Both A. and R. Vv. give rightly “they that sought.” It is really those characterized by the act, “the seekers.” This usage applies to a vast multitude of cases, where “perpetually” or “constantly” would falsify the sense. See Matt. 5:5, 6, where it is evident that in “the mourning,” and “the hungering and thirsting,” there is no more thought of “always,” than in “the meek,” or “the merciful.” In all it is just the class so characterized, like ■ σπε■ρων, ■ θερ■ζων, ■ ■κο■ων, ■θ■λων, ■ ■γι■ζων, ο■ ■γιαζ■μενοι, ο■ σωζ■μενοι, ο■ ■πολλ■μενοι, ο■ πλαν■ντες, ο■πλαν■μενοι, ■ γιν■σκων, ■ ■γαπ■ν. One might quote all through the Greek T. It is the same with the finite verb, if not so frequently as with the participle. Thus in Matt. 5:13, 14, the present tense is simply the copula, and even Dr. S. would shrink at once from the rendering, “Ye are always the salt of the earth,” or “Ye are constantly the light of the world.” Again, see James 1:12, “Blessed the man who endureth temptation.” Does this mean that any man, even Job, was continually enduring? So in the next verse, it is clearly.” when” or “while” tempted, and in no way means that he is so persistently. Most chapters of the N.T. supply examples.

It is allowed then, that the Lord intended His own to be ever dependents in prayer. But the answer to the curious question; Are those to be saved few? is strangely represented by this unintelligently

narrow use of the present: Our Lord does insist on striving earnestly; but that this implies a long space, because it is the present; is ignorance of its ethical value and force in the fade of the record which proves throughout the Acts," of the Apostles how soon those in earnest were brought into conscious peace and blessing. . . Those who seek to enter save through the narrow door (of repentance) will not be able.

Then comes the astounding words; "The absence of the Aorist, and the presence of the Present, whenever the conditions of final salvation are stated."

Acts 2 ought surely to be a test, the great day of Pentecost. New in answer to the cry of those pricked in heart Peter says, "Repent" (aor.), and, in his solemn charge, adds, "Be saved (or, save yourselves, aor.) from this perverse generation." Here we have the most direct contradiction of Dr. S., the aorist there, and not the present tense, as he would, have sin stating the conditions of final salvation. No doubt we have το■ς σωζ. in ver. 47; and it is notorious that some, who have not adequately weighed the case contend like him; that this phrase means those in process of salvation. That it need not is certain from the ethical force of the present; "the saved,", or "those to be saved," are a class so characterized without question of time. That it cannot mean an actual process going on follows from the σ■θητε of ver. 40. And this ought to be plain to all who compare Eph. 2:5, 8, where it is said of the believers, χ. ■στε σεσωσμ■νοι (the perfect, i.e., the abiding continuance of a past act); also Titus 3:5, ■σωσεν ■μ■ς where the singleness of the act of saving us is stated. Could this be if Dr. S.'s theory were true? Scripture, on the contrary, by using the aor. and perf. as well as the present of the same case, demolishes his notion. None can deny that final salvation is before us in Eph. 2, and in Titus 3 That is, scripture beyond controversy applies both pert., aor. to the final salvation of believers; so that the present tense, which also occurs in this connection, cannot in God's word contradict either the single act, or its continued result, but ethically characterizes. Dr. S.'s rash handling of the matter necessarily sets the occurrences of the present against the perf. and the aor. Had he known grammar and scripture better, he would have avoided the error. The comparison of Heb. 10:10 with 14 may help him, though Dean A., if my memory serves, erred in this very case. For here we have the same—persons said to be ■γιασμ■νοι and ■γιαζ■μενοι. Now incontestably they could not be already sanctified, and this as an abiding result, if the present tense only means a process incomplete because going on, as the error shuts us up to, The ethical sense of a class so characterized, without question of time, conciliates perfectly the two expressions which Dr, S.'s imperfect and erroneous view would dislocate. Both verses speak of believers as they are now, ver. 10 being no more future than 14.—

On the other hand, no right-minded Christian would weaken the truth that faith and life go on in constant exercise while we are here below; so that Dr. S. is quite uninformed as to those whom he classes with Mr. Moody and his friends, of whom one cannot speak. But he himself enfeebles, if he does not deny, salvation as a state entered by faith. He can see for himself Acts 16:30, 31, where, in answer to the jailor's urgent inquiry how to be saved (aor.), he was told to believe (aor.). Here again final salvation is in question, and a single act, of faith secures it according to Paul and Silas. According to Dr. S.'s theory it ought to have been the present in both: his doctrine and his grammar fail alike.

In John 1:12; 3:15; 5:24, as in 1 John 5:13, it is the present participle as in many texts elsewhere, such as Eph. 1:19; and this is exact, when a characteristic class is meant. If it were a question of

fact, the aorist would have displaced the present, as in Acts 11:17; 13:48; or if the permanent result of a past act was intended, the perfect as in Acts 15:5, 16:3, 4. But the image of these last is not consistent with the exclusive notion of the actual present, which is therefore demonstrated to, be incorrect here. The ethical present alone agrees where an aorist or perfect can also be employed, though the faith is an enduring thing beyond doubt.

That Dr. S. has misused John 6:35, 54, is apparent from ver. 44, 50, 51, 53, where the aorist is used of coming, eating and drinking. This could not be unless the present were used ethically. The reasoning therefore is a mere fallacy. Dr. S.'s school, by his own account, should consist of souls always learning and never able to come to full knowledge of truth.

Chapter 87

Hormah: Part 1

The root of sin lies very deep indeed. It is nothing less than the will of man. Hence the great defect in any mere moral judgment as to sin. Such a judgment proceeds on grounds, either of immutable principles of right and wrong, independently of the acknowledgment of God, or on the ground of conventional righteousness, as variable as the several states and conditions of men. Thus, the apostle concludes the detail of practical ungodliness with this sweeping principle: “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:18); and another principle equally broad is found in the words: “They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” It necessarily introduces an element which no system of morals could provide for; namely, suitability of conduct under special circumstances, the right thing to be done at the right time. If we will only allow that there is a supreme will to which every will ought to bow, obedience and disobedience cannot be defined by statutory laws. One alone stands forth in the singular place of obedience—the obedient One—He “Whose ear was opened morning by morning to hear as the learned;” He of Whom it is written, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;” He Who Himself said, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me.” We alas! have to say, “We have turned every one to his own way;” our will has not been subject to the will of God. Ever since we have been quickened by His grace, and God has drawn us with cords of love as a man, so that we have come to Jesus, and received Him as made to us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, we have practically had to “prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God,” and, in many instances, painfully to learn submission to it.

We are “sanctified unto obedience” of Jesus Christ, as well as unto the sprinkling of His blood (1 Peter 1:2). As servants of Christ, we are “servants of obedience unto righteousness.” It is by the knowledge of this principle that we get so deep an insight into what sin really is in the sight of God. It is our willfulness, That is the interpretation which the exercised soul is enabled to put on many of the dealings of God with His children. Men and Christians see the outside of one another, and judge accordingly; God judges the heart, and searches the reins. Is it right or allowable? is the question with man. Is it obedience? is the question with God.

There is nothing which so draws the line between spirituality and sentiment, and indeed prevents spirituality from degenerating into mystic refinement, as the realizing that the Holy Ghost, Who, in quickening our souls, has created in us new feelings and desires, is the Spirit of truth, and, whilst presenting truth objectively to the soul, sanctifies by the means of it. “God hath chosen us unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” The whole course of a Christian should be truthful. The very basis of Christianity is truth—the truth of what we are in ourselves, and of what God is as revealed to us in Christ. Our starting point is the recognition of our real position before God—sinners, helpless, ruined, and righteously exposed to the wrath of God. When, by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, we are brought to take this truthful place, the controversy is over between us and God: He justifies us freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Starting from this on our walk as Christians, if we sin, the truthful place is confession,

and then again God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. A large measure of the needed discipline of God is to bring us to this truthful place: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

We may learn a solemn and profitable lesson from redeemed Israel; redeemed indeed only outwardly, but still answering the gracious end to us of admonition by that which happened to them.

The distinguishing grace of God had been shown to Israel in the blood of the paschal lamb in Egypt. They had seen the glorious triumph of the Lord on their behalf, in leading them through the Red Sea as on dry land, and the utter destruction of their enemies in endeavoring to follow them. They had known the grace of God in sweetening the waters of Marah and in providing shade and refreshment in the wilderness. They had murmured also; but their murmurings had been answered in grace, bread being given to them from heaven, and quails sent in abundance. They tempted the Lord; but He answered them by causing water to gush out of the flinty rock. They had fought against Amalek, and prevailed through the hands of Moses upheld in intercession. The grace of God had abounded over all their sin, up to the moment of their receiving the law by the disposition of angels. Moses is called up to the Lord in the mount, to receive from the Lord ordinances for them of divine service. They forgot Moses, and set up gods fol. themselves to go before them. This sin is answered in the terrible judgment inflicted on their brethren by the children of Levi, and the plague of the Lord. They had seen the tabernacle reared and filled with the glory of the Lord. The cloud, the witness of the presence of Jehovah in the midst of them, now took its place as their guide through the wilderness. Their holy priesthood had been consecrated before them, and when the fire fell on the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord appeared, they had shouted and fallen on their faces. They had also witnessed the same “consuming fire” vindicating the holiness of the Lord in the destruction of Nadab and Abihu. The stoning of the sabbath-breaker and of the blasphemer, at the commandment of the Lord, proved that Me was judge Himself; and prophecy of judgment in case of disobedience, and mercy after humiliation and repentance, close the eventful year of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt.

“In the fourteenth day of the first month, Israel kept the passover at the commandment of the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai.” What a retrospect for Israel to look back through a year to the blood sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels of their houses in Egypt—the angel of the Lord dealing destructive judgment all around, and they feasting peacefully within! May our souls know abidingly the blessed reality of this deeply interesting figure!

“On the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony, and the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai: and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.” But they leave there the record of their sin and of the judgment of God in the names Taberah and Kibroth-hattaavah, “the burning” of the fire of the Lord, and “the graves of lust.” It is from Paran that the spies are sent to search the land, and bring also of the fruit of it. Israel had known the bondage of Egypt and deliverance from it by the outstretched arm of Jehovah, and that arm was not shortened, so that it could not bring them to the land promised to their fathers.

But how graciously does Jehovah condescend to their weakness in commissioning Moses to “send men that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel.” They

searched it without any molestation for forty days, and “brought back word unto them and unto all the congregation, and shelved them the fruit of the land.” But the report of the strength of the people and of walled cities was more readily received than the report of the goodness of the land, although they had such a sample of its goodness before their eyes. Vain are the remonstrances of Caleb and Joshua. The ten who accompanied them in searching the land brought up a slander on the land; the congregation first murmur and despise the pleasant land, and take counsel to “make themselves a captain and to return into Egypt.” Caleb and Joshua again remonstrate; Moses intercedes; but the Lord sets Himself against their rebellion, and makes their unbelief to be the punishment of their sin. “Tomorrow, turn you and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea.” Thus thwarted in the wilderness in one way, they evince it in another. The same people who yesterday, (with the presence of the Lord with them, and the fruit of the land before them) refused, at the commandment of the Lord, to go up and possess the land, become bold in disobedience, now that the Lord commands them to turn again the way of the Red sea. Their wilfulness would fain surmount any difficulties. The sons of Anak had lost their terror and walled cities their strength in their eyes, and they themselves had grown from grasshoppers to giants the moment the will of the Lord thwarted their will. Such ever is man's boasted freedom of will—miserable freedom indeed, to have a will always opposed to “the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God.” It is freedom of a sort; but what a freedom! “When ye were servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.”

“And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up to the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up to the land which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned.” Only yesterday they had said, “Let us make a captain and return into Egypt,” and the Lord had answered, “To-morrow turn you, get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea.” But now in very wilfulness they confess sin and plead the promise of the Lord; strange but faithful picture of the deceitfulness, as well as the desperate wickedness of the heart! And Moses said, “Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? but it shall not prosper.” Their pleading the Lord's promise, and confession of sin was in this instance only the prelude to per-sumptuous sin. The Lord is not with them, and their willful boldness ends in discomfiture. They presumed to go up unto the hill top, “and the Amalekites came down and smote them and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.”

Do we know anything like this in the secret experience of our own souls? When Christians, through the grace of God, have attained to a measure of blessing, and then cease from following on to know the Lord; when the heart secretly turns back to the world, out of which we have been rescued by Christ giving Himself for our sins; when the difficulties of the way present themselves more prominently than the rest and glory which God Himself has set before us, then we may be assured that the evil heart of unbelief is at work, and there has been departure from the living God. Declension has manifestly set in. Christ is dishonored, and the pleasant land despised. The necessary consequence is discipline from the Father, discipline even to the scourge, because of His love. The stroke is felt, and intended to be felt. It may bring disgrace on us in our own eyes, and in the eyes of others also. It is hard for us to be turned back.

We are just like wayward children. How well we can understand the reply of Israel, “Lo, we be here,” to the announcement, “Turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea!” They could not bear to lose, as it were, so much ground, and to traverse the wilderness

afresh. They would go up from where they were, but it cannot prosper; neither was it the Lord's way, nor was He with them; their attempt failed, and ended in discomfiture and deeper disgrace. The Lord will have us back to the cross that we may start afresh with Him. We must learn that, after all our progress, we are nothing better than sinners saved by grace. It is on this point that the controversy so frequently turns between the Lord and ourselves. We refuse to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We allow that we have sinned, but desire to go on as though we had not. This is not obedience but presumption.

We do not undo wrong, by doing what appears to us to be right, but by justifying God in confession, and taking the place which He assigns to us. The same God who, by His grace, has made us everything, and given us everything in Christ, the moment we cease to value that, by looking to our own attainments, will in very faithfulness make us feel our nothingness. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” He is ever able to come in when we are humble, and work for His own name's sake. But He has no name to meet us while, in the pride of our hearts, we insist on maintaining a position. He can, in such case, only resist us. Are we indeed cast down?” He can reveal Himself as “God who comforteth those who are cast down.” Are we in tribulation? He is able to come in as “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.” Let us get down as low as may be before God, He has ever in reserve some part of His own name to reveal and meet us.

But, if “we walk contrary unto God,” so that “He walks contrary to us” —till this be acknowledged, and “the punishment of our iniquity be accepted,” God is still in the attitude of a registra. How pointedly does Moses, in narrating to “the generation to come” the ways of their fathers who had perished in the wilderness, present this principle! “Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the Lord; we will go up and fight according to all that the Lord our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill. And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight, for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. So I spake unto you, and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill. And the Amorites which dwelt in that mountain came out against you and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah. And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you.” (Deut. 1.)

Ye were presumptuous, and went up.” Solemn admonition indeed! Well we may say: “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults: keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.” Israel presumed on the promise of the Lord, and on their own confession of sins; and at the same time “rebelled against the commandment of the Lord.” Presumptuous sin appears specially the danger of God's own accredited people. It is doing that which makes for our own credit, rather than, that which is for the honor of Christ. In this there may be no moral element which the natural conscience can discern. There may even be the apparent confession of sin; and boldness of action in pleading the promise of God, humility and dignity outwardly presented, and yet God not acknowledged at all.

It is the exercised soul which cries: “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sin.” Caleb and Joshua, faithful in the midst of unfaithfulness, not only reported well of the land, but felt their strength to be doing “the will of God.” “If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land,

and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey: only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not; but all the congregation bade stone them with stones." The Lord was not with those who presumptuously went up the hill; but those who, like Caleb and Joshua, had known the presence of the Lord as their only strength and security, in going up when He commanded to go up, would equally find it to be their strength and security to turn back the way of the. Red sea, when the Lord so commanded. The Lord was still with them.

And what did Caleb and Joshua learn by their turning back with the others, but fresh lessons of the abounding of the grace of God over the sin of Israel? Disappointed of entering Canaan from Kadeshbarnea, it all turned to gain in entering by "a way they had not passed heretofore." For when "the soles of the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, rested in the waters of Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off from the waters that came down from above: and they stood on a heap: and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground." The Lord did not turn back His faithful servants, Caleb and Joshua, with their unfaithful brethren, to no profit. They witnessed indeed the fall in the wilderness of all their generation after less than forty years; but they had learned the blessings of Aaron's rod which budded; they had witnessed the saving power of the wondrous ordinance of the brazen serpent; they had proved too that no enchantment could prevail against Israel. And thus richly freighted with the knowledge of the blessings of a present God even in the wilderness, an entrance was abundantly ministered unto them into Canaan, through the prevailing power of a present God manifested by the means of priestly service.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 88

Hormah: Part 2

"Turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the Red Sea." Does it seem hard to us to do so? If there has been failure and declension, only let us come back in simplicity of faith to our starting point, the cross of Christ, and then we too shall learn, as Caleb and Joshua, afresh and more deeply how the Lord hath triumphed gloriously. Humbled, if needs be, in the eyes of others, bowing submissively under their taunts, receiving all as a part of the discipline we need, and, oh! how light compared with our folly. God shows Himself as an upbraiding God. "He giveth grace to the humble." All the progress we have made in the knowledge of divine things, in which we have complacently rested, is not to be compared with the deeper lesson of the, grace of God, yet to be learned in the cross and from the cross. It may seem to us to be only the shame of retracing our steps but it is in reality to go on with God, learning steps; manifestations of His grace in Christ Jesus; it is to find a reality in the very truths which we had only superficially handled before; for real Christian progress is characterized by our estimate of great essential truths—truths connected with, and flowing from, the person of Christ. "That I may know Him."

Is it a weariness to learn more experimentally the value of the ever-blossoming, fruit bearing priestly ministry of our Jesus—a ministry so immediately flowing from His person? Starting indeed from the cross, and keeping near the cross, it is blessed to learn its value, as Israel knew the brazen serpent, the last resource of the grace of God in the wilderness; for as surely as Jesus Himself is the Alpha and Omega, so also is the cross to us the first and the last great doctrine of God. It is well too to learn when all can find fault, and the finger of scorn is held up at the failure of God's people, and they cry insultingly: "There, there, so would we have it," that the charge shall not lie against us, for it is God that justifieth. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." These and other lessons are to be learned in thus turning again by the way of the Red Sea—by humbling, instead of justifying, ourselves—by really confessing sin, instead of resolutely maintaining a position—by knowing rather the comfort of the Lord's presence, in being, as it were, turned back in apparent disgrace, than presenting a strong front, and going on without God. All effort to maintain a position to which even the grace of God has led, but the maintenance of which (instead of the maintenance of Christ's honor) has become the object, must end in discomfiture. It is presumptuous sin. And if Christians will refuse to turn back at the bidding of God, and to humble themselves under His mighty hand, in order to drink more deeply into the riches of His grace, God will resist them; and what will the end be?

There is one lesson to be learned under every failure and disappointment; namely, death and resurrection. The Lord Jesus Himself might say as to Israel, "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught, and in vain;" but let His own death and resurrection come in, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." His servant Paul had to say, at the close of his ministry: "This thou knowest, that all they which be in Asia are turned away from me;" but, however he might feel disappointment even keenly, yet his labor in the Lord was not in vain, and still the sure foundation of the Lord standeth. And in our days, those who have labored for the Lord, and been disappointed in the result, have they learned nothing? Has not disappointment taught them death

and resurrection? Has it not tended to bring back the soul in solemn review, and to see the need of death to be written on much of their service, which had not Christ simply for its object? Cannot they justify God for their disappointment? But their labor is not in vain in the Lord. Disappointment at Kadesh-barnea led to a triumphant entrance through Jordan.

Oh! that we all knew better how to get into the place of blessing: it must be a very low place indeed. Many a goodly pretension will there have to be given up; no position of credit in the eyes of others must be sought to be maintained. We must justify God in all His righteous judgment Then controversy is over, and we shall prove Israel's God to be our God, “Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth forever.” And although death and disappointment have been written on our fondest expectations, it is only to teach us not “to trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver.” The very sense of deep need will only open more clearly the fullness of Jesus, and we shall have learned, by our inexhaustible experience, to keep more close to the Spring-head of living waters, by finding the cisterns we had hewn out for ourselves broken and incapable of holding any water.

J. L. H.

(Concluded from page 148.)

Chapter 89

Inspiration: to the Editor of the Bible Treasury

My Dear Sir,

The divinely illuminated soul is convinced beyond all manner of doubt that the Holy Scriptures display the dealings of God with mankind. He sees also that they are, on their own testimony, Theopneustic; and that, as the writers recorded the (original) words, their statements expressed exactly what God intended to impart, and expressed the same exactly as He willed it, yet retaining the style of the penman. He observes, further, that every part is essential, and occupies just the necessary position in order to sustain the unity of the whole. He next inquires as to the character of the several parts; for, though all is equally inspired, it does not follow on that ground alone that all is warranted as true.

Thus erroneous acts and sayings of men may be used (as indeed they are) for our instruction. However, there is obviously enough, no difficulty with the words of God, of the Lord Jesus, direct or through angels; none with the prophets, apostles and others “filled with the Holy Ghost “; none with the sayings of men whose errors of speech are demonstrated in the Word itself; none with the historical facts given as true. But by what criteria is the believer to try the truth of (say) the speeches of Job and his friends or (as some would add) the writings of Solomon in the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes? It seems unaccountable to suppose that God has allowed parts of His word to be so vague that we are to be in doubt whether such and such a passage is absolute truth or merely an illustration of man's liability to err.

Is Job 19 a prophetic intimation of the coming Redeemer and of the resurrection? or is it only rhetorical figures used by an excited man in self-vindication? Is Ecclesiastes to be valued only for the ability and the experience of the writer? Are the words “I said in mine heart” (Eccles. 2:1, 15; 3:17, 18; 9:1) as in any way parallel to those phrases in 1 Cor. 7 where a plain distinction is drawn between revealed truth, i.e. truth having a divine claim on the soul, and spiritual wisdom? It seems indeed calamitous to suppose the human alternative. Opportunity is thus given for a most arbitrary position, if they happen to oppose a pet theory. For instance, a recent writer who has broached the theory that the Hebrew word for “spirit” is restricted in its use to man, found Eccl. 3:19 adverse to him. He is not however alarmed, but proceeds, “In one place only where man is questioning about things existing under the sun, is rooagh ascribed to beasts, and then it is by one who confesses his own ignorance of what he is writing about” (p. 7, “Spirit, Soul, and Body;” H. C. A., Broom). Is there not the germ, and more, of rationalism there? Is not the principle of interpretation false? But the fact also is untrue; for “rooagh” is also so used in Psa. 104:29 (compare also Gen. 6:17; 7:15, 22); so that, unless the Psalmist is likewise untrustworthy, Solomon is not so philologically ignorant as he is represented; and the writer's conclusion is overthrown. But is his mode of argument sound? Does God allow men to write what is untrue without its falseness being plainly discernible to the spiritual mind? If so, our confidence in the word of God is shaken. The Spirit inspired Solomon to record infallibly his impressions of what he saw “under the sun;” but was the preacher permitted to indite a wrong impression or to employ misleading language? Was not his view of

things of God from his own standpoint? And in fact has not a beast “spirit” or its own peculiar instinct, besides the living principle which is called “soul:” in both of wholly inferior character to man's which come from God Himself and goes upward? If so, inasmuch as varied aspects of truth are never contradictory, the class of argument adduced above is not only invalid and unintelligent, but dishonoring to scripture and. dangerous to man.

If we cannot rely absolutely on Solomon's writings how are they to be interpreted? Or to state the main question again—Are we called upon to sit in judgment on the truth or falsehood of the statements of Solomon &c., as we do on the recorded words of inspired men? If so, by what means? W. J. R.

Chapter 90

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

Until we discover the distinctness and order of the parts of any piece of writing, we are not in a position for interpreting it in detail. All careful readers of the scriptures must have found that the arrangement of the several books into chapters and verses, as adopted in the Authorized Version, does not serve the most important end of arrangement at all, rather the reverse. For they appear to have been designed more for the convenience of occasional readings or of reference, than to assist in the exposition of the scriptures. But to assist in the exposition of the book itself is surely the most important end of arrangement and division.

In the historical books of the Bible, for instance, the order clearly evinces itself. We there at once perceive where a narrative begins and where it closes, and the connection of all its parts; but in the prophets it is not so. In them there are no clear and decisive marks given to us, at least very generally: we must therefore be at some pains to discover the order and make the arrangement ourselves. It will then be inquired, how are we to do this? Generally, I would say, let the prophets be read throughout and in order, as entire pieces, and then let attention be given and judgment exercised upon them, as on any book, to discover their distinct interruption and periods. Assuredly these holy and beauteous oracles of our God are worthy thus to be entertained; and surely an indolent and careless reading of them will be rebuked of Him by leaving us in contracted and indistinct apprehensions of His glory to which they all testify.

While, however, I would urge, upon the consciences of my fellow-disciples, the duty of bestowing labors such as these on the oracles of God, I would clearly recognize that knowledge of God Himself (such as he who is spiritual alone can have) is our best help in studying the details of His holy book. The friendship of the Lord Jesus lets us into His secrets—into the divine counsels. “I have called you friends,” says the Savior, “for all things that I have heard a My Father I have made known unto you.” Communion with Him makes us clear and able witnesses to Him; for He further says, “Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning.” Human learning has its uses, I deny not; but, as it is an attractive thing, and imposes much on our poor hearts, which ever naturally relish that which is of man, and not that which is of God, we must be careful that we do not over-value it. It is the church which is made the pillar and ground of the truth, and not the schools of science and literature and the church is thus the witness and upholder of truth, not as being endowed with human learning, but as having “the mind of Christ,” and “an unction from the Holy One.”

It was not because there was in them a lank of intellectual power or of literary attainments, that the apostle rebuked the disciples for being still but learners, when they ought to have been teachers of divine mysteries. The failure was of a moral character, or he would not have rebuked it. They were dull of hearing, because their souls had not taken that interest in the glory of the Lord Jesus, which, had they loved Him better, they would have taken; and therefore it is, that He presents this failure in knowledge as the first step of fearful apostasy, and of final curse and rejection (see Heb. 5:11- 6:8).

On the principle, then, of ascertaining the limits of the distinct strains of the prophets, before we attempt to interpret them in detail, looking at the 52nd, 53rd, and 54th, of Isaiah, we perceive at once that the prophet is introduced to a new subject at the 13th verse of the 52nd chapter; that the same subject is continued throughout the 53rd chapter; but that it does not occupy him in the 54th chapter. We therefore conclude that 52:13-53. is one distinct strain of prophecy, and thus we are in a position for interpreting this portion in detail.

In beginning to do this, we must inquire what form it takes, into what subordinate parts it naturally distributes itself, and what title the whole subject will properly bear.

Doing this, by reading it from the beginning to the end (ever remembering with reverence, and yet to our unspeakable comfort, that it is the word of the living God—our God, in the sure mercies of His dear Son), it at once presents itself to us in the following character—it exhibits Messiah and the saints alternately or interchangeably contemplating the suffering Messiah, and passing their several judgments upon that mysterious blessed object, and we may entitle it, “Messiah in His sufferings.”

52:18-15.

“Behold, My servant shall deal Prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were, astonished at Thee; His visage was so marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men so shall He sprinkle many nations the kings shall shut their mouths at Him for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

Jehovah, in these verses, looking at Jesus' smitten form, and affectingly presenting it to our view, celebrates that glory to which all this humiliation and suffering were to conduct Him, according as it is written of Him (Phil. 2:8), “And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” For this was the rule of Messiah's glory, as He said, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth ranch fruit;” and so all scripture teaches that glory now must take as it were a resurrection form, just as life must do. For as the life and inheritance of those whom Jesus represented, and for whom Jesus. gave Himself up, according to the everlasting covenant, had been both forfeited, and death and the curse been induced upon them; Jesus, in regaining both, must pass meritoriously through death, and get for Himself and His saints a condition of life and a kingdom and glory, only by destroying thus, through death, him who had the power of death. And this He did to secure to those who believe on Him, a life that shall prove itself stronger, than death, and “a kingdom that cannot be moved” (John 11:25, 26, Heb. 12:28).

The day of the Lord Christ, when He shall take to Himself “the heathen for His inheritance,” and be exalted as “King of kings,” is here anticipated by Jehovah, when “to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes shall also worship,” —when “the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents, the king of Sheba and Saba shall offer gifts, yea, all kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall serve Him.”

53:1-6.

“Who hath believed our report, or to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground; He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of as all.”

The remnant here addressing themselves to the same blessed object point at once, not lo the result of Messiah's sufferings, as Jehovah had done, but to their cause, their own deep iniquity and many transgressions. They begin by rehearsing the common unbelief, and intimate this to arise from the resistance which the pride of fallen man naturally offered to the despised form of Jesus of Nazareth, to the humiliating and rebuking sign of the carpenter's son (see Matt. 13:55). And they confess that they had naturally partaken of the same spirit of unbelief (Ephes. 11:2). In the progress of their meditations they utter the memory of the Lord's wondrous love; and after again taking shame to themselves for their unbelief, they at length, in the sweet assurance of faith, confess their sin on the head of this worthy Lamb of God, finding peace in His blood (Ephes. 16, Heb. 12:24).

Before we proceed with our subject, we may here observe the suitableness of those respective judgments of Jehovah and of the remnant, while looking by turns upon the Messiah's griefs. Jehovah looks at them as intimating the glory into which they were all to result; for the covenant between Jehovah and the Christ was surely on this wise (but oh! for the spirit of unshod worshippers while standing here), the Son emptied Himself of all, not acting as for Himself, but as Jehovah's servant, and as such endured the cross; and then by the covenant He took back all, and therefore was it fitting that Jehovah then pledged in covenant promises to the suffering Christ, looking at His sufferings, should celebrate the day of those promises when they shall be manifested in the kingdom as the people of Christ, and HE shall be declared the heir of all things. So was it alike suitable to the saints, in looking on these sufferings, to be reminded of their many stains and wrinkles; for to purge them away, and to give them beauty and acceptance in the eyes of their Lord, were all those sorrows borne. “He was made sin for us Who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

7,8.

“He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare His generation? For He was out oft out of the land of the living; for the transgression of My people was He stricken.”

Here Jehovah resumes the subject. He justifies Messiah in His conduct throughout all His bitter agony; that He had therein conducted Himself, as towards God, rebellious murmur (Mark 14:26); as towards man, without a returning threat (1 Peter 2:23). But the Father rehearses, that though

He was thus worthy of all justification, yet (being made sin) He was treated as unworthy; left without righteous judgment: none of all who had, been taught by Him in the synagogue and in the temple, or who had ever heard Him, though they knit what He said unto them, would now stand for Him (John 18:20-22). As against Him, oppression and wrong were in the place of judgment, and He was hurried to the grave as numbered with the transgressors.

I would observe that the, propriety of interpreting these verses as the words of Jehovah is warranted by two clear considerations. First, the passage “for the transgression of My people was He smitten,” affords literal evidence that they are so; and, secondly, the justification of Messiah which this passage contains is, as I may say, a moral evidence of the same; for judgment, and consequent justification is in this connection the province of God, and not of the saints. Accordingly we find in the 49th chapter of this prophet, that Messiah says, “My judgment is with Jehovah;” and again, in the Gospel of John 8:50, “I seek not Mine own glory; there is One that seeketh and judgeth.” And an apostle, filled with the Spirit of his Lord, would say (1 Cor. 4:4), “For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord.”

10.

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.”

Here the saints again, as in their turn, look at Jesus. Before interpreting their meditation, we may pause for a moment's reflection on that which here meets the soul, that it is, as touching Jesus, that Jehovah, and the remnant of once ruined and helpless sinners, in judgment and affection meet; that it is Jesus who draws and detains and fixes the regards both of heaven and of earth, Jehovah counting Him as His elect, whom He delighteth to honor (Isa. 42:1), the remnant esteeming Him “all its salvation and all its desire.” And oh! the treasures of divine wisdom and goodness! that with the full maintenance of all the holy honors of God's throne, He who sits thereon, and they who had sold themselves to him who sought to overturn it, should yet meet in such fellowship as this!

In the verse which we are now considering, the remnant again rehearses Messiah's sufferings, as He endured them at the hand of Jehovah. The passage reads as if the saints had just caught the preceding words of Jehovah, wherein He had vindicated His holy One and righteous servant, and wondered therefore that in spite of this, “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him;” but soon recovering as it were from their surprise, through a fresh apprehension of the purpose and necessity of these sufferings, they anticipate and celebrate that three-fold blessed fruit of them which in due time the Lord was to gather. First, “He shall see His seed” —that He should have His household about Him like a flock of sheep, should gather the great congregation, should be encircled by the ten thousand times ten thousand, and the thousands of thousands who should understand and magnify the grace of these His sufferings, and say, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain” (Rev. 5:11, 12). Secondly— “He shall prolong His days” —that He should enter manifestly upon the power of an endless life, that “having died unto sin once He should live unto God,” —that “He that was dead should be alive for evermore.” And here we observe that this promise embraces all the seed which He was to see and gather, according to the first promise; for He should take them with Himself into this life: having Him, the Son, they were with Him to have life eternal (1 John 5:12); death, as

touching them, was to be swallowed up in victory. Thirdly— “The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand,” that He should have dominion; and that in His hand dominion should not again be, abused and forfeited as it had been of old, but that the pleasure of Jehovah should be fully answered, and a scepter of righteousness order in peace all things throughout the reconciled heavens and earth, shedding there “the light of the morning when the sun riseth; even of a morning without clouds.” And here we, in like manner, observe that this promise embraces also the seed which He was to see and gather, for if sons with Him, as of one kingdom as it is written, “When Christ, who is Our life shall appear, ye shall also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4)..

11, 12.

“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied; by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify man? for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great; and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He hath poured out His soul onto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Jehovah again takes up, as it were, the wondrous tale in these verses which close the prophet's strain. As with zealous desire for Messiahs exaltation, He confirms, and also in brighter and faller light presents all the prospect of glory just anticipated by the remnant— “He shall see of the travail of His soul,” confirming the words, “He shall see His seed,” and then presents the character of this seed—a seed made righteous through the Messiah’s meritorious sufferings, and obedience unto death, and that this honor and dominion, as all scripture presents it, is the reward of His precious and most worthy sufferings.

Thus the Father delighteth to honor the suffering Son of man, and so with desire should we desire the day when this honor shall all be prepared for Him. “To wait for the Son from heaven” is as much of the character of a renewed soul, as is the turning “from idols to serve the living God.” And there should be a sense of patience accompanying this waiting—the waiting being for an object so longed for, that the heart should be sensible of its “need of patience.” But alas! how much have other delights than to see the Lord Jesus honored, which is thus alone in sympathy with the Father, divided the hearts of most of us, and made it no occasion or patience to wait for His day!

I would here add, that while I thus treat the alternate parts of this beautiful and affecting prophecy as the language of the saints, the language indeed of every renewed soul that cleaves, as it must, in all desire to the once crucified and soon to be exalted Lord—I would distinctly avow this—that I believe such will be the faith, and such the confession of the children of Israel in that day, when receiving the Spirit of grace and supplication they look on Him whom they pierced and mourn for Him, and find in Him and by Him “a fountain opened for their sin and their uncleanness” (Zechariah 12, 13). Then, but not till then, will the connection between this 53rd and the following chapter of our prophet be really and livingly developed, for then “shall the barren sing, and the woman that travaileth not with child break forth into singing because of the multitude of her children, the enlargement of the place of her tent, and her seed's inheritance of the Gentiles.” For even our own apostle testifies to us, that though blindness in part is now happening to Israel, yet Israel shall all be saved, and the receiving of them shall be to the world as life from the dead (Rom. 11). And we the present election out of the world, only serve as a sample of that mercy by which Israel shall then be saved (Rom. 11:31); and as an occasion for the provoking of them—the covenant people

of God—by us who are no people, a foolish alienated nation (see Deut. 32:21; Rom. 10:19; 11:11). But now Christ crucified is for Jew and Gentile; all are equally one in Him. Let us then “behold the Man.” His sorrows have gone too much out of mind; the chastened tone which they should give to the spirits of all the worshipping household of our God is too feebly expressed among us. But with what tenderness will they be traced, with what power, as in the language of Isaiah will they be rehearsed by the awakened tribes of Israel! May the Lord the Spirit quicken our sense of them and also give us to anticipate that joy and fullness of glory into which they shall, ere long, conduct the blessed Sufferer Himself at the head of the great congregation.

Chapter 91

Israel's Preparation for the Land .1

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

So when Israel enters the land, a new scene altogether different from the wilderness is presented for our learning; where new energies are called forth to meet different trials and testings, as seen in the conflicts of Israel under the leadership of Joshua with the inhabitants of the land.

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

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

The wilderness condition is not one endowed with power, as in the land. The great lessons in the wilderness were the varied aspects but complete work of Christ; and it was necessary that He should thus be set forth that when they—Israel—possessed the land, they might see how their blessing all centered in Him. The nation has not yet learned it, nor can they till the new heart is given them. It was absolutely necessary that we should have all these details, that we might learn how to judge and deal with our own old nature. And when grace has taught us that Christ, made in the likeness of sinful flesh, died bearing its full judgment, and that we in Him have died to sin, then do we as believers receive power to maintain conflict with the world. It is vain to attempt battle with the enemy without, before the enemy within is judged.

The change in the typical presentation of Christ, i.e. from Moses to Joshua, corresponds to the growing of the believer when he first apprehends the truth of being in heavenly places in Christ. Both Moses and Joshua are types of Christ. The former led Israel through the wilderness, and Christ is the power that leads us through the world, and while believers look to Him, there may not be consciousness of the Holy Spirit's presence and power. Blessed it is, when, not realizing power over the flesh, we are able, burdened and sorrowing, to turn to Him. But to be delivered from the burden, to rise above the sorrow is something more, and this is when we know Him not only as the Captain of our salvation—our Joshua—but also as our High Priest in heaven, and the Holy Spirit sent down as the connecting link between the Head in heaven and His members on the earth. But Christ is also with us here, not bodily, but by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads us through Priesthood to look to Him as seated on the throne. So that He is with us here, and in heaven, and Priesthood connects these two, so that we have direct and immediate access to God. Joshua has to stand before Eleazar the priest who shall inquire of Jehovah for him. It is Christ by the Spirit leading us to approach Him as our High Priest above, and to God, through Him revealed as our Father. “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” We must be in the land to know this fully. But to be in the land—seated in Him in the heavenlies, does not take us out of the wilderness as to the body. On the other hand, only those who by grace know their standing in Christ can bear without murmuring the trials of the wilderness. And thus it is that the Christian as to circumstances, is yet in the wilderness; and as to his standing, in the heavenly places, with and in Christ. A riddle to the world, a divine reality for us.

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

We note, in passing, how absorbed Moses is here in the welfare of Israel. Elsewhere we read his pleading to be allowed to enter the good land, until God told him to speak no more of this matter. Here when Jehovah bids him ascend Mount Abarim to see the land, and then die, he immediately prays, not for himself, but that “Jehovah the God of the spirits of all flesh” may “set a man over the congregation.” This is very beautiful, it is nearly the same abnegation of self as when on a

previous occasion he said, “Blot me...out of Thy book which Thou hast written” (Ex. 32:32). Moses knew the people, how necessary that there should be a leader who should go out before them, and go in before them, one who would never lose sight of them, so that they might not wander and be as sheep which have no shepherd.

The Lord Jesus when He was here said, He was this good Shepherd. Joshua led them out of the wilderness and in to the promised inheritance. The Lord led His own sheep out of Judaism (which had then become a wilderness) into the green pastures of grace. Not personally while on the earth but by His Spirit after He had ascended. And is not this way and purpose of God seen—enough but darkly—in that Moses dies before Joshua leads Israel into the land? But it is the Spirit, the Comforter, the Servant of Christ, Who now leads us, acting in Christ's name, into all truth, and takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us. The Jew out of his Judaism, the Gentile out of his degradation into the richer fields of Christianity. The Spirit of Christ in the Psalm (23.) puts the song of faith in the mouth of the redeemed of Israel, and in a more blessed way, in our hearts now, in this day of reproach and misrepresentation. “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters.”

The people were numbered before Joshua was appointed. He was appointed for their sake, just as the good Shepherd came to seek the lost sheep. How the numbering of the people, and the record of the name of each family, and the allotted inheritance for each, prove the care and love of God, entering—so to say—into the details of their life, so that place and quality of their possessions are appointed by Him. There was due preparation made, the order of their march was determined. It was God's army going to take the promised inheritance; the rank and file, as well as each officer, knew their place, and the march did not begin till all was ready.

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

Directions as to the feasts are given, but in reference to the land. And a conditional provision of mercy for the man-slayer. These all look onward to the future of Israel. Though well we know how the gospel appears in the institution of the cities of refuge. Neither the feasts, nor the cities can apply to the wilderness. Yet we have the best share in each. Our portion is not the earthly and

material, but the spiritual and the heavenly. The feasts are not for us to be observed respectively at different seasons, but all are in one, One which combines all, where, though there is the material bread and wine, yet the spiritual and the heavenly overshadow all as we in remembrance of Him “show the Lord's death till He come.” For these two words contain the worth, and dignity, and the sacrifice, that were ever-prefigured in the types of old, whether of High Priest or of Victim.

Chapter 92

Israel's Preparation for the Land .2

Israel numbered, and a new leader appointed, are not all the preparation needed to enter the land, for in these their responsibilities do not appear. Accordingly they are reminded of Jehovah's dealings with them since they came out of Egypt. He had led them through that great and terrible wilderness, and had cared for them; their feet did not swell, nor did their garments wax old. He had fed them with quails—earthly food—and with manna—angels' food—from heaven. At the same time He had made them know that He was holy and just, and visited their iniquities with judgment; yet at the close of their journey had crowned them with mercies and loving kindnesses, and notwithstanding their sin had brought them to the promised land. All this is recounted to them by Moses in Deuteronomy. Israel's responsibilities were so important that, to remind them that their continued possession of the promised land depended upon their obedience, another book is written, and the results of faithfulness according to the law, and of disobedience, are all foretold. This was an integral part of the preparation, for they were under bond of perfect obedience, though they had broken the bond continually ever since they made the rash vow.

And here see the contrast between the tenure of possession as then proposed, and of their establishment in the good land when the counsels of God are fulfilled. Not obedience to the law, but sovereign grace gives them permanent possession. It rests on the same ground as does our assurance now of the possession of a far brighter land than they will have. Their land—now a wilderness—shall truly blossom as the garden of the Lord, but our citizenship is in heaven, our mansions are above, our city is one made without hands. While Israel are yet men upon the earth, though enjoying the greatest blessing foretold by-and-by for the earth, we shall be in risen bodies of glory drinking new wine with the Lord Jesus in the Father's kingdom. But all, whether for the church in heaven or for Israel on earth, is founded upon Christ.

Our responsibilities flow from grace, theirs rested upon the ground of law—obedience, enforced by mercies and judgments, and the precepts and warnings, in the book of Deuteronomy, flow from law ground; and therefore this book is consistently both preceptive and, comminatory. Yet underneath the solemn warnings and the sure judgments lie the determined counsels of God; here and there a promise and a prophecy of future blessing appear amid the claims of righteousness and the threatenings of a broken law. Indeed the book almost begins with a glimpse of the blessedness and glory to come, presented in the form of a prayer, or desire of Moses, but to be gloriously fulfilled in good time. “The Jehovah God of your fathers make you a thousand times as many as ye are, and bless you as He hath promised you” (Deut. 1:11). Restoration is implied, for mercies are theirs, and grace is sovereign (see also 33:26-29).

The possession was at first conditional, and such conditions as made their continuance in the land impossible. For fallen man had engaged to be perfectly obedient to God. This was the ground Israel had chosen, such the tenure upon which they presumed to hold the land. Deuteronomy recognizes this ground, and though grace had come in, and, God, rising above law, had declared His mercy, the demands of the law are not abated, nor the penalties mitigated. All are enforced by

the past mercies and future judgment. But they are crowned with blessing, and warned as sinful men under law; thus they are made ready, and the power of Jehovah leads them.

Yet is there something more ere they tread the long-wished-for land. In no common ordinary way must. Israel enter, but just as the power of Jehovah led them opt of Egypt through the divided waters of the Red Sea, so must they enter the good land and pass through the Jordan dry shod. The power of Jehovah their God was their triumphant banner as they passed through. He is the Lord of all the earth and His people must be led into their possessions in a way befitting this Name; “to-morrow Jehovah will do wonders among you” (Josh. 3:5). Not only must Israel be known as His people. but the nations must have a witness of His eternal power and Godhead; and they trembled at the thought that the Lord of all the earth was the God of Israel. “And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites which were by the sea, heard that Jehovah had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was their spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel” (5:1).

The ark is 2000 cubits in advance of the people as they march towards the Jordan, that they may see the way to go; and in the midst of Jordan it remains till all have passed over. This was a preparation like the numbering and the appointing of a new leader quite apart from their responsibility. This new way of entering the land was not only a wondrous display of Almighty power, but from which Israel should have learned to live in obedience to Him Who held the waters in the hollow of His hand. The holiness demanded by law was surely enforced by the power of the law-giver. After the last words of Moses (Deuteronomy) what more fitting sequel than the, evidence of the truth that God was for them (cf. Rom. 8:31)? But they saw not the moral bearing of the miracle, it was but another wonder added to the many already witnessed both in Egypt and in the wilderness. God would fit them (as it were) for dwelling in the land, but they understood not His ways. Israel saw the miracle; it was reserved for the church to know its meaning.

Indeed the truth conveyed by the ark going through the Jordan never could be known till Christ came—, nay, only by His going away through the path of death, and then making a way for us through the same waters, but His presence abiding that the power of it might keep back the overflowing waters of death. The ark going through the Jordan is neither suffering for sin nor intercession for a rebellious people; it is Christ in power, but a power which is the special result of having Himself gone under death's power when He made His soul an offering for sin, winning victory where it could be won in no other way than by the death of the Victor. The Jordan is not so much the Victor's death, as His power over death, though undoubtedly the way in which He won the victory is not indistinctly seen.

But prominently we see the fruit of the work and cross of Christ, Who triumphantly leads His own people, as it were, in the very face of death, and through its domain, a way hitherto unknown, to the knowledge of the heavenly places in Him. This way is impossible to man, yea to saints save as He is there to keep back and stay the otherwise overwhelming flood. The ark in the Jordan is no part of atonement, but the presence of the power of Christ which alone can withstand the power of death, our only bulwark against it. Not their past mercies, nor the promises alone kept back the flood from destroying Israel, but the ark resting in the midst while the people passed before [in presence of] it. All the promises are made good in Christ; He accomplishes the purposes of God

whether for Israel or for the church.

The Red Sea was the way from death to life, and there is seen the power of death over the enemy—the world as such has no more dominion over us—while death to the foe it is life to the blood-sprinkled. It is ours to know how we get victory over the world, through the death and resurrection of Christ; but there is a more subtle power than the world to be overcome, even the flesh. The Red Sea—in type—gives us the standing of death and resurrection through Christ, but as a condition of soul, I apprehend, not realized till by faith we pass through the Jordan, that is, till consciously dead and risen with Christ we write sentence of death upon the flesh. What type in the wilderness foreshadowed the truth of our having died, and being risen in. Christ? Some if not all point to it, surely all are in harmony with it, but all pointed directly to the Person and work of Christ. So the ark in the Jordan not less to Him, but also to our death with Him in that He died to sin, and to our rising with Him in that both the people and the ark come up out of the Jordan. For as Israel followed the ark into the waters of death, so we, sustained by His power, pass through—not feeling its power as He felt it—rejoicing in His victory and gain our good land, sitting with Him in the heavenlies. On the cross Christ met death as a Victim, that was atonement. Here, as typified by the ark in the Jordan—He meets death as a Conqueror. Jordan may overflow its banks, but He quells the power of death and we triumph in His triumphs. He gave proof of His victory over the power of death when He rose for He could not be holden of death, but He conquered death and the grave, not for Himself but for others. “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matt. 27:52, 53). “After His resurrection” for in all things He must have the pre-eminence; He is the First-born from among the dead. This victory over death for the body we shall know when He comes; but we are called to know it now for the soul in what may be called a higher aspect, at least as regards holiness if not glory.

For victory now is connected with our faith, by which we triumph over the power of death in the “flesh.” The resurrection of the body is not by the power of faith, but by the power of God apart from faith; the trump of God and the voice of the archangel will awaken every dead saint, and every living saint shall be changed, and both will rise to meet the Lord in the air. Faith leads us now to anticipate the joy and the glory, but the fact of resurrection will be by the power of God, in His own good time. The Lord said, I will raise him up at the last day.

Jehovah will have a memorial of their glorious entry into the land, and twelve stones are taken out of the bed of the river to be left in the lodging place where they should lodge this night. But not only for them, it was also to be a sign for their children. The stones are to be a memorial unto the children of Israel forever. But this memorial is erected in the place where they lodge. The first night at least they could not forget. No vague remembrance as of a thing past and done with, but the stones would remind them of the river and how they passed through, and would tell them of the power and presence of God; was it not also by implication a pledge of His continued presence and future conquest? They were not to forget God, for He would never fail them.

But there was another twelve stones, but not for Israel's eye. Israel have no visible part with these twelve stones, save as all their blessedness flows from Christ. Not a man from each tribe, but “Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan” (ver. 9). When the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, the sea stones—this memorial—was seen only by God. And there is in the

Person and work of Christ a preciousness and value which only God can estimate, beyond any created intelligence. For beside being the Savior of them that believe, He is the Vindicator of God's name, of His truth and righteousness. If no soul had ever believed in Him, He the Lord Jesus, would still be the delight of God, Who exalted Him where sin had dishonored Him, and conquered sin and death that had ruined man and spoiled creation. This is God's peculiar position in Christ. The believer gets the blessings flowing therefrom, but he cannot measure Christ's worth, nor God's estimate of it. We read of two goats, one of which was called Jehovah's portion. So here the twelve stones beneath Jordan's swelling flood is God's portion. For a time the raging waters of sin and death hide Christ from men; soon He will reign in power and glory, and God be exalted in the earth. Not even then will man or angel know all the worth of Christ.

But what a blessed portion is ours as we look at the stones in the lodging place! We are only “lodgers” in this world, and that only a “night.” But we have a memorial given to us of the Lord, and one which tells of our salvation, and also how it was accomplished. So that we have, as it were, the memorial in the Jordan connected with that in the lodging place. But who even of the first-born ones can fully estimate the Lord's death? As the stones were for a memorial for the children of Israel forever, so the Lord's supper is in remembrance of Him until He come.

The stones in the lodging place were as much for Joshua as for any other Israelite. We do not read that he was commanded to set up twelve stones in the Jordan. Moses was the only one of all Israel who “by faith kept the passover.” Did Joshua's faith go beyond the memorial in the lodging place, and he alone of all Israel worship God in the place of death, where the priests' feet had stood? Thus owning the power of death but worshipping Him Who conquered death? Then though not in so great light as the church of God, he was partaker of a like faith which is never limited to mere external obedience. It was Christ—the ark—Who overcame and stayed the power of death, and Joshua returned to bless the God of his salvation. It was an act of worship in the same spirit, though not in the same form as when we remember the Lord in His death.

Chapter 93

Israel's Preparation for the Land .3

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

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

After such wonderful interpositions of the power of Jehovah for Israel, what more is needed but that they march immediately on to victory? There is nothing more true than that after grace shown, God looks for a corresponding answer from His own people. Under law the answer required was obedience, now under grace it is obedience still but springing from altogether a different source. And herein lies the responsibility of saints now, so different from that of men, as such. Man's responsibility apart from the gospel is, “Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). Sinful man is utterly incapable of doing his duty. Sovereign grace appears, saves him, makes him a new creation, and changes the whole ground of responsibility: not annulling the command—the duty of fearing God, but putting him where, and supplying the power by which, the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in him. He is thus on the ground of “no condemnation,” and of the indwelling Spirit, and the corresponding answer to this is, to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. Thus the Holy Spirit—the law of life, as in a new creation—makes a fresh starting point on new ground where old things are passed away and all things become new. The duties and obligations attaching to all the relationships of life remain, but the past failure is forgiven and the believer begins afresh, and now with power from God. A new responsibility commences; the former was without strength, this is with the assurance of power from God. It is no excuse for the failing believer to plead the power of nature; a superior power, that of the Holy Spirit, is given, and Christian responsibility is measured by that gift. Our privileges are greater, our enjoyments are higher, and our responsibilities are deeper, than those of Israel, even had they been perfectly obedient.

Returning to the chapter before us (Josh. 5), Jehovah had wrought for them, His grace had followed them ever since they came out of Egypt. Hitherto there had been no response to all this favor; for forty years they had remained in an uncircumcised condition. Nor would they have thought of it now, content to lie under the reproach of Egypt; but God never forgets the claims of holiness, and now that the dangers of the wilderness are past, Israel must respond to their now position. If their untoward manners in the wilderness gave reason for the forbearance of God,

there can be no more delay. “At that time Jehovah said unto Joshua, Make thou sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.” God is rich in grace and will have them (in type at least) such as His holiness requires. That which is offensive must now be judged. Nature had had full sway in the wilderness, but in the land the knife must be used; for it is impossible that an unrestrained, unmortified, nation can fight the battles of the Lord. It would be like Satan attempting to cast out Satan. Not the knowledge alone of sins forgiven fits us for contending with spiritual wickedness in high places. Israel had that (typically) in the wilderness, the blood on the altar pointed to it. The power of Christ quelling the power of death—as the ark in the Jordan—and then the practical result—the sharp knife—must be realized before saints now are equipped for the war. Paul tells the Ephesians that they are in heavenly places in Christ; then he bids them be strong in the Lord, and to put on the whole armor of God. The circumcision of Israel was carnal, ours is that of the heart; in each it precedes victory.

And this, though practically the believer's act upon himself, is due solely to the grace of God. It is only by the Holy Spirit in us that we can live contrary to the old self. The natural man denying himself is an impossibility. He may by strength of will deny himself one thing, but it is always the exalting of himself in another. To judge the whole nature, root, and branch, is nothing less than of the Spirit of God in us, “that ye may not do the things that ye would.” The will of God is our sanctification.

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

Scripture speaks of the reproach of Christ; and every believer is more or less bearing either the reproach of Christ, or that of Egypt. Heb. 13:13 shows us what the reproach of Christ is, and who they are that bear it. To leave the camp and go to Him is a deep affront to the religious world. For this is the reproach cast upon those who “go forth,” that they are disorderly, self-righteous, narrow-minded, separatists: and wherefore? Because it is a going forth to Him, as Lord, Master, and having no rule but His word, no bond of connection but His Spirit. Separatists indeed from the camp, but how can that be called narrow-minded which would and does embrace all the children of God? Nevertheless it does bring on us reproach, and the Spirit of fled says it is the reproach of Christ, the reproach of Him Who was crucified without the gate, as a malefactor, as the religious world of that day were the prime actors in that deed. It was a religion of forms and ceremonies, once acceptable, but which then had become worthless. But the “camp” still exists, and has its forms and ritual, and the same hatred. For those who separate from them. Yet there must be some deeper reason than that of leaving the camp's ritual and formalities, a reason which lies possibly unseen at the bottom of the well. There is no covering so thick under which love of the world, and an uncircumcised heart, may so comfortably lodge as religious forms and a sensuous ritual. This is making room for the flesh in the things that professedly belong to God. And this is just what Israel would have done, save for the intervention of grace, which put the sharp knife into their hand; and it needs a sharper knife to cut one's self away from the associations of the religious world, than

from the profane world. Hence the dislike of the religious world for those they speak against is far more expressed, than that of the outside world. If those who go forth to Him without the camp bear His reproach, those who cling to the camp bear the reproach of Egypt. And every child of God found there, dishonors God, dishonors Christ, yea, himself too as a believer. It is the same grace that now leads a believer out of the camp, as then led Israel to Gilgal.

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

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

Before Israel begins the war, the passover is eaten on the appointed day. No blessing, no height of enjoyment, can be separated from the foundation truth set forth in the passover, the divine reason why God can and does bless. There His righteousness had (typically) its full demands, and the Avenger passed over the guilty. All their after mercies flowed from that. It is most instructive to us to see it here in connection with their position in the land. It recalls Egypt, the house of bondage; then they were slaves, now they are receiving a kingdom, and all due to the passover. And saints, now sitting in heavenly places in Christ, still remember that “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” The feast of unleavened bread is the proper sequence of the passover, and so the apostle adds, “therefore let us keep the feast.”

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

land. While here below, unleavened cakes mark our responsibility, the old corn of the land is the grace of God known in its highest aspect; and these keep pace together, eaten in the self-same day.

If the unleavened cakes must still be eaten with the old corn, why does the manna cease? This is an instance of how impossible it is to set forth the place and privileges of the Christian in one comprehensive type. Israel could not be in the wilderness and in the land at the same time, and therefore in the type, manna, which is the special food for the wilderness, ceases necessarily. On the other hand the old corn is peculiar to the land and could not be had in the wilderness. The Christian is both in the wilderness and in the land; he is both a pilgrim passing through a world which to him is a desert, and in heavenly placed in Christ. Therefore he still feeds upon Christ as the true bread that came down from heaven, and as risen, eats of the old corn, of the fruit of the land. To know the cleansing power of His precious blood, to know Him as High Priest ever living to make intercession for us, maintaining us in faith, delivering us in the hour of temptation is just what we need as pilgrims here below, but does not reach to the height of being blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

The Lord Jesus said before He left the world “Peace I leave with you,” and this includes all wilderness mercy and blessing; but “My peace I give unto you” is the possession which the Lord, as man, had with the Father in heaven. And He was the first man that knew such peace; never before had there been such intimate communion between God in heaven, and a man upon earth. It was peculiar to Him. The voice from heaven was heard saying, “This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.” And the response from the only perfect Man, was, “I do always the things that please Him.” Who can measure the peace, the communion of the Father and the Son? Yet this peace, peculiarly His own, is the special bequest of His love to His disciples. This is truly the fruit of the land of our heavenly Canaan. It is more than grace, mercy, and peace as needed during our sojourn in the wilderness; it is communion with Christ in possession of heavenly things. To have our mind set upon the things which are at the right hand of God where Christ is, to find our highest, nay, our only true joys there, and to find their spirit influencing and permeating our whole life down here, is truly to eat of the old corn of the land.

Chapter 94

Israel's Preparation for the Land .4

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

Saints now need the same word. Indeed there is no word ever given to the saints of old but what finds its application to saints now. While we rejoice in God our Father, let us never forget that our Father is God, and that reverence and godly fear is ever our becoming attitude in His presence. It is no spirituality and deeper communion when we hear too familiar language used in prayer or praise. This is not so much lacking in addressing the Father; it is when speaking to the Lord that irreverential manner is most frequent. Holy confidence, and freedom of access does not mean familiarity, which may imperceptibly become levity. Jesus is indeed our Savior and Friend, but saints should constantly remember that God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ. And so the Lord Himself says, “Ye call me Master and ye say well for so I am” (John 13). Evidently the first thing for Joshua is to loose his shoe, for he was on holy ground; but that is where the church of God is now, and there to know the Lord as worthy of honor even as the Father, as well as our great Leader against all spiritual wickedness. The reverential worship of Joshua, and the man with the drawn sword just express our position in the world, only that our warfare is not with men but with the powers of evil in heavenly places (cf Eph. 6:12).

When the father received the prodigal, among other things he said, “put shoes on his feet.” It was not fitting that he should be shoeless in his father's house; he was no longer a homeless wanderer, but a son restored to all the privileges he had lost. And we, forgiven and received into the Father's family, have shoes on our feet, for we are sons not hired servants. It is the witness of acceptance, and place in the house. Israel left Egypt with feet shod; readiness for the journey, and breaking with the world. And the saint is now told to have his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and this is activity in service. All these have to say as to our position through grace before God and before man, as leaving the world behind us, as having our associations and joys with those who are of the Father's household, and as having God's message of love and peace for man. But here in Joshua it is something far higher and is not for the world's cognizance. The unshod feet in God's presence is the sign of subjection, the heart, the understanding, and the will, surrendered to God. Joshua said “What saith my Lord unto His servant.” The outward manner must be in accordance with the inward spirit, and he puts off his shoe.

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

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

Why no such display of sovereign power afterward? If man (Israel) is more active in subsequent battles, and the intervention of their Captain not so marked and glorious, it was because failure came in. After failure, when grace brings in restoration, faith frequently appears more energetic. It was so with Israel; at Jericho their might was in abeyance; as to the Red Sea they were told to stand still and see the salvation of God, so here they wait till God overthrows the first barrier in the land to their possession. This wondrous overthrow is the pledge of final victory, the assurance that the Captain of the host is leading them. But why is there no following instance of the same power acting apart from man? Because they had to be taught the necessity of watchfulness and dependence upon God, of which they did not feel the need when at Jericho. The required moral condition had been symbolically set forth, i.e. no confidence in themselves, but faith in God; but they had to learn their need practically; So while they still overcame their enemies, there was greater demand for the exercise of faith; a putting forth of their own might, yet under the control of God, was the appointed way of possessing the land. All was theirs according to promise, actual possession was “every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon” (Josh. 1:3). Unfaithfulness prevented full possession, and God would not throw down walls for those who failed in faith. Surely all wisely and graciously overruled for our instruction. But never after was the presence of

the Captain so marked. And how fitting that this first trophy in the conquest of Canaan should be rather the evidence of His presence than the result of Israel's prowess. It was the confirmation of the original promise first made to Abraham; joy to Israel and terror to the Canaanite. At no subsequent point in their history were they so exalted as at this moment. Even the glories of Solomon, and of the temple when dedicated did not more manifestly show the presence of Jehovah.

Compare them now with what they were on leaving Egypt. Let the eye run down the whole thread of their history when they cried out for fear (Ex. 14:10) to this day of triumph, and then say, What hath God wrought? Yes, it is the triumph of grace. Grace which like Jordan overflowed its banks. Grace which had been put to the test, which had never been found wanting, which it is not enough to say had met all the need of a perverse nation in the wilderness, but the need of Him Who in spite of their rebelliousness would righteously bring them into the good land according to His promise. And now behold this self-same people crowned with glory in the presence of their enemies; is it not the overflowing of grace? Yea, of sovereign grace, which will continue to be sovereign, rising still over every obstacle until the day come when He, the Captain of the host—now our risen Lord—shall come in power and glory, and visit the earth with sudden and overwhelming judgment, of which the fall of Jericho is both a type and a warning.

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

Spies! They went to her house, lay hid all the time, and then escaping by the window fly to the mountain and hide again for three days. What had they discovered? Nothing but what might have been apprehended already by faith. “I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee” (Ex. 23:27 &c.). The spies only verified the word of promise spoken forty years before, and they report that “all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.” But what did they discover? They found a poor sinner who trembled at God's word, and they sheaved her the way of salvation, and she believed, and perished not with them that believed not. And this was the reason why spies entered Jericho. The Captain of the host needed no spies; He could look over the battlements and highest towers of the city; He could search every man's heart. Besides, He was going to throw down their walls; no spies needed for that. Nor were they unseen; their entry, though by night, was immediately told to the king of Jericho. But when it is the purpose of God to save, what can this

king do? Rahab was one of God's sheep; not of the fold of Israel, but brought into it through grace. Grace was at that moment breaking bounds even for Israel. God had said that He would make their enemies turn their back unto them, but it was beyond Israel's expectation that upon their shout He would throw down the walls. God had said that they should possess all the land wherever they trod, but He did not tell them in what a marvelous way He would lead them to tread the streets of Jericho. If His grace was then overleaping and going beyond the strict letter of the promise, how could it be restrained from going still further and rescuing a poor Gentile from destruction? It was an intimation, at that early date that God would call whomsoever He would, and is the exercise of that sovereign grace which afterward would be characterized by bringing in Gentiles when Israel would be set aside. The Lord Jesus said when leading out the sheep of Israel to new pastures, “other sheep I have...them also I must bring.” And Rahab was one reckoned among the “other” sheep while Israel was still nominally the people of God. “Must!” There in Rahab's case is the same necessity of grace: then to number her with Israel (Josh. 6:25); now, whether Jew or Gentile, to greener pastures and streams of living water, and to be numbered among His “one flock.”

Only after the cross did the great ingathering of “other sheep” from among the Gentiles begin. Yet before the gospel was sent out to all nations God had His witnesses outside Israel, with varying intelligence and faith according to the truth revealed. Job stands foremost in his day and God bears testimony that there was none like him in all the earth. His three friends doubtless were saints though far behind Job in intelligence of the ways of God. They were accepted through the intercession of Job. Melchizedec, the royal priest, wondrous type of Christ as without beginning of days or end of life; Jethro, who confessed the God of Israel though he would not cast in his lot with them: Rahab, pre-eminent as witness of sovereign grace: Ruth, who gave up the advantages her own country offered, to share the poverty of Naomi in order that as she says, “thy God shall be my God,” thus identifying herself with the poor of Israel—the same spirit as is recorded of Moses who chose to bear the reproach of Christ, rather than enjoy the pleasures of Egypt. And Ruth like Rahab has a place in the line of the ancestry of the Son of David. Naaman again, who submitted to the word and received healing: the widow of Zarephath, Gentile witness of life in resurrection power. And, coming down to the days of our Lord, we have the Centurion whose faith exceeded any in Israel: and the Syrophenician woman—another Gentile witness of the power of Christ over Satan. All these testify to the grace of God Who sought and found sheep bearing a testimony apart from the special witness of Israel. Each of these has a specific character. All proclaim the sovereignty of grace.

The presence and power of the Lord Jesus in the earliest days of the church when on Peter's first preaching three thousand were converted is analogous to this first victory in Canaan. On each occasion the enemy was surprised. The Christ-rejecting Jews and Satan at their head, not less so, when the power of the Holy Ghost came upon the gathered disciples, and immediately after three thousand converted, than were the men of Jericho when their defense suddenly disappeared and gave free entry to Israel. In the church (Acts 2) it is a victory of grace, of Christ over Satan, and wresting from him the captives that he thought must now be his forever, seeing that they had crucified the Lord. But that death is the means of life; what greater proof than the three thousand added to the church? Such was the mighty display of power in Israel and in the church before man cast his dark shadow over its bright glory; a glory which otherwise would have continued to shine

in its power. But a blot came upon the church through Ananias and Sapphire as upon Israel through Achan. Grace, in each case mingled with judgment, was sufficient for both emergencies. But neither in Israel nor in the church was such a thing afterward seen as walls falling at the presence of the ark, or of three thousand souls converted at one preaching. Afterward the responsibilities of faith more appear. The grace of God still saves, the power of the word is still felt, but the energy of faith is more prominent. Divine wisdom controls all. By faith we overcome the world. The servant of the Lord is now in a position where his own dependence upon God is more felt. Most essential this to faithful and true service, yet not as a principal, but as a subsidiary to the grace of God, i.e. the faith and devotedness of the servant—which as a rule mark the successful evangelist—is used as a means by which God will accomplish His purpose of sending His message of love to souls.

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

Chapter 95

Israel's Failure in the Land .5. Achan

Man being in honor abideth not. Such is the divine testimony. Failure is inherent in man. In innocence, under law, or under grace, no matter what the position, or the privilege, he has never abode therein. Failure may first be secret, in the heart, sometimes the act is hidden, but if unjudged is sure to appear in its consequences. One would naturally suppose the greater the honor the greater would be the jealous care to abide therein; this as a rule holds good in worldly honors; alas, in the things of God the contrary is constantly seen. Favor through the evil nature of man has led to unwatchfulness, and in many instances with ruinous results; always, in the case of a believer, bringing grievous chastening.

To forget God even while enjoying the blessings is the history of man from Adam down to this day. Until the call of Abram, save for a few witnesses, God was shut out in man's thought, from His own world; and outside the chosen race the condition of all was “having no hope and without God.” The fearful consequence was that as they did not like to retain the knowledge of God they were retributively given up to their own evil. Divine light came into this scene of darkness, not at first shed upon all—that full light was reserved for the time when Christ came, Who coming into the world is the true light for every man—but upon a particular race and only upon others as by reflection when they came in contact with Israel. Though not the full blaze for them, it raised them above all other nations and gave them a special place of honor. The point before us now is not the purpose of God in thus separating this race from others, proclaiming Himself as Jehovah, the One God, and proving them, but the fact that they were in honor and abode not.

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

It is because of the Spirit's indwelling that all in the church of God, i.e. every true believer, are members one of another. Therefore necessarily if one member fail or suffer the whole body is affected, and far more intimately than the congregation of Israel could be. This close intimacy of

suffering and equally so of rejoicing, is through the unity of the Spirit which was not possible before Christ had ascended as the risen Man, and had taken His place on the throne of God. Thence He sent the Comforter to abide with us. Thus one Spirit abiding in each, in all, constitutes the one body.

The effect of the sin of one member is not confined to himself. There is what may be called its corporate consequence. If the Spirit is grieved the whole assembly—the local representative of the body-suffers; corporate blessing is hindered, the presence of the Lord not realized in the meetings. There is no remedy for this but humiliation and united prayer. The Holy Spirit may through the intercession of the assembly lead the failing member to judge himself, and, restored in soul, the hindrance to corporate blessing is removed. But if not, the Lord will surely make bare the wrong which the assembly is bound to judge, it may be by public rebuke, or require excision, but the Lord's name must be vindicated, and the purity of the assembly maintained. When the failing one judges himself before the secret becomes known, and is restored in soul, it remains a matter between himself and the Lord. “For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31 &c.). This scripture has special reference to the disorders that crept in at Corinth when the saints mixed the Lord's Supper with feasting as a common meal. But it embodies the principle that if sin is discerned, and therefore judged by the individual himself, he will not be judged. And this judgment is not the judgment of the world, which no believer can come under, but the chastening of the Lord. The chastening of the Lord is that which is administered through the assembly; not the same as the Father's chastening in Heb. 12. We see in Israel not the real unity of the Spirit, but a little foreshadowing of it, and all the clearer, because the image of it is not in an occasion of joy and victory, but of deep shame and fear. Had the occasion been some remarkable feat by a chief, all would share in the rejoicing as a natural thing, but when it is a sin involving death, then the reality of the thing foreshown comes vividly before the mind. Achan sinned, but God said “Israel hath sinned.” It is the first time that the hidden sin of one individual is charged upon the whole congregation. Achan, and his family, alone knew his guilt, but the consequences of his sin were felt by all Israel; they were put to flight by a despised enemy. But though all suffer why is the sin charged upon all, when they were ignorant of it? Is it not a proof that Israel was not THE object before the mind of God, but the church, where the shadow given in Israel becomes to us a divine reality. Surely it was also teaching them that since they were under the lead of such a “Captain” in Whose presence Joshua had to loose his shoes from off his feet, they must be jealously careful that no secret evil should be found among them. It was a sharp lesson, but the holiness of God admits of no compromise. At that moment Israel had charge of it, as its witness before the nations of Canaan. But if Israel failed to guard and keep it, and being known as Jehovah's people, God would vindicate it Himself. Hence the swift and complete judgment of Achan and his family. They had all been defiled though not all consciously guilty, and if Jehovah is the Captain of the host, then every man must be clear from guilt, and from every defilement. It was in the joy of their first victory in the land, that the first failure occurred. Its effects soon appeared. One man sins, the whole congregation suffer. New circumstances bring the sin to light. Israel left to their own resources find they cannot stand before their enemies. Confident in their own strength, elated with the ease with which Jericho was taken—as if it had been by their own arm—they decide as to Ai. The defiling power of Achan's sin was already working. Joshua, and priest, and all forgot God and attempt to do without Him. Had they asked counsel of God, the sin of the guilty man would have been at once disclosed and the shameful flight from Ai prevented. Israel failed through vain

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

conquest might have brought every nation to submit without daring to fight, but Israel's discomfiture at their first attempt against Ai eventually armed the nations and gave them courage to resist if possible Israel's further advance; it gave them the thought that perhaps they might overcome the dreaded people, and that the God of Israel after all was not so greatly to be feared. The Canaanites would naturally think that it was only by mere stratagem that Ai was overthrown. There was apparently nothing supernatural in the taking of Ai as at Jericho, the wonders of which they would willingly forget. Human skill in stratagem, or mere force they could meet. Hence Israel had to contest every step of the way. Only the ground on which they stood could they call their own. Was not this the consequence of their own sin? And so the word is fulfilled (Josh. 1:3) not yet according to the fullness of the original promise, but for the present modified according to their failure in the matter of Achan.

But Israel's failure is used of God to teach us now how imperative holiness is in the church of God. Without such teaching how much we should have lost. Could the holiness which God demands, and the revenging of ourselves against all defilement (cf. 2 Cor. 6:11) be more solemnly impressed upon the conscience of the assembly than in the judgment of Achan? And more, we should not have known how grace acts in wisdom, restoring, yet in such a way as to make the restored people remember their folly. Marvelous are the ways of grace. The process of discovering sin in the assembly may be most painful, always humiliating, but it is in order that the presence of the Lord might again be realized. Achan did not judge his sin, he valued the things he stole. His own conscience unpurged, he defiled the whole congregation, and Jehovah must step in to purge out the leaven that was leavening the whole lump. The end of discipline is to restore, not perhaps exactly to the same position as before, for the failure will ever remain as a fact; but the restoration of any saint always deepens the power of godliness in his soul, and is always to the praise of His grace.

Chapter 96

Israel's Failure in the Land .6

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

That their folly was overruled, and that God made it an occasion for skewing how He would be merciful to those who trembled at His word, even though they were of the accursed race of Canaan, is most blessedly true. Isaiah proclaimed it (66:2); but God here shows it. How far mightier the display of mercy, of grace since the cross! The Gibeonites also give the true position of a soul really penitent, for they bow to the sentence of death; they were sore afraid of their lives, and therefore did that thing. They plead not the alliance, they surrender themselves unconditionally, “behold we are in thine hand; as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.” So true is it that glimpses of richest grace, and of practical righteousness, of the reality of the soul's lost condition before God, are thickly scattered through the pages of God's book, long before the great foundation was laid in the precious blood of Christ. Here on one side is Israel cursing the Gibeonite, on the other the submissive Gibeonite content to be anything that Joshua may determine. Over both is seen the picture of God's mercy to a self-judging sinner.

But we are looking at Israel's failure; before as to their might, now as to their wisdom. If Israel while contending for an earthly kingdom needed to be endowed with power and wisdom from God, how much more we who are receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, a heavenly kingdom, in seeking and receiving which our obedience, and dependence, and wisdom should be as far above that required of Israel as the realities of holiness are above its mere types!

Alas! the church of God very soon followed in the footsteps of Israel. At the beginning the presence of God was as manifestly with the church, as He hid been with Israel. The Holy Spirit came to take His abode in the newly formed body, and attested His presence by a rushing mighty

wind and the cloven tongues of fire. He was the promised Comforter come to guide them into all truth, even as the Captain of Jehovah's host appeared to Joshua, and to lead the armies of Israel. And the energy of the Holy Spirit's power was soon felt by the great enemy, and three thousand were added together. What a triumph here of the name of Jesus over the power of Satan who had so blinded the Jew as to reject Him. It was the taking of another Jericho. Not more wonderful the falling down of city walls than the conversion of so many souls on that Pentecostal day. This was to the church, as that was to Israel, the pledge and pattern of victory over every foe had there been faithfulness in each to have continued in the goodness of God. But when did man individually or corporately continue in His goodness? Individuals from the first Adam have not continued, saints have needed and still need restoring grace. And as to man incorporate, there are two notable witnesses. Israel as a nation, and the church (far more intimately incorporated than the nation), both have failed, both like individuals need restoring grace. Nor will God fail in this; for Israel's blessing is nearing, and the glory of the church yet nearer. But the untrustworthiness of man, and of saints must appear. The glory is God's. If the church had learned in the presence of God the lessons that the course of Israel afforded, what shame and sorrow would never have been known.

The apostles had not long departed ere the church forgot God as the source of power. It forgot that it was only in the name of Jesus that the world could be overcome. “In my Name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16). In My Name only. Not using His Name as a mere talisman, as Sceva's sons attempted (Acts 19) but in true faith, and then the wondrous results follow. The church in its name and strength dared to contend with the world, and the world won the victory as easily as the men of Ai over Israel.

When Israel fled, it brought humiliation and crying to God, and this brought to their knowledge that they were defiled, and so they are led to restoration and joy. God gave them victory over the same foe that had so recently triumphed over them. It was a grand sight to see Israel on their faces before the Lord. Did the church as a whole ever take such a place? Nay. Here and there might have been a gathered few, but their numbers were lost in the general mass of profession. The result is far worse for the nominal church than for Israel. Indeed the analogy between Israel and the church lies rather in the principle of the flesh, trying to be independent of God, than in the manner. In the spiritual warfare of the church with the world the words of the Lord have been forgotten, “In my name;” the names of men have been substituted for His Name, and the world gained a victory. The nominal church is now a power of, and in, the world. As such, it is hastening to its doom; it is the nauseous thing that Christ will spue out of His mouth, and then as a mere harlot it will be destroyed by the world (Rev. 17:16).

The manner of the church's failure is rather in contrast with Israel's at Ai and with Gibeon. Israel attempted no compromise with Ai. The mistake was in not seeking counsel from God, and in attempting to fight Jehovah's battles in their own strength; they did not try to enlist the enemy, and swell their ranks with aliens. But this is what the church did, and spared no pains to win whole masses of men to the profession of the fundamental dogmas of Christianity. And when the priest was turned out of the temple where stood his idol, the so-called Christian priest took possession of the temple and changed the name of the idol to the name of the virgin, or of a “saint.” And this was called conversion! It was the birds of the air lodging in the branches of the great tree. Naturally

when such an element came into the professing church, it needed the powers of the world to preserve order, which however did not succeed, as ecclesiastical history abundantly testifies, the strong arm of the law in not a few instances being appealed to. And what a pitiful groping after wisdom we see in the early ages of the church, which are more marked by squabblings than by unanimity! It could not be otherwise. It was an unholy alliance between the church and the world, and was deliberately entered into. Distinctive grace and truth were lost.

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

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

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

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

What a glorious day for Israel. The combined forces flee, Joshua wields his sword with might from Jehovah. The “Captain of the host” is with him. And that is but enough, for Jehovah Himself appears apart from human instrumentality and thus completes the victory. The Lord of creation commands and nature obeys, and the hailstones smite not Israel, but the flying foe. Each stone with its own special message discriminates between Israelites and Canaanite. The sword of Israel

and the great stones of Jehovah are both guided by the same mighty and unerring Hand. Once before there was a similar intervention of God for His people; then the hail was mingled with fire (Ex. 9:24). Then the people were bond slaves, now they are conquerors “for Jehovah fought for Israel” (Josh. 10:14).

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

How one witness after another comes crowding up before the idolatrous world of His eternal power and Godhead! The hailstones, and the long day of twice the usual length, assert in unmistakeable language even to the degraded Canaanite, that God was the one God in the earth as in the heaven. They are without excuse. They still worshipped the false gods of their own making. But when we remember that oven the highly favored nation of Israel, even the people on whose behalf these astonishing displays of power were made, did themselves soon sink into the lowest depths of idolatry, and became worse than the nations whose land was now given them, whose sin was the cause of their extermination, we have a strong—if not the strongest—proof that no display of divine power, of goodness short of the grace that comes through the cross, can wean the heart of man from the love of evil.

In this most renowned battle of Joshua is seen the double thing—the energy of God in man, and the same energy apart from man: the power that clothed all Israel; and the faith that is prominent in Joshua. Faith truly proves itself to be the gift of God by its own power; for to command the sun to stand still is greater than the confidence of victory. But the energy of divine power apart from and above man is now manifest. Israel had the privilege to prove their valor, then Jehovah appears and crowns their victory. Thereafter it is a record of victory; the kings and their armies may gather, but city after city is taken until the people find rest. No further tale of sin or failure follows while Joshua lived.

In the church of God not only we may see the energy of faith in individuals, but there is undoubtedly the action of the Spirit of God who controls the power of the adversary and leads the servants of God to victory. Israel under Joshua in the land is a mirror wherein we see the reflected image of the church, though so many centuries before the church was called. All were warnings, admonitions, and ensamples. Alas! where is our profit?

Chapter 97

Israel's Preparation for Messiah's Kingdom .7

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

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

God rested on the seventh day. Sin came in, and God began to work again. The Lord Jesus bears testimony to this. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” Before God appeared, and in a sense began the world over again in the person of Noah, He allowed space for man, now fallen, to show what he was. Left to himself he filled the earth with violence and corruption, and became a prey to the angels that kept not their first estate. The whole period since his expulsion from Eden to the flood was preparatory to prove the necessity for God (in grace) to work if His divine purpose in creation—His own glory—was to be fulfilled. Not that He left Himself without witness; grace was active in Abel, Enoch, and Noah. But the solemn fact remains, man without government ended in the deluge. The next step in God's dealings is government entrusted to man, wherein is given another proof that God must work. The first governor had been a preacher of righteousness; but as soon as he was in the responsible and new position of governor he got drunk. God did continuo

government by man in the earth, but his unfitness to wield the sword of justice was proved in his first act. And the failure—which coming so soon and so marked proved it to be inevitable—is not in a man of the world, but in a saint; not in a man with no knowledge of God, but in one who knew His power and had seen it in the overthrow of the antediluvian world, and had preached righteousness. Here indeed is proof of man's incapacity, but by this is declared how he needed the interposition of God, and so the way was cleared for the coming of the Man of God's right hand.

The idea of government was not lost upon the earth. But the one notable instance in that early day was Egypt, the first-born of the nations, and the expression of the world's strength. The king is found in proud defiance of Jehovah, “Who is Jehovah?” he said. If the saint as governor failed, what else could be seen in a proud heathen but sturdy rebellion against the authority of God? Of course it was only crushed by unsparing judgment. But God was carrying on His purpose, and bringing to view that man at the best was a failing creature, and, when invested with power and authority, used it against God. It was right that man should be made manifest and be set aside to make place for the Only Man who is able to rule. To this end Pharaoh was raised up so that in him the power of the world should be set aside. “And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power, and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth” (Ex. 9:16).

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

Israel having passed through the desert and at rest in the land (Josh. 23:1), not the rest that fulfills the purpose of God (see Heb. 4:8), but rest front war during the remainder of Joshua's life and his

contemporaries, sufficient for the then purpose of God, Israel at that time affords a type of the Christian's highest position short of being actually in the glory with Christ. It is an image of the church sitting in the heavenlies in Christ, which is revealed to faith while yet here below.

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

Sad picture in the book of Judges of what man becomes even with highest privileges if left to himself! Soon Israel became like the worst of the heathen. From the closing chapters it may be said of them, as of the men before the flood, they filled the land with violence and corruption. Nowhere is depravity more exposed. The hatred of man to God culminates in the cross; but as yet he had not the opportunity to show it. But so far as the goodness and patient forbearance of God appear, so far does the incurable evil of man appear; the longsuffering of God only brings out in clearer lines his wickedness, and the absolute necessity that by stern discipline and righteous judgment the people should be trained to say when Messiah comes to reign, "Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke 19). How much there was, and is needed for this! How long a time for evil to increase, which could only be surpassed by the mercy of God who will accomplish His purpose of grace to man and of glory in Christ!

But the book of Judges does not contain images of the heavenly things now revealed; no allusion is made to it in the epistle to the Hebrews save the brief mention of a few names, exemplars of the power of faith (11:32). Truly there is much for individual saints, as indeed every where, but nothing which points to the special truths for the Christian. These special lessons are ended, and a new chapter opens of God's ways with Israel. If the church was before the mind of God in the ordinances given to Israel in the wilderness, not less is the kingdom of Messiah before Him when Israel is in the land. God is preparing the people for the kingdom of the Son of David; as the antediluvian age was preparatory to the intervention of God in government, and as the times of the Gentiles, when world-power was given to Nebuchadnezzar, are preparatory to the universal kingdom of the Son of man. In each case the disorder and wickedness of man proves the necessity of His intervention for the fulfilling of His own counsels.

Throughout this book we see nothing of the rule and power of the priest of God. It was the idol-priest that swayed the people, and idol-worship prevailed in the land. God gave them up to their enemies. In mercy deliverers were raised up and a temporary respite afforded. Here and there a passing beam of light, but soon to go out into deeper darkness. It is a descending scale of iniquity. They became lawless, each one doing what was right in his own eyes (Judg. 17:6), and

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

Such were the people who ere long are to be a holy nation, every one taught of God. What a triumph of grace when this stiff-necked and rebellious race shall be obedient, and in a position second only to the church in glory! From the opening of the Book of Judges to the end of the reign of Solomon is one connected chain of events, and so given as to show that all as different parts form one whole, or as the bright and darkest colors of the same picture, the preparation for, and the establishment typically of, Messiah's kingdom.

From the beginning God allowed man to follow his own will first, and then according to His infinite wisdom made man's wisdom to be a means, or used it as an occasion, for the accomplishing of His own purpose. Mark the successive steps in this fresh chapter of God's ways; sin abounding, judges forgotten, the priest rejected, man's choice of a king, God's choice persecuted; but the man of the world perishes, the man of God is exalted. It is an epitome of the world's history.

Israel's Preparation for Messiah's Kingdom .8

As with the antediluvians, so with Israel, God, leaves not Himself without witness. Among them He called out Abel, Enoch and Noah, and now He elects Ruth, having given her a position in a family of Israel. The time was not come for a Gentile testimony independent of the ancient people. But this little remnant—Elimelech and his family—is marked off from the nation, their history is not given incorporated with that of the guilty people but in a little book by, itself. It hints at the purpose of God to separate His own from among the mass of the ungodly. He has a separate book where He writes the names of His saints, even the book of life. This family failed in faith, they lost sight of the fact that the land they were leaving was God's gift to them, and let the famine be ever so grievous, He knew how to provide. Elimelech looked at the famine and had faith enough to perceive that it was judgment upon Israel, but forgot the power that was able to keep those that trusted in Him. This man and his household depart into a foreign land to dwell among the enemies of God. Would it not have been far better to have abode where God placed him? to have suffered even with guilty Israel, than to flee, as it were, from His presence and seek relief where surely the want of faith led him? To him, as an Israelite, the consequences were most distressing; he died away from his inheritance, in the midst of a people that of old sought Satanic aid to destroy Israel. And his two sons, sinking deeper in disobedience, marry daughters of Moab. The chastening hand of God finds them out, and they die. Naomi is left alone with her daughters-in-law. Husband and sons gone, who are now to provide for Naomi? All is lost, what can she do in a strange land? In these distressful moments did she regret the want of faith which led them so far from home? Ah, it was with her as with many another of God's chosen ones. Far better wait to bear heavy trials where God, has east our lot, than to seek a way of escape by human means, which are always the fruit of lack of confidence in God, and bring spiritual loss. Naomi left the land because of famine. Husband and sons die, and though there be no famine in the land of Moab, it is still famine for her.

The God of mercy steps in, the news comes that Jehovah hath visited His people in giving them bread, and she is brought back to the land which ought never to have been left. The loving-kindness of God never fails, His mercy endures forever. Mark the overruling wisdom of God; if the chosen witnesses fail in testimony for God, His grace raises up a brighter witness for Himself in the person of a Gentile. One of the daughters of Moab will leave her kindred, and her people, and her nation's gods, to follow Naomi into a strange land, saying, “Thy God shall be my God.” Here was a witness for the true God raised up from among the idolatrous Moabites to be His brightest witness among the feeble remnant in the land. Truly not one of them had made such sacrifices as Ruth made. And how great the reward! she enters the line of David's ancestry, yea, of David's greater Son. But what a rebuke in the simple faith of Ruth for Naomi who left the land not submitting to God! yet a rebuke in the form of restoring grace, crowning her in her widowhood with tender mercies and loving-kindness. It is the manner of His love; and saints now bear testimony to the same manner. Ruth comes in among the people, who, though so guilty, were still owned as God's people. He visited His people with bread. (1:6.) She knew them to be His people, and though her faith was veiled under strongest attachment to Naomi, she says not merely, “thy people

shall be my people," but adds, "thy God shall be my God." Thus, amid the violence and corruption of Israel, a little company bears testimony to the God of Israel. It is but a brief sketch, yet is the hand of God as visible in marvelously providing for the well-being and honor of Ruth—and through her for Naomi—as it was in the judgments that fell upon Israel. In the midst of the darkness God gives a bright scene of family and household piety, to which we turn with gladness from the surrounding national and social wickedness. What a contrast to the impiety of the idolatrous household of Micah's mother! (Judg. 17) The book of Ruth, however, is but a passing and transient gleam. Still it proves that in the worst times God never left Himself without witness, it declares His faithfulness to the weakest of saints, it manifests His power that all things must bow to His will and subserve His purpose of grace; for a Moabitess is brought in, through Elimelech's failure, to partake in the highest honor which could then be conferred upon any woman of Israel.

At the close of this book (Ruth) God unfolds His purpose, the end He had in view, and the means thereto—to bring in David. But two more generations must come and go, for the time was not yet come, the iniquity of Israel not yet ripe, ruin beyond human remedy must be visible ere God sets His king upon His holy hill of Zion. David closes his chapter of God's dealings with Israel, giving a foreshadowing of even greater iniquity and of a mightier deliverance, when the Son of David shall sit upon His throne. Israel's sins and sorrows will then be over.

The elders and people (4: 11.) pronounce a blessing upon Boaz, but the Spirit of God leads them to use words which can only be fulfilled when Messiah comes. "Build the house of Israel." Their Messiah is our Lord Jesus, He will build their house and in the future day do infinitely more than restore the glory of Solomon, so that the nations shall be amazed, and say, like the queen of Sheba, that the half had not been told.

The book closes with the genealogy of David. Is it not remarkable that this record should begin with Pharez? That the elders and the people should take the house of Pharez as a pattern of blessing for the house of Boaz? "Let thy house be like the house of Pharez"? Who was Pharez? Let Gen. 38 answer. Why not begin with his father, Judah? His was the greatest of the tribes of Israel. But it was through Pharez, son of Tamar, the promised blessing must come. God led His line of promise through base things of the world, and took up those that man would spurn. This was to magnify His grace and exalt His name. How unlike man, by whom the greater the object before him, the better the means used. Not so with God; base things, and things that are not, characterize the instruments, or the channels, to accomplish His word. Truly, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah" (Isa. 55) At that moment, Israel, according to the righteousness of law was ruined, and could have no valid title to any one thing on the ground of obedience and fidelity to God. They had joined themselves to idols; they were then morally in the condition of Pharez, children of transgressions, as the prophet said long after (Isa. 57:4). Their own ordinances shut them out, for God had said by Moses, "A bastard" shall not enter into the congregation of Jehovah" (Deut. 23:2). But in a world of sin, where even saints fail, there can be no other ground, save judgment, than absolute grace, and then sovereign grace. It forms and carries out its own purposes, and chases its own way; and so it comes to pass that, if the beginning be Pharez, the end is David.

At this point, according to the book of Judges, we see the nation as such, to be idolaters; in the book of Ruth, a little remnant failing in faith, and the grace of God abounding and pointing onward

to greater blessing.

We may consider this the first stage in the preparation for the coming kingdom. What is the second?

The Holy Spirit leads through scenes of greater evil and worse abomination, yet ever keeps before us the increasing necessity of His kingdom; His great object, the in-bringing of God's King. The next downward step is the failure of the priesthood. The sons of Eli were a greater abomination before God than that recorded in Judg. 19. The priest was the connecting link between Jehovah and the people, he was the appointed means, and no other dare assume his functions. But when the priest wickedly departed from God, and used his position to increase the dishonor of God, then the appointed means of communication with God, and of restoration to Him, were gone. Hophni and Phinehas made the people sin. The indulgence of the father was as fatal as, if less criminal than, the iniquity of the sons. Judgment overtakes the wicked sons: they are slain in battle; the father dies under the hand of God. Yet sinfully lenient as he was to his sons, his heart was true to God. Not their death, but the loss of the ark, is the immediate cause of his death. The dishonor to God was more to him than family sorrow and disgrace, and he felt that there was no possibility of approaching God in the appointed way while the ark is in the hands of the Philistines. Ichabod is pronounced upon the people: what is to become of them? There was another beside Eli who felt the extreme gravity of Israel's condition; the wife of Phinehas would not be comforted, and the name of her son bears testimony to her grief. How could they any longer be called God's people? God steps in and provides a new link between Himself and them. Samuel appears, a prophet, the only possible means of recalling guilty Israel, and of communicating to them the word of God. Such means were not needed so long as the normal link of the ark and the officiating priest subsisted. The advent of a prophet was proof that all else was gone. A prophet came to Eli (1 Sam. 2:27), but his was a special message to one man, not to supply the place of the lost ark and of the guilty priest. This was the position of Samuel, who stands out prominently as the first of the prophets, as it is said, “All the prophets from Samuel” (Acts 3:24, of Psa. 99:6), God thus naming him as the first of that line of messengers to a people utterly rebellious, as “Moses and Aaron among the priests.” For the first time the prophet is the link between God and Israel.

But how inveterate the evil of this people, and how unsparingly exposed! They soon reject him and avow their desire to be like other nations and have a king. They had broken the old connection, God brings in a new one. The old office of judge and priest was seen for the last time in Eli; a new position is seen in Samuel, who is judge and prophet. The people refuse the intervention of grace, and prefer connection with the world, and to have a king like other nations. In truth it was the rejection of God, not only of His prophet.

The intelligent reader of God's book cannot fail to see how every recorded sin has been the means of accomplishing God's predetermined will. The purposes of men have been only clay, and the divine Potter has molded it according to His own will. Everything—even wickedness—is made subservient to His purpose. And in the detail, what wisdom! yea, what grace!

Awful as it was to deliberately reject God as their ruler, desiring a man as their king, it is an immense step in bringing to pass the purpose of God. Only it must be man’s king first, then the King of God's choice. As priest he had failed, and after the short transitional period of prophet rule, his failure as king is still more evident. Indeed, whether priest, prophet, or king, there is only One

Who could not fail. And the ruin before us in this sad history through the failure of man is the preparation for the coming of that One, and demonstrates the necessity of, it. Man must be tried in every way; every proof is given that nothing short of sovereign grace can bring in the promised blessing. Israel from the first were a rebellious people; but mark the controlling power and wisdom of God: He makes their rebellion now take the form of the blessing about to be given them, the form of Kingly rule. It was His deliberate counsel that a king should reign over Israel, but it must be His King, the Man of His right hand. Man's choice is sure to be worthless. God sanctions their choice for a time, but only to make manifest, that, however good apparently it may be, his failure is inevitable.

And so we have Saul, whose beginning was so auspicious and seemingly prosperous. A bright future lay before him; the providential acts of God clear the way to the throne, and the prophet anoints him. Success attends ere long his first essay in war, and there is great rejoicing among the men of Israel. All this but confirms the testimony against man, that with every advantage he invariably fails. Saul was raised to the throne of Israel to prove, among many other witnesses, the great fact of failure stamped upon human nature, as men put a trade-mark upon their goods and merchandise. I say for this purpose, as well as to prepare the way for David, the chosen of God. Again, look at the marvelous way of preparation: it was by treachery, hatred, and at last open persecution; just like what the world—the Jew—did to Christ, the Son of David.

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

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

Chapter 99

Israel's Preparation for Messiah's Kingdom .9

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

Three very notable circumstances had just before transpired whose significance was unperceived by the most interested, for they were tokens confirmatory of his call to the throne. First, two men tell him that the asses are found, brought home, not by his diligence, but by the providence of. God. Then three men meet him with offerings, going up to God to Bethel; and of these Saul has his portion as the anointed king. After that he comes to the hill of God, and there a company of prophets meets him with rejoicings. Saul himself comes under the immediate power of the Spirit of Jehovah, he prophesies and is turned into another man. “All these signs came to pass that day.” They were foretold by Samuel, and were witnesses of the truth of his word. A godly man would surely have recognized the hand of God and sought to understand. But no lasting good effect was produced in his soul; much less could he read in them the deeper intimations of God's goodness in store for Israel. For do we not read in them that Israel who had strayed away from God should be found and brought back to their home? Yet not Saul found his father's asses, neither was it he who shall give even a passing image of Israel's future restoration; this was reserved for David. Saul only scattered and caused deeper ruin. Again, when Jacob, the banished from his home, was nearing it, he was led to Bethel, and there becomes a worshipper; so should Israel return and worship God with meat offerings and drink offerings. The “going up to God to Bethel” reminded of past mercy and is the pledge of future restoration. And though at the time of this typical prediction the hill of God was held by the Philistines—they had a garrison there—it did not prevent God giving to Saul this foreshadowing of blessing which might have been his own (see 13:13, 14), but which will surely come to pass in a day yet future. But the sketch of blessing is not yet complete: the picture is crowned by a company of prophets, who, are exulting “with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them.” How the tide of blessing swells as it rolls on! First, two men; then three; last a company of prophets. First, restoration, then worship, then exultation and. the presence of the Spirit of Jehovah. And the day is not far distant when the true King shall come to His throne, and shall be met with songs, saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the Name of Jehovah.” And then will the Spirit be poured out upon all flesh (cf. Joel 2). And when this prophecy is fulfilled, it will be said of the whole nation, as was said of Saul, that it was turned into another man.

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

Saul held his peace, when the children of Belial derided him (ch. 10:27). Apparently he would wait till God should by some public act confirm him yet more in his position. Nor has he long to wait. God had already touched the hearts of a band of men who followed him to his home in Gibeah; and next gives him victory over Nahash, the Ammonite, which would be all the more impressive because of the circumstances of Jabesh-gilead, and the cruel condition of life Nahash would impose upon the inhabitants. God puts His seal upon Saul by this victory; for the Spirit of God had come upon him, and his message to the people was made effectual by the fear of Jehovah falling upon them, so that three hundred and thirty thousand men come at his call. But in all this there was no test of obedience; Saul was only clay in the hand of the Potter. On this as on other occasions when the Spirit came upon him, he was turned into another man. Yet this remarkable first victory sheaved how God would be with him if he were obedient.

At this point a most important moral question is settled. Israel has a king, and he is crowned with victory; but how does Israel now stand before God? This question has its solemn answer in ch. 12. There Samuel reminds the people of past mercies. When their fathers sinned and came under the power of their enemies, they cried to God, they did not ask for a king, and God sent deliverers. Now, says Samuel, When ye saw Nahash the king of the children of Ammon come against you, ye did not cry to God, but said to me, “Nay, but a king shall reign over us, when Jehovah your God was your King.” They were worse than their fathers. Jehovah thundered upon them, and in terror they own their sin, “We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.”

God, while vindicating His own title to be King, allows their choice to stand—for the accomplishment of His own purpose. At the same time by the mouth of the prophet He declares their responsibility and the danger of this new position. Priesthood had connected them with God from Aaron to Eli; that link subsists no longer. The people have chosen royalty not as a new link between God and Israel, but to be like the nations. Such choosing was their sin, it was in truth rejecting God. Nevertheless royalty, was God's purpose, and is henceforth to be the connecting link between God and His people. For so He will be exalted in Israel, and in the world. But the establishment of a king must be in God's way, and the man must be of His choosing. This necessity is proved by the failure of man's way and of mane king. The divine principle of God

acting upon man, is ever “first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual.” Christ's exaltation in the earth is dependent—if we may use such a word—upon the utter inadequacy of man to meet the purposes of God's glory.

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

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

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

Remark that in ch. 14:45 is given the first instance in scripture of the democratic element rising and overcoming constituted authority; and in this instance we can truly say, Vox populi, vox Dei.

But to argue from this that the source of human authority lies with the people is contrary to the word of God. Consider the circumstances here—Saul was not God's choice; ruin was settled down upon the people; only one man of faith in Saul's army; this public witness Saul would destroy. God will maintain the testimony for Him, and as Sovereign Ruler uses the people to save Jonathan. He steps aside from his ordinary course to preserve His witness, and convicts Saul of sin; makes him feel powerless, and verifies the prophet's word that the kingdom is taken from him.

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

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

Chapter 100

Israel's Preparation for Messiah's Kingdom .10

“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:26) Every believer knows the necessity of Christ suffering for salvation, but they were necessary for making good His Messianic, glory. He was made a little lower than the angels on account of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He should taste death for everything. It was Christ's glory to exalt God in respect of sin, His especial glory to manifest God's righteousness in such a way, that the utmost mercy, so far from impeaching divine justice, serves but to exalt it the more. The justice is never more clearly seen than when God justifies the ungodly; for then is seen how perfectly Christ has met all the claims of divine righteousness against the justified one. To bring these two together, viz. eternal justice and fullness of grace, yea, each to magnify the other, was the great work of Christ. The cross is the witness of both the justice and the grace, but it also testifies how they unite and blend together to carry out the purpose of God. It is the glory of Christ to have done this. “It is finished,” He said, and delivered up His spirit. There was no other way to enter into His glory; and to exalt God and to vindicate His name was the primary object for which Christ came. Then, God being glorified, redemption follows. Unsparing judgment upon the guilty would vindicate the majesty of God, but that excludes all mercy; and such judgment became necessary immediately on the commission of Adam's transgression. Mercy stepped in, and the transgressor was spared. But from that moment it behooved Christ to suffer. In due time He came to suffer; but the necessity for suffering and for death arose at that moment, not only that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, but first that the character of a holy God, and the inflexibility of His righteousness should be upheld and maintained. There were ages

during which “that righteousness was not declared; nor during that time could mercy so brightly shine. When the righteousness was established by the cross, there was no further restraint upon the full out-flowing of grace. God had, in His wisdom, other purposes, subsidiary and preparatory to fullest grace, to disclose before He, was revealed in Christ. And one was that man must first be proved without strength and ruined, so that Christ may be seen as the Savior God, and that not in a partial but in an absolute sense. The proof of man's ruin, was not necessary for judgment. The one transgression was enough for that. That was truly and in itself irretrievable ruin; but God would have proof sufficient to convict man at the bar of his own conscience. Proof to this extent was necessary for salvation. The trial lasted from Adam to the cross. With the cross man's probation ended; then was the due time, and unsparing judgment and infinite mercy combine, and are displayed in Him whose soul was made an offering for sin. There, on the cross, mercy and truth met together; there, righteousness and peace kissed each other; there, in being made sin and forsaken—there, where perfect judgment of sin, and compassion for the sinner are seen in His death, is the highest moral glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is only through His death that God can declare Himself to the whole universe—the Savior God.

But this highest glory had no place in the thoughts of the two disciples going to Emmaus. Their aspirations were confined to Israel; they “trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed

Israel." The nation's degradation, not their sin, was first in their minds, and all hope seemed crushed by the cross. Yet the third day was come with its wonders; angels tell certain woman, and these tell the disciples, that He is alive. Some of the company go to the sepulcher and verify the report of the women; but where is the corresponding exultation? Not in the hearts of the two; they were sad. The tidings that He was alive astonished and bewildered them. Evidently they did not fully believe the goodness; for, as they walked, they communed together in sadness. Hence the Lord, as yet to them an unknown stranger—for their eyes were holden, says, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" The Lord Jesus is here answering their thought, and we learn that His sufferings are not only necessary for the preaching of repentance and the remission of sins, but equally so for the entering into His glory on behalf of Israel. Truly, Israel needed the atoning sufferings and death of Christ as much as Gentiles. But, while the cross sends the message of mercy to all the world inasmuch as He tasted death for every man, or everything, the sufferings of His whole life as well as of death on the cross are "not for that nation only."

Isaiah (53:1-4) presents the sufferings, of Christ from and for Israel apart from atonement, which is unto all. As their Representative He was bruised for their iniquities, the chastisement of their peace was upon Him; but it is by His stripes they were healed, for Jehovah laid on Him all their iniquity. As Representative He necessarily became their Substitute and had to bear their stripes, and "was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of My people was He stricken." The glory of His person makes it impossible to separate propitiation from substitution in His death; nevertheless they are distinct ideas. In the latter part of this chapter there is atonement proper—His soul an offering for sin. The result is not the being cut off and having nothing, but seeing the fruit of His travail, and victory over His foes. His being cut off are the sufferings which, through the condition of Israel and the righteous judgment of God, Christ must bear in His way to the throne of Israel. He, the Christ, began to bear the blows of scorn, hatred, and contempt long before He came to the cross. The crowd took up stones to stone Him, they led Him to the brow of the hill to cast Him down, the chief priests sent officers to apprehend Him. Were not these, with other indignities, buffets to Him who was the true and only Heir to the throne of David? Was not all this that He suffered really judgment upon the people? It was their King who was so treated. But He is more than their King, and His atonement on the cross gives a value even to non-atoning sufferings which they could not otherwise have. But the remnant in the latter day will say "by His stripes we are healed." Righteousness demanded these stripes for Israel, grace gave an atonement for them and for the world.

No wonder if the hearts of the two disciples burned within them as the Lord opened to them the scriptures which declare the necessity of His sufferings and death, but thus establishing the glory of the kingdom upon an immutable basis, and doubtless proving to them that Israel must be saved from their sins, sprinkled with clean water before the glory shines forth.

Generally the unbelief of the Gentile has a different aspect from that of the Jew. Gentile unbelief either ignores Him altogether, saying that the Gospels are only a fabulous story invented by the cunning of priestcraft to maintain the authority of a sacerdotal caste, or else, while acknowledging the historical truth of the Gospel record, denies the Godhead of Christ and the absolute inspiration of the record. Of Gentile as well as of Jew it can be said, "they esteemed Him not;" but of the Jew alone is it true that he "did esteem him, stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." On the contrary

Gentile writers are found who give Him the foremost place among the great reformers (!) of the world, not that He suffered under the wrath of God in judgment of our sins. It is reserved for the blindness of Gentile infidelity to talk of Christianity as a blend of all that was good in paganism and Judaism, with it presenting a code of morals, and imparting a better tone to the inner life of man, i.e. to the world. To esteem the Lord Jesus as merely a good man, even the greatest and best of men, while the Gospels attest that He claimed and received divine worship, is one of Satan's master-strokes in dishonoring Christ and deluding souls. The Jew esteemed Him smitten of God and afflicted, and despised Him. The Gentile affects not to despise Him (save the vulgar infidels of this and all time), does not believe Him smitten of God any more than suffering to atone, but denies the true glory of His person. “We beheld His glory, the glory as of an only begotten with a Father.” This is said of the Word Who became flesh. When He came, the Gentiles did not know Him, the Jew would not receive Him; it is not said (John 1:11) the Jews did not know Him. Certainly the Jew, though more guilty, is more logical than the Gentile. Blasphemy characterizes the former, guilty ignorance the latter.

When the angel announced to Joseph the birth of Christ, he said, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.” The Pharisees said, We have no sin. Therefore their sin remained, and barred the kingdom; for they could not be saved from the sins they refused to confess, nor could the kingdom come before they were saved. Christ came to save first, and as His mission became more manifest, so Jewish hatred became more intense. Even the hated Roman was preferred to Christ, their true King. “We have no king but Caesar” How true! that “He was despised.”

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

nation rebellious from the beginning?

There is another and a precious name which the prophet does not mention it, Jesus the Savior, was reserved, for the evangelist (Matt. 1:21). The prophet declares the glory of the King, the evangelist announces the blessing of the people. The first question with God was their sin. No glory even for Messiah as King before that was established. It was the one thing needful for the people. No purging, no glory. Therefore the immediate need of the people is given in Matthew. Christ was born King of the Jews, but He must be a Savior before He reigns. At His birth prominence is given to this Name; for all His glory, His special glory as Son and Heir of David hangs upon His being first of all a Savior. He could Dilly be such by the suffering of death. But the glory is decreed (Psa. 2)—He must reign. If the glory of His kingdom can only be attained through death, “ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” With the two disciples it was simply a question of power, with God it was a question of sin.

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

Israel’s Preparation for the Messiah's Kingdom .11

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

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

Messiah took all this from God; not in the mere sense of God permitting it, but as the direct and immediate appointment of God. “The cup which my Father giveth me shall I not drink it.” Thus He learned obedience. Suffering was a moral necessity both or His present path, and for His future glory.

When David was anointed, why was not Saul removed from the scene, and the man of God's choice seated at once upon the throne? If Messiah's path was necessarily through suffering, there was equal necessity for David, of else how could he be a type? It is David's glory to be in a measure suffering as did Messiah. He needed training for his coming exaltation. Saul had no such training; he had warnings as well as signal favors from God. But he was God's instrument for teaching David that he might learn obedience from the things which he suffered. And herein is the essential difference between the type and the great Antitype. David learned because he was taught. Christ learned without being taught. When the evil spirit came upon Saul, there was more

than discipline for David; it was that he might answer somewhat to Him who endured the malice of Satan as well as of man. Saul henceforth is the symbol of Satanic hate.

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

The first word to Samuel was, “Fill thine horn with oil and go; I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me a king among his sons.” Samuel is afraid. God has compassion on His timid servant, and then says, “Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to Jehovah, and call Jesse to the sacrifice.” As if God said—since you have not sufficient confidence in Me, but fear for your life, I simply bid you call Jesse to a sacrifice, after that “I will show thee what thou shalt do, and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee.” God does not change His purpose, but all that Saul or others need know is that Samuel is gone to Bethlehem to sacrifice. The prophet's fears are allayed. But this was not to his honor. Often we ask for, and obtain, a smoother path; but we lose honor and reward.

But what a condition of Israel's when his coming made the elders of Bethlehem tremble. They knew who he was, and they had conscience of sins. He quiets them. “I am come to sacrifice to Jehovah: sanctify yourselves and come.”

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

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

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

Now God brings David prominently on the scene, and makes him from that day forward the point round which all else revolve; in every detail he is the central figure. Whether it be David the fugitive; or David the king, he is the object before the eye of God. Nor could it be otherwise, for David is showing, as far as an imperfect man could, the path of the Only begotten of the Father to God's throne.

The nation had failed under priest-rule and under prophet-rule. God is about to establish a king, and their sin and guilt will henceforth be measured by the way they treat Him. And David in this very thing is the type of Christ. The sin of the Jew is measured by the presence of Christ among them; all previous guilt is as nothing compared with their rejection of Him “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin” (John 15:22). The judgment of the Jew, of the world, was involved in His presence; both Jew and Gentile united in refusing Him, and the solemn word is uttered, “Now is the judgment of this world.”

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

How wondrous and wise the ways of God; how perfectly suited the means to accomplish His purposes, manifold as they are! The troubled soul of the king is refreshed, and for a time David remains in the royal household. But how soon man forgets those who have been in any way a means of good to him! only let self-interest stand in the way, and gratitude and honor, which man boasts of so much, are often cast to the winds. All is forgotten, and on the next occasion when

David appears before the king, he inquires who he is. Abner might be excused, but Saul ought to have remembered who had played before him. But forgetfulness of his benefactor was not the greatest of his sins; this is simply human; he willfully opposed the known purposes of God.

The true David, even Christ, has played on His harp to the refreshing of many a troubled soul. He has played to many a sinner on the harp of His great salvation, and refreshed him with His grace. Wondrously sweet to Legion, to Mary of Magdala, when the evil spirits departed from them; and also to the weeping father when He not only commanded the evil spirit to come out of his afflicted son, but added, “and enter no more into him.” And how eventually He plays to troubled saints, refreshing them, and encompassing them with songs of deliverance. Alas, how soon we forget all His benefits! But here David causing the evil spirit to depart from Saul (it was only for a season) is a picture of Christ before Whom demons fly.

At first David was rather in a private capacity. But God's time for his public display soon came; it was in presence of the armies of Israel and of the dreaded Philistine. What a proof then was given that the Spirit of Jehovah was upon him. The giant foe defies the armies of Israel, and Jehovah the God of Israel. He comes in all the might and pride of man, with all the adjuncts of the world, a helmet of brass, a coat of mail, greaves of brass upon his legs, a target of brass between his shoulders, with a spear like a weaver's beam. It is material power of the world in array against the power of faith. This man is the expression of the world's might. His stature nearly ten feet; he is invulnerable before and behind. All is useless, for faith overcomes the world.

How in the pride of conscious strength he boasts against Israel! Saul, higher by head and shoulders than any in Israel, is cowed, and all flee from him. How the Philistines most have gloried in him, a confidence equaled only by their terror when he was slain. In his boast against the servants of Saul he did not reckon upon the God of Israel, Who, whatever Saul might be, would vindicate His own name, and in His own way. Not by opposing worldly means to worldly power, as Saul attempted to do when he clothed David with armor, as if faith in Jehovah could use like weapons as the world. Faith puts them off and goes to meet the foe in the name of Jehovah of hosts. That name was David's shield, and nerved his arm, and gave him victory. This manner of fighting raised the scorn and contempt of the world's power, and made the giant yet more insulting. “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah.” His Spirit was upon David, and with the (in appearance) contemptible means of a sling and a stone, as against a dog, the giant falls, and receives his death-stroke from his own sword. The battle is won. The victory is by the Spirit of Jehovah. Israel does not contend, but pursues a flying foe, and reaps the fruit. But it is David the anointed, who becomes the cynosure of all eyes, the wonder, and for the time, the praise of Israel. Saul might slay thousands, but David his ten thousands.

The women of Israel meet the returning army with songs. Their higher praise of David connects him in Saul's mind with the kingdom; for he knew from the prophet that it was given to another. Therefore from that day and forward he eyed David: the chosen of God as such draws upon himself the fiercest and most implacable hatred of the rejected king. So did the Jew treat Christ. Upon His Holy Head fell the concentrated hate of the rulers. Nor is there any more cruel hate in this world than that of the rejected of God upon the faithful.

At this moment there is a bright gleam; the army is victorious, the women are jubilant. It is but a sample of the achievements of Messiah when He comes to reign. Here, as in other portions of the

word, men by their action show the energy of the spirit within them, the women, the position resulting from the action, or conduct of the men. Here it is a scene of joy, of exultation; which gives a glimpse of the future, when all Israel will return with singing.

This is not the first time the women of Israel are prominent in song. Miriam and the women of Israel with instruments of music answered Moses and the men of Israel singing to Jehovah over the drowned Egyptians. Deborah was foremost when she and Barak sang at the destruction of Jabin's army; and here they come forth to meet Saul and his army. Though women are restricted from certain functions in service, both under the law, and now by apostolic command, certainly cordiality in praise was never forbidden them. And it was a grateful thing to the army to meet with a joyful welcome where all united in gladness, save one whose heart was filled with jealous rancor against the man whom God had chosen as the instrument of this glorious victory. The poor wretched king, outside the joy common to all beside, soon turned the glad scene into one of deepening distress and woe. As it were, the slain Philistine revives, and the end is the death of the rejected Saul but the triumph of the chosen David.

Chapter 102

Israel's Preparation for Messiah's Kingdom .12

As the victor over Goliath David enters at once into public life. From, the humble position of shepherd he rose to be really the chief in Israel. Saul might still be chief nominally, but it was by David that Israel was raised from the depths of despair and fear, and a song of triumph given them. Even so will Messiah at the right time raise Israel from lower depths and give them a more triumphant song. He had already been anointed, and the Spirit of Jehovah rested upon him. The same Spirit led him to the battle and gave him victory. Jesse had no thought but to inquire after David's brethren, but the thoughts of God were far above the thoughts of Jesse.

So the Lord, our David, after He was anointed by the Spirit descending as a dove and abiding upon Him, was likewise led by the Spirit into the wilderness to meet in single combat the antitype of Goliath in his defiance of Israel and of God. And even as Goliath must first be slain before Israel could rejoice in victory, so must the devil first be vanquished before blessing and reinstatement in highest earthly privileges can be brought, to Israel. If David be the type of the Messiah, no less is Goliath a symbol of Satanic power. Christ's victory in the wilderness was His first act in His path of service, even as David's first public act was the slaying of Goliath. The great enemy, though not yet banished from the scene of Messiah's glory, must he made to know the power of Israel's future king. In the wilderness the Lord Jesus Manifested His power and gave the pledge of His future triumphs. There it was overcoming the tempter, as in resurrection breaking the bands of him who wielded the power of death: pregnant presages of His coming kingdom and power and glory.

But that which gives us a practical lesson even in our every-day life is that both David and Jesus our Lord overcome the foe by the sword of the word of God. The same sword abides for us, and faith nerves the arm to use it. “It is written,” said the Lord. “I come to thee in the name of Jehovah,” said David. God had written His name on Israel's banner, and that was David's Confidence. The sure word of God gives us victory in every conflict. Faith rests upon it, and by faith we overcome the world and its prince.

David's victory was in presence of Israel and of their human foes. Christ's victory was unseen by human eyes, but in the presence of God and of the angels—He was seen of angels. Perhaps even the demons beheld the defeat of their Chief, as they did afterward confess His Person and His power, “I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God.” But the day is coming when men shall be eye-witnesses of His power and glory, and all then shall know that He is Jehovah.

When the Lord Jesus returned from the wilderness, it was not to receive the praises of men, but their hatred. They did wonder for a little moment, for there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about, and at first He was glorified of all (Luke 4). David was met with acclamations of joy, but the hatred of Saul prevailed. And with the Lord the scene immediately changed, His path was quickly marked with sorrow. Herod had put John the Baptist in prison, the one who claimed the position of a “friend” (John 3:29). And His first recorded preaching after His return from the wilderness was in Nazareth where they sought to throw Him from the brow of the hill. A similar path awaits David. It was after his victory over the defier of Israel and of the Jehovah of Israel, that

he entered upon that special path of suffering, and tasted of that cup which Messiah drank to the dregs. David might taste, and for that must be sustained; a greater than he drained the cup.

But we must repeat a remark made before, that while David's path of suffering as a whole is typical of Messiah's rejection by the Jew, when we come to details we find how blended is the imperfection of the saint with that which prefigured the perfect path of the Lord in similar circumstances. To distinguish between these surely needs the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Yet, even the saint's imperfection only serves, by contrast, to place in brighter light the absolute perfection of Him who was ever the Faithful and True Witness. David failed quite enough to have been set aside as a type of the Perfect One. But we see in his course the sovereignty of grace towards a much-tried saint, as well as the foreshadows of God's purpose concerning Christ and the supremacy of Israel in the coming age. And though in many points of his life the “type” is most distinct and clear even there let us never forget the saint's responsibility. It is even so with us now. Not that we are types in any sense whatever, but we may be instruments of God as the channels of blessing, and of conveying truth to others; ourselves, like David, perhaps not conscious at the time of the purpose of God in thus using us. Yet in every case a certain amount of moral responsibility rests upon us measured by our intelligence in the ways of God. David as a type of the Messiah, and as a saint with whom God is dealing for his present and immediate profit, must both be before our minds, or we shall fail to learn what God has written for our learning now, and the unfolding of His purposes in Christ for Israel's glory; perhaps lose altogether the blessedness of being called “friends” (John 15:15), to whom the Lord discloses the counsels of the Father.

As during the life of Saul the sufferings of David prefigure those of Christ, so does Saul set forth the unrelenting hate of the leaders of the rejecting and persecuting nation. There was no open idolatry during the king's life; he maintained more or less the external order of the appointed worship. The priests, if not the prophet, were with Saul. But in his heart was hatred of God's anointed. And during our Lord's sojourn here below, there was the absence of idolatry, and with the Pharisees, the dominant religious faction, a hypocritical zeal for the law in external duties and ceremonies, but with that a fiercer hate of Him who is greater than David. The house was swept of its idolatrous abominations, but garnished with hypocrisy (see Matt. 23). Saul at first pretended to be zealous for God, at the same time that he, as in the case of Agag, disobeyed His commands. At first he would extirpate those who had a familiar spirit, at the end he sought their counsel. The Lord foretells that in a similar way the guilty nation will fall again under the power of the unclean spirit, and with it seven other spirits still more wicked. The downward course and miserable end of Saul are a picture of the evil generation that, rejects Christ their Messiah while David and his company, who are eventually exalted, show the portion and destiny of the few that followed Christ in His rejection (Matt. 12; 25).

Israel's praises of David brings Saul's hatred to a point and gives it form. With the quick eye of jealousy he sees David as the future king of Israel, and thereupon seeks to kill him. The wise men from the East came to worship Him who will born King of the Jews, and Herod is troubled, and devises means to slay the young child at Bethlehem. Deceit and treachery marked both Saul and Herod, and each sought to slay God's anointed, whether the type or the great Antitype. Saul told David to fight Jehovah's battles and to be valiant. But he hoped that David would fall by the hand of the Philistines. Foolish Saul! Had he forgotten that David slew Goliath? Herod told the Magi to bring him word when they had found where the young child was. Worship was on his tongue, but

death in his heart. Both seemed to feel instinctively the advent of the true and rightful King. Saul tried by means of his two daughters to bring about David's destruction. With the second he imposes what he thinks an impossible task. David brings double the number required; whereat Saul is yet more afraid of David. He proceeds to give a direct command to his servants and even to Jonathan, that they should kill David. How strikingly: similar many of the circumstances here recorded are to those which the Lord passed through. The Pharisees gave commandment to their adherents that if they knew where Jesus was they should take Him. They also consulted to take Him by subtlety.

For a brief moment (19:7) David had respite. Not for long; the evil spirit again dominates the miserable king. David seeks shelter from the king's fury in his own home, but as quickly leaves it; for even there the hate of Saul would reach him; he flies to Samuel. Three times messengers were sent to slay him, and three times God interposed in a wondrous way. The messengers of death are turned into prophets. Saul dares the manifest power of God, as if he said that God might turn aside his servants, but should not turn him! No act of his rebellion went beyond this. The mightiest man is only a reed in the hands of the Almighty. Saul must prophesy, he is no stronger than his servants, though his evil heart still retained his purpose against David. But God put a hook in his nose and turned him in a way he would not, as He did the Assyrian in a later day (see 2 Kings 19:28).

The officers that were sent to take Jesus (John 7:32) came under a similar power, and were also turned from their purpose. Astonished they return, saying, “Never man spake like this man.” We do not know that saving efficacy accompanied in this case the words of the Lord any more than it did the constraining power of the Spirit in the case of Saul and his messengers. In each we see God using the enemy to bear testimony to His power according to His will. What a vain thing is man! When the rulers take counsel together against God's anointed, He has them in derision. For the decree is gone forth: God's king must sit on the holy hill of Zion. David is under the panoply of God, nor can Messiah be touched till the appointed time. David must be preserved all through, he must suffer but not die, for he had not life in himself. Christ had, and was able to go through death in His way to the Throne. How very partially each type can set forth either the depth of His sufferings, or His power and glory. There was that in the path of Christ where no man could go, a cup which none but He could drink, a baptism which was His alone. Death under judgment was His. Many have followed Him in death, but not in judgment. These were not typos but disciples. The Master must be first and alone; “Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterward” (John 13:36). He bore away the judgment; then others, His disciples, could follow through death. As regards types Isaac came nearest for he was actually bound and laid upon the altar, but there is essential difference between the figure and the reality of death. It was only in figure that Abraham received his son from death (Heb. 11:19).

Returning to David, how suited to the circumstances is his deliverance. He was with the prophet whose function is not to fight with the sword, but to bear testimony and, if need be, suffer! God delivers David in an extraordinary way. Saul becomes another man, foregoes his purpose, and in appearance and according to the uninstructed voice of the people is numbered with the prophets, as of the same company with Samuel and David. Not to the discerning eye, for his behavior savored rather of the frenzy of the prophets of Baal. Here is no providential mode of escape for David as when surrounded by his pursuers in the wilderness of Mann, Saul is called away by

tidings of the invasion of the Philistines. Saul; himself under the direct and immediate hand of God, becomes the instrument of deliverance. May we not say here as Samson when he found honey in the lion's carcass, “Out of the eater came forth meat” God delivers His saints in unexpected ways, ever for His own glory, yet always in keeping with the position and circumstances of His saints.

Jonathan's love (ch. 20.) was an oasis to David in the desert of persecution which he now feels in its acutest form. Driven from home, a wanderer, a fugitive, he had nowhere to lay his head. The power of Israel wielded by Saul is against him. So it was with the Lord Jesus. Foxes had holes, birds of the air had nests, the cunning and the unclean had a place in this world; He, the Lord, had none. Yet to Him there was a house at Bethany, a little green spot where He could meet with hearts that responded to His own. Of them it is said, “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.” Of only one other is this intimacy of affection spoken-of the disciple whom Jesus loved. Precious to the Lord was this communion of love in His path of sorrow. The loves of David and. Jonathan are but shadows of the Lord's love for that family, and of their love for Him. Yea, however close Jonathan's love to David may be to their love to the Lord Jesus, David's love to Jonathan can be only a faint image of the Lord's special love for these highly favored ones at Bethany.

In this sorrowful yet deeply interesting meeting of David and Jonathan there is more than their mutual love. In Jonathan we see the godly in Israel owning their king. They confess Him before they see His glory; and they are themselves weak and in fear. Simeon, Anna, Nathaniel, confessed Him; but Nicodemus is most like Jonathan, for he also, for fear of the Jews, came by stealth to the Lord Jesus, as Jonathan to David, fearing his father, and unknown to him and to the nation at large. He acknowledges David as the king of Israel. He had before stripped himself of the emblems of royalty and given them to David. Now he acknowledges that his life is in the hand of David. It is complete and perfect submission. There could be no fuller confession of David's rights as king of Israel, for he pleads not only for himself, but also for continued kindness to his house forever. He expected to see David's greatness. “And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of Jehovah that I die not; but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house forever; no, not when Jehovah hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth,” “and I shall be next thee.” Jonathan entreats, but his entreaty is in accord with the counsels of God, and therefore his prayer has a prophetic aspect. We see in this the covenanted blessings of the saved remnant in the age to come; not of those who share in the rejection of the Lord, the Messiah, to whom He said, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” David's company became princes in the kingdom. Jonathan never took that place, he returned to the city, and did not follow David. None loved David, more than he; but he is used, and (I believe) it was so ordered by God, that he should thus prefigure the future remnant of Israel who never know the reproach of Christ, that will he brought back to the land in “the kindness of Jehovah,” and of God's counsels concerning them. The promise is given, repeated, and confirmed with an oath—two immutable things.

Israel's Preparation for Messiah's Kingdom .13

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

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

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

is demanded in accordance with the measure of light. If God passed over (I do not say sanctioned) their duplicity, it is not an example to be followed, rather a warning to judge the secret springs of action and see that all is consonant with truth in the inward parts.

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

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

David's guile brought sad consequences for Ahimelech and his house. Indeed, on the previous occasion it nearly cost Jonathan his life. Saul was far too shrewd a man to accept the story of a sacrifice at Bethlehem, and in his anger threw his javelin at Jonathan. His jealousy and hate made him keen of perception. David succeeded in deceiving the priest, who fell a victim to the king's wrath. Perhaps, had David told the whole truth, the priest might have oven then cast in his lot with him, as Abiathar his son did later. Full trust in God would then have doubtless uttered the words of faith which afterward David said to the son, “With me thou shalt be in safeguard;” even as we are with our David spite of Satan's power and the world's hatred. As it was Ahimelech boldly maintained David's integrity; though was there not a gentle rebuke to him for his want of truth in the words, “Thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more?” The effects of one man's sin are seldom confined to himself, and in some instances defilement is the consequence which is always the case when sin being known is not rebuked in faithfulness to the Lord. But here Ahimelech was not defiled. In his simplicity he accepted David's statement. The effects touched him even to death, but he was guileless. David was the indirect cause of his death, and he afterward admitted it; for at the time he suspected what the fatal result would be when he saw Doeg. Should he not then have made a full disclosure of his true position? False shame sometimes engenders guile; the effects spread far and wide. Upon Ahimelech is brought destruction, upon his family and the city. Yet wicked and cruel as Saul was, there is more than human revenge. He was the guilty tool of Satan's malignity against all who in any way befriended God's chosen king, and Doeg was the willing tool of Saul. And when the Lord Jesus came, Satan found other willing tools of his hate. The priests were his tools, and Pilate (though he was unwilling) the tool of the priests. In Saul's day the priests were the sufferers, for they were owned of God. In the Lord's day the priests, then disowned of God, are in the place of Saul, and urge, yea, compel the Roman governor to crucify the Lord Jesus.

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

David flees to Achish. Here are three things so closely linked together as to be like cause and effect. Indeed, failure in trusting God is the root of all departure, now as then. There was deception attempted upon Saul, a bolder aspect of untruthfulness to Ahimelech, and now degradation before Achish. And in this backsliding course the fear of man grows, and trust in God seems quite gone; for how else would he seek refuge with Israel's bitterest foes? It was as giving up his inheritance in Israel, forgetting his anointing, forsaking his God. David sinks very low in the presence of Achish. A saint seeking refuge from fear of trial by going into the world is sure to increase his difficulties and sorrows. So it was with David. Is fear removed? Nay, it only takes a different form, and he is now in real danger of his life; for he had no right to claim the protection of the God of Israel. But mercy is above all, and his great danger is the means of driving him back to the land which he ought not to have left. God even uses the Philistines to remind him that he was the anointed king, and how he was honored in the memorable fight with Goliath. “And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David, the king of the land? Did they not sing one to another of him in the dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?” They recognize him as the “king of the land,” and well interpreted his triumph over Goliath, and the song that greeted him when the women of Israel met him with music and dance. David was ten times greater than Saul. Is it not strange that enemies—the world—are better interpreters sometimes of circumstances than saints? Ought they to be? Alas! how soon believers forget in whose keeping they are. Faith is both the most hardy and most delicate plant of God in the heart, most hardy where unhindered, most delicate where fear of man or other phases of the flesh appear. Both Saul and the Philistines were enemies. Saul said, “I know thou shalt reign.” The Philistines call him “king of the land.” The only effect of their word is to make David sore afraid. Want of faith leads him to attempt a human means of escape. God in sovereign grace overrules, and Achish sends away a “madman.”

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

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

David's followers were not those whom the world called respectable; in the estimation of the wise and prudent, it was a disreputable company. Quite true, and there was but one redeeming feature among them. But that was everything in God's sight: they were with David, and he was their captain. The disciples of the Lord have since borne similar reproach. For the most part they were numbered with the base things of the world before they were chosen, and afterward had to bear the world's contempt. This we accept: it was His while here. Even men of position (though not many wise, mighty and noble, are called, 1 Cor. 1), having a place in the world, have been content to become fools for His sake, whether in following Him then in view of the kingdom, or now in view of heavenly glory. To Nicodemus they said, “Art thou also of Galilee “art thou one of that base company? But in the cave of Adullam were found the precursors of those to whom the Lord said, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Chapter 104

Israel's Preparation for Messiah's Kingdom .14

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

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

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

Though he had sought refuge among the Philistines, David's heart was true to God and to Israel. He hears that the Philistines are robbing the threshing floors of Keilah, and he immediately prepares to go against them. But he first inquires of God. And here, as ever, when faith seeks to know and to act according to the mind of God, it is met with objections and doubts. How natural the fears of David's men! Human wisdom and prudence endorsed their objections. The effect upon David is to send him again to God, and his faith is confirmed, and victory assured. Saul—religious Saul—hearing that David is in Keilah, hastens to destroy him, saying, “God hath delivered him into my hand.” He thought there was no escape for David, and said God had done it! What a fool man becomes when he attempts to understand the ways of God with His saints, he himself being an

enemy! Yes, God did bring David to Keilah, but He also knew how to bring him out of it, not for Saul, but for His own glory and for Saul's confusion. The base men of Keilah would have delivered him to Saul. But he again seeks and finds direction. God led him both to befriend the roan of Keilah, and to flee from their ingratitude. The Lord Jesus met with the same ingratitude from those that He befriended. Among them is the impotent man (John 5) whom the Lord so graciously healed. He told the Jews “that it was Jesus who had made him whole.” It was the spirit of betrayal, only he had not the opportunity. The hour was not yet come. This base man was of the generation of the men of Keilah. Doubtless David felt keenly when assured from God that the men whom he had delivered, forgetful of his kindness, would deliver him up to Saul. But how much more did the Lord feel from a baseness and an ingratitude still deeper! Listen to His words of sorrow, “Yea I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy” (Psa. 7:4). And, yet a more touching cry when the betrayal is accomplished— “Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psa. 41:9) words of which the historical occasion was the defection of Ahithophel, but which pointed onward to the greater sin of Judas (John 13:18).

Then follows a glimpse of the grace which without interruption marked all the life of our Lord. Circumstances, which seemed to have brought David into extremist peril, in reality put Saul in David's power. But he will not avenge himself, on the contrary he appeals to Jehovah; let Him “therefore be Judge and judge between thee and me, and see and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.” So also the Psalmist where we see the Spirit, of Christ, of Him who would not save Himself, but committed all to God, “Plead my cause, O Jehovah, with them that strive with me; fight against them that fight against me,” &c. (Psa. 35). The same cry for help and deliverance again, “Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; oh deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man” (Psa. 43:1). Saul's better feelings prevailed for a moment, but deceit in some form or other always has marked the persecutor; perhaps even deceiving himself, for not long after a very similar scene occurs (see 26.). But there was a transient effect produced, for even the cruelest heart may have its seasons of relenting, though generally succeeded by the same old, if not a greater, hatred. It was so with Saul, in whom we see the persistent enmity of the natural heart, spite of known truth. “I know well that thou shalt surely be king.” Yet after this he sought David's life.

A different picture is presented now (chap. 25.), which, while not dissevered from the kingdom, looks to a higher thing which is called into existence when every outward link with Israel is broken. And so this chapter fittingly opens with the fact of Samuel's death. He was the visible link of the people with God, after, the death of Eli, the priest. There was a new link preparing, but he was in the wilderness of Paran, as yet not received by the nation. While still the rejected king, the Holy Spirit brings before us the story of Abigail and her ultimate blessing. She is not the type of the church as a whole, but seems to prefigure church position during this present time. In her we see those of the remnant who as a kind of first-fruits were joined to the Lord, and were added to the church (Acts 2) soon to share as the Bride in the exaltation and glory of the Bridegroom, though now for a season despised. Some of the characteristic marks of the church are found in her. She renounces her own position, whatever it was after Nabal's death, to share in the sorrows of David, whom Nabal (Israel) despised, but whom she knew to be chosen of God. David's present circumstances has no weight with her. He was suffering because God had called him to the

throne, and that was enough for Abigail's faith.

To partake of the sufferings of Christ is our privilege, though how little our measure. We all, more or less, fail individually to follow in His path of sorrow; shrinking from the cross, but loving the blessing.

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

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

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

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

Two facts are now given (vv. 43, 44) which, if the Holy Spirit had merely meant to show how wonderfully David had been delivered from all his foes, might have been omitted without detriment to the record of God's grace and loving-kindness. But the primary object of the Holy Spirit is not

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

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

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

Chapter 105

Israel's Preparation for Messiah's Kingdom .15

Up to this point David has given us a glimpse of the path trodden by Messiah when He was presented to the Jew. And the remnant that then believed in Him, separated from the nation, sharing in His rejection, but to enjoy a more blessed position, were taken out of the natural position of Israelitish remnant, and with believing Gentiles, after the cross form one body, the church, where they that are nigh, and those who were far off, the middle wall of partition broken down, are made one “new man.” This position of the godly ones of Israel—for God always maintained a testimony for Himself in Israel whether in the former or present dispensation—Abigail and Ahinoam represent. During the time that this body is forming by the Holy Ghost, Israel as a nation—Michal the first wife being separate from her husband—become Lo-ammi.

The chapter that follows gives the trial of David's faith as a saint. For honored as he was, he was but a man, and his faith must be tested as that of every other believer: “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:7). But, besides this proving of David's faith, is there not an analogy between his forsaking the land and making a home among the Philistines, and the professing church forsaking its true place, forgetting its standing and making for itself a home in the world, so as to avoid the consequence of the cross, hatred and persecution from the enemies of Christ? Many of the true children of God are carried away through false teaching, the fruit of unbelief in the word of God. God has kept for Himself a few faithful ones; but the mass of profession is mixed with the world, and rapidly sinking into Laodicean apathy and pride, notwithstanding the seeming zeal seen in the highest and lowest aspects of profession, which is comparable to the unhealthy, because feverish, energy of a sick man. As a whole the professing church is living contentedly in a kind of spiritual Ziklag, until God permits the enemy to overthrow it. Ziklag is burnt not by the Philistines—the world within the pale of profession—but by the Amalekites—the world, outside profession. The Amalekites did not burn a city of the Philistines but the refuge which saints had made for themselves in the world. It is righteous judgment, but withal great mercy. For God will bring His people, those true in heart to the person of Christ, out of every false position. The church though broken will be compelled to return from their Ziklag to their true place, individually if not corporately. For us it is waiting for the Son from heaven. For David it was returning to the land of Judah.

David's failure in faith, and Saul’s inability to withstand temptation, are the two things next before us. And we learn that not only is the natural man powerless against temptation, and therefore incapable of ruling well and presenting in his high vocation an image of the Great King, but even the saint fails, and in the first principles of trust in God. David's failure brought him into circumstances which well nigh proved fatal. It was only the intervention of God in grace, that opened the door for his escape from the dishonoring position in which lack of faith placed him. One aspect of God's dealing with him at this time is His mercy. Of course we may say, looking at God's purpose in him, that he must be delivered; but this in no ways lessens—nay, rather increases—his sin in going again to seek refuge among the Philistines. But this all the more exalts

the compassion and grace of God. For his going over to Achish and settling down in the country of the Philistines, and pressing his service on the Philistine king when marching against Israel, was putting every possible hindrance and doing all he could, against his ever sitting upon the throne of Israel. Could he be the one chosen to be king? As a responsible man he forfeited all the privileges and honor of his anointing. But when did failure in responsibility ever turn aside the flow of God's grace to His saints, or bar the fulfillment of His purpose? God had spoken, and neither David's fear of Saul with its consequences, nor Saul's active opposition, could set aside His word.

In Saul we see the natural man's attempt to forsake evil and his sure failure. There may be an appearance of having succeeded, and so long as no temptation assails him he may maintain the appearance. But when the opportunity comes, the power of evil breaks down every barrier of good resolves and intentions? all which are found to be as tow touched with fire; and with increased impetus the undelivered slave of sin rushes into the same courses from which he seemed delivered. This is the history of many a soul, and it by no means proves the want of sincerity. Many a circumstance may happen to make a man review his past ways with shame and disgust: with such a feeling it is an easy matter to resolve to abandon them. A reformation that has no deepen root than the mere accidents of human life afford, or what man calls gratitude, cannot endure when the tempter and favorable opportunities combine. It may be the reproaching of conscience, for the natural man has a conscience which sometime will speak until it be seared as with a hot iron. In such cases there is no real sincerity; and if there were, sincerity is not power. It is simply self-delusion, and the man is the victim of his deceitful heart.

This was the case with Saul. He recognized (ch. 24.) the kindness and forbearance of David; and it so touched him that he “lifted up his voice and wept.” He is convinced that David will baking, and prays him to swear that he will not destroy his name out of his father's house. David gives the required pledge, and Saul returns home—doubtless with the thought that he would no more seek David's life. But Satan does not leave his captives alone. A little time may elapse, so that Saul's sense of gratitude and his good resolutions may evaporate, when he would be as ready as ever to follow the path in which Satan was leading him. His hatred was only smoldering till it was fanned into a flame as fierce as before.

For here is very much more than Satan accomplishing the ruin of a soul. Saul was his tool in his enmity against Christ. Saul only saw David. Satan saw in him the type of Christ who is the Son of David. If Satan could only destroy David, where would be the Son and all, the promises bound up in Him? not only the future blessing of Israel and of the earth, but the bruising of Satan himself, and wresting from him the world of which through sin he had become the god and the prince? It is Satan's antagonism to Christ which alone fully accounts for the persistent and unnatural desire of Saul to slay his daughter's husband. It began with jealousy, but David's submissive conduct, so invariable, was quite sufficient to have removed all such feeling so unfounded (but therefore with deeper root), had that been all. Satanic wisdom discerned in the youthful slayer of Goliath the power of God, and the progenitor of Him who was to be the bruiser of his head, and the conqueror of Death and Hell. Therefore it was that Saul's jealousy ripened into Satan's hatred. And all through the scenes the real contest is between the opposing forces—if we may thus speak—the power of God on one side, and, on the other, the power of Satan.

This opposition dates from the garden of Eden. To the serpent, God said, The seed of the woman should bruise his head. From that moment, Satan's constant aim was to destroy the woman's Seed, whenever He should appear, and if possible to prevent His appearing. To this end he made Cain a murderer. Eve thought he was the man; perhaps it was also Satan's thought. A mightier effort followed: he corrupted the whole race, and the deluge came. Satan did not calculate on the race being continued through Noah. Nor was there any clue given (save vaguely in “Blessed be the Lord God of Shem") till long after to show in what line the promised seed would come, till Abram was called, and upon him Satan immediately fixed his eye. He essayed on three different occasions to swamp the separated line with the nations outside. Twice was Sarah exposed, first, in the house of Pharaoh (Gen. 12:14), then in the house of Abimelech (Gen. 20). His third attempt, for the same object, was with Rebecca (Gen. 26), only that God would not permit her to be taken into the Philistine's house. Isaac's sin was the same as Abraham's. If Satan succeeded in corrupting the old world, why not in corrupting also the chosen line? All this was to prevent the coming of the true Seed.

Again, Satan knew that the line ran through Jacob; therefore he led Isaac to give the blessing—in intention—to Esau. The sad story of Dinah shows the hand of Satan for the same end. When Jacob's children were in Egypt, he instigated Pharaoh to decree the destruction of every male child, i.e. to destroy the race. Again, he sought the corruption of the chosen people when he brought the daughters of Moab into the camp (Num. 25). David appears, and Satan quickly discerns that the promised Seed will come in this line. The sphere of his plotting is narrowed and his efforts are directed against this chosen man, and Saul is his willing instrument. All these are Satan's attempts to frustrate the purpose of God; for if, he could prevent the advent of the promised Seed, he would remain undisputed master of the world. But neither man's sin, nor the saints' failure, nor Satan's opposition, can set aside or annul God's decree.

From this point of view—God's purpose—there can be no doubt as to the issue. Satan may seem for a moment to drive the chosen man to the last extremity; and the chosen one himself may fail in faith, and in despair give up all. But this in the end only makes the interposition of God more pronounced and the discomfiture of Satan more complete.

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

David does not forget his place in presence of Saul whom he constantly honored as the anointed king. David says of himself, only “a flea"; that to pursue him is “as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.” What need of such an army as Saul had to seek David with his little band of at most six hundred men! So great means to attain so (apparently) small an end! How very determined the will of Saul against David, yea, against God! He who sits in the heavens has man in derision. He sends a deep sleep upon Saul and his army; and they are all in the power of David,

whose reverence for the order of God alone stays his hand. But is there not also a touch of sarcasm in David's words, “The king of Israel is come out to seek a flea"? For the “flea” had been in the king of Israel's camp and had taken away his spear and the cruse of water; i.e. his means of warfare and the necessaries of life. In a word, Saul was powerless. What greater proof than this, that Saul was the “flea,” and the power of God, the strength of Israel, with David?

Did he think to come unawares upon David? David knew Saul better than Saul knew himself, and he “sent out spies” and understood that Saul was come in very deed. Appearances might seem fair at first, but David did not trust them, and he sent out spies; and soon proof was given that no confidence could be placed in Saul. And now the interposition of God is very plain. The sentinels who should have watched while the king slept are themselves asleep. God thus, as it were, prepared them for David's nocturnal visit, and led by the hand of God he in the boldness of faith goes straight to the sleeping king. In this moment of triumph his dependence upon God is tested and not found wanting. His follower advises the slaying of Saul. This would have been sin. He would not avenge himself. Saul might be a wicked man, but he was Jehovah's anointed, and David would not take the matter in his own hand. “Jehovah liveth,” he says, and that is enough for David. “Jehovah shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish.” Would it not have been a continual reproach that he had slain the king while sleeping? Faith committed it to God. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves.” But how manifestly the craft of Satan is defeated! Whether Saul slew David, or David slew Saul, either way would have suited Satan's purpose, and have been a hindrance to the purpose of God. The object of David's visit to the camp was accomplished in taking the spear and the cruse of water; and proved unmistakably that a power above Saul was David's guide and preserver.

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

witchcraft, its practice still existed, and his immediate attendants knew it, and they hid it from the king. For when in his dire extremity he asks where a woman with a familiar spirit may be found, they are able at once to say, “Behold there is a woman who hath a familiar spirit at Endor.” What an index is this to the condition of Israel!

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

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

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

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

We have said that this ruin of Israel was as necessary for the coming kingdom of David, as the sufferings and sorrows of David himself. If the man must be disciplined to sit upon the throne, so must the people to rejoice in him. And as the world will be prepared for the kingdom of Christ by

passing through tremendous judgment—the vials of His wrath poured out upon them who have rejected God’s chosen king, so is Israel prepared for the kingdom of David by passing under a judgment heavier than any before.

The triumph of the enemy however was very brief. It is measured by the rapid rise of David from the condition of an exile, first to be king over the house of Judah, and soon after of all Israel. It was just long enough to show that Israel had lost all power and was ruined, that their ruin was through and owing to the man of their own choice, the fruit of their rebellion against God, in wishing to have a king like the nations. No circumstances could be imagined affording stronger proof of this; and this misery of guilt is brought upon the people that the sovereign grace of God in raising them up might be gloriously manifest, and Israel raised to a higher position than before.

It is characteristic of God's ways at all times with these whom He is about to bless abundantly. The fruits of sin are allowed to ripen; then when all is apparently lost, God appears and gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. How astonishingly all this will be the experience of Israel when re-established in the land David's kingdom with all its renown is but a shadow of the flame kingdom under Messiah; the Son of David. From, every tongue shall be heard in praise to Him the words already prepared for them. “Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen and Amen.”

But where was David during this crisis in Israel’s history?

Chapter 106

Israel's Preparation for Messiah's Kingdom .16

Dark was the day for Israel. The king, terrified by the doom pronounced upon him in the cave by the prophet, goes with its impress upon his brow into the battle, with despair in his heart and with a nerveless hand. A day whose last hour would behold him dead, and his sons with him; a day when the power of Israel would be broken, its armies dispersed, fear and dread upon all! Wondrous prelude to the glory and power of the coming king and the peaceful supremacy of his son. It was God's wise way of bringing in His chosen king and of preparing the kingdom, so that all Israel might acknowledge Him to be the source of all power and glory.

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

contained?

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

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

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

David's victory and succeeding failure stand side by side with those of Elijah, who in the power of God and in faith so mightily triumphed over the prophets of Baal; and immediately after fled from a woman who threatened his life on account of that deed wherein he had so gloriously vindicated the name of Jehovah; and in his despondency he prayed for death. Not so great a sin as rushing into

the arms of an enemy, but an equal want of faith. For David in effect says that the Philistine king is a better protector than God. Is not this the true character of his act, and therefore a great sin? Not so heinous in man's eye as Uriah's matter but more dishonoring to God. The latter crime was falling through sadden temptation, but the fleeing to Achish was with deliberation. For after a seeming calculation of the best means to escape from Saul, he looks apparently at both sides of the question and comes to the conclusion that the best thing was to go to Achish the Philistine. Is this mere history? Is it not practical teaching for us in this day?

In fleeing to Achish, David is no type of Christ; our thoughts turn to the Perfect One, but to see the contrast between Him and the man honored to be the type. All through his life he was pre-eminently a vessel of grace but an earthen vessel, and the quality of the vessel appears. As a type he is carried through scenes according to the purpose of God, but as a man, a saint, his faith must be tested. Wonderful combination of foreshadowings of Christ and the walk of faith! But here, in this matter, it is failure, the last and the greatest in his life of exile. There was on earth but one perfect MAN; but He was not a mere earthen vessel, only made in men's likeness. He was a sinless humanity, not merely that He did no sin neither was guile found in His mouth, but His human nature was intrinsically holy. He was incapable of sin. God sent Gabriel to testify to Mary concerning the “holy thing” that it should be called the Son of God. God's delight in the sinless Man He declared at His baptism and repeated on the mount of transfiguration, when even the brightest of Old Testament lights vanish in presence of His supremacy and of the Father's infinite good pleasure in Him; and Jesus was left alone. There is nothing of which God is so jealous as the glory of the person of His Son.

The person of the Lord has ever been a mark for the attacks of Satan, and of man instigated by his malice. The Pharisees at last head the list of blasphemers; but there have been some since their day who, with the additional facts of death and resurrection, have dishonored His person, not with Pharisaic blasphemy but with errors equally fatal. An early attack upon Him was the denial of His true humanity, the Gnostic philosophy, which well nigh swamped the early church, asserting that His body was simply an appearance, a phantom. Then there was no real death, nor real resurrection! Thus the apostle (1 Cor. 15) is a false witness and we are yet in our sins! If the Lord's body was a mere shadow, and therefore intangible, the foundation of salvation is gone, and, what is of far greater moment, the righteousness of God is not declared. But compare Luke 24:39, with 1 John 1. “Handle me” says the risen Lord; “which we have looked upon and handled,” says the glad disciple. This deadly and stupid heresy, even if it yet exist, is hidden away in the dark corners of Christendom; but the kindred blasphemy of denying His Godhead is shamelessly advanced in open day.

The reader may call this a digression. Granted. But is there not a cause? In the present day a peculiar form of dishonoring the Lord but found with some who call themselves Christians. They do not oppose the Deity of the Lord, nor His humanity, but say that as man He was born under the curse! that it was only by prayer, by a holy life, and by His baptism in the Jordan, that He emerged from that condition! It is now asserted that He was—at one period of His life—a leper! In a word, all these really deny His Godhead and humanity. These antichrists admit the holiness of His life in word and deed, but affirm that He had a nature capable of falling! I venture to say that a man with a nature liable to fall, and notwithstanding perfectly holy in word and, deed, is an impossibility. But supposing it were possible, Jesus son of Mary might be a man without an equal, but how could He

be God? Jesus is God the Word, the Son: not only was the fullness of Godhead pleased to dwell in Him but also that “holy thing” which was born of Mary should be called the Son of God. Manhood in Him was united to His divine person.

The apostle (Heb. 10:33) exhorts those who were the companions of suffering saints, he commends them; the sufferers and their companions formed one company. As we should now, express it, they were in fellowship together. In like manner the companions of—in communion with—those who are tainted with this evil doctrine must share in their judgment. It is of no avail to repudiate the evil personally; the question is, Are you a companion of such? Brotherly love for godly brethren is the plea for such companionship. I deny real godliness and true divine love in any assembly where the truth of Christ's person is not the first, if not the only, ground of communion. If brotherly love (so called) is preferred to His honor, such brotherly love becomes sin. It is no less defiling to sit at the Lord's table in company with a fornicator, a drunkard, or a thief, than with a “companion” of such evil; it is even more a deadly affront to His person.

To return to David. His unfaithfulness finds imitators in those who shirk the fight of faith and seek shelter where there is no trial of faith. Our faithful God always breaks in upon the quiet of an unfaithful saint, so that the staff upon which he leaned pierces his hand. Saints have attempted friendship with the world as well as sought its protection yet this in no way modifies the enmity of the carnal mind against God, or of the world against the people of God. David's presence did not prevent Achish from making war with Israel. It may have been an incentive. But saints that have fallen into this position have even joined with the world in persecuting those who have remained faithful. David was ready to do this thing. The exigencies of his position into which he was entrapped through his fear, of Saul, and, from which no worldly wisdom could deliver him, demand that he should follow Achish, Was David, sincere in his pleading to follow the king? Why not? He had forgotten God; to forget Israel was all in comparison. Having committed the greater sin, he, would, without any conscience easily fall into the less. The one is the natural consequence of the other, He had neither the power nor the will to free himself. But God was watching over him, and used the natural jealousy and not unreasonable fears of the Philistine lords to deliver David from his evil position. There is no recorded instance where the overruling power of God is more seen, accomplishing His, own will both in object and manner, yet not interfering with the responsibility of the saint, or with the apparent freedom of man. It was impossible that David should be present in the battle now imminent either with Achish or with Saul. With the former he would be fighting against his own people if with the latter, the Philistines could not have had the victory, for God would not permit the enemy to triumph over His chosen one. And if the Philistines had been defeated, where would have been God's righteous judgment upon Saul? What of the divine testimony that Saul was rejected of God? Israel would have been confirmed in their choice of Saul, and David still an outcast. The overruling hand of God is manifest. The hour was now come for Saul to go into battle and perish, and Israel that followed him must share in his judgment. This is the result of man desiring a king and rejecting God. No other result could be righteously. The special question at this juncture was between God and the rebellions king, and so David was kept aloof. But David's will and the human motive which led him into seeking shelter in Gath—the apparent reason why he was away—was not according to the mind of God Who knows how to make the unfaithfulness of man subserve His purpose.

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

Chapter 107

Israel’s Preparation for Messiah’s Kingdom. 17

Millennium: Setting up the Kingdom

In bringing these papers to a close let us take a glance at the establishment of the kingdom. And it can be but a glance, such as is afforded by the might of David and the splendor of Solomon, which are but shadows in comparison of the power and brightness of Messiah when He takes the kingdom. The fullest type necessarily falls short; He must be present before we can see His glory. Even as in the past, David may have felt the sorrow of being hunted by Saul and in the end driven to seek shelter among enemies, far more than any that were with him sharing his toils; but what were his sorrows compared to the sorrows of the Lord? And as His sorrows were deeper so will His glory be greater. But here we are met with the fact that when looking at David the type of the rejected Messiah, we had Messiah Himself before us in the Gospels, and so could read the type in the Antitype; for it is He Who throws light upon the type, not the type upon Him, and the contrasts stand out in sharper outline than the analogies. Indeed the closest analogy is never without proof that the image of the coming King was looked at through a defective medium; yet enough remained to His glory to call forth our praise. For it is Christ's life in the Gospels that throws a halo around the wanderings of David.

In looking still at David now on the throne as type of Messiah, whose kingdom is not yet established in the earth, we have not its glorious reality whereby to judge of the type under David's reign. All that we know of the fixture kingdom of Christ must be gathered from the prophetic word, the lamp which we must use to read of David the King. We must wait for the advent of the kingdom to see the application and the importance of many things in David's reign, and also in Solomon's; for, as typifying the kingdom, David and Solomon must be considered as one; and indeed they are so presented historically, for Solomon was on the throne and crowned before David died. For not as a mere historical fact is it recorded, but to give one complete picture of Christ's kingdom on the earth, in one unbroken reign, David's death not interfering with its unity.

Though many a detail may be dark as to its typical application, the great truth is clearly read, that all enemies shall be destroyed, and that Messiah will begin to reign before peace is brought in—that there will be in fact a David, and a Solomon aspect of His reign.

In the history, the kingdom of David immediately succeeds the death, of Saul, which involved the ruin of Israel. A greater ruin has now befallen Israel, and the kingdom of Christ is not yet established. There is nothing between Saul and David that points to the lapse of nearly nineteen centuries during which Israel remains ruined and scattered beyond the wit of man to say where. In this interval, unnoticed in type or prophecy, the hidden purpose of God is revealed, and the exhaustless wonders of grace made known in the church. The church was revealed only by its presence when the Holy Ghost was given at the day of Pentecost. Even when the risen Lord ascended from the mount of Olives, it was the kingdom that filled the mind of the disciples, and to the kingdom the answer of the two white-appareled men alone refers. Not the least allusion do they make either to the calling or to the rapture of the church. Prophecy overlooks this long

parenthesis, and therefore in the typical presentation of Christ as rejected, and then reigning in power, the one follows the other without a gap. The church of God is no part of the course of the ages which carries the idea of government either direct from God, as when He ruled in Israel, or when they were dispersed and government entrusted to the Gentile, where the intervention of God among men was by no means so marked as when Israel was publicly His people. Both Israel and the Gentile are now thrust aside—both having failed—to make room for the church; the times of the Gentiles still run on, but modified through the calling of the church. When the church is gone, God will resume the government of the world, in spite of the dragon and his slaves, and by judgment will prepare the earth for the advent and reign of His Son, to Whom Jehovah has said, “Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool. Then He comes. Meanwhile He is waiting. The sufferings and the glory are in the prophetic word joined together. Grace to the lost, and going beyond all previous revelation has placed an interval between the sufferings and the kingdom glory, and has formed a sphere outside the limits of prophecy and above its range. “They are not of the world,” said the Lord. This a true of us dispensationally, it ought to be equally true of us morally. We do not belong to the ages of the world, but are a separate people.

Nor is there, in the history we are looking at, any foreshadowing of the judgments of which the prophetic word is full, and which will take place at the close of this present age after the church is caught up.; that is, before His appearing. While these judgments are being poured out upon the earth, Christ is still hidden until He appears for the destruction of antichrist, “the king.” There is nothing analogous to Christ's sitting at the right hand of Jehovah in the history of David, who with one step rises from the place of rejection to the throne. When Saul is removed, David immediately is presented to the nation; unless Saul be considered as a type of “the King,” for then Christ begins to act in power. When He appears, it is not by one great victory that peace is brought to the earth. He rules in the midst of enemies till they are all subdued, and this is the characteristic of David's reign. As it is said, “Jehovah shall roar out of Zion.” After “the king” is destroyed, there will yet remain nations to be subdued, and a re-arrangement of them according to God. For the landmarks and divisions, which the pride of man and his lust of power have made, will be annulled, and the original divisions, as God divided the nations, will again appear (see Gen. 10). And by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood (ver. 32). The world is marked by families, and nations, and races, and in this day each is asserting itself according to its power; but the final settlement will only be when Christ reigns.

The first effect of Christ taking His power will not be peace. He will in fury tread down His enemies. This is the preliminary or David aspect of war, not the Solomon display of glory which is properly the millennium. It is not according to His purpose by one stupendous act to put down all authority and power—which of course He could do if He pleased—but during a certain limited period, after the sudden and instantaneous judgment of the beast and of the false prophet, and a little later of the Assyrian, to use Israel as His instrument in breaking to pieces the opposing Gentile power. But Messiah will Himself personally appear in the judgment of these three at least. The brightness of His presence, and the breath of His nostrils, slay the wicked, but these are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone (Rev. 19:20). He will also personally meet the king of the north, the Assyrian, whose doom overtakes him in the same terrible manner as it fell upon the western beast and upon antichrist. The Assyrian falls not by the sword of a mighty man, nor by the sword of a mean man, but by the voice of Jehovah shall he be beaten down. That is, his will not be the

destruction which falls upon his armies whose bones Israel will be seven months in burying, but he shall be cast alive into Tophet. To an Israelite no more appropriate word could be used, or so significant of his end. Tophet is the place where the Israelites burned alive their children to the god Moloch; the word is closely associated with, and carries the idea of being burnt alive (2 Kings 23:10). Tophet was prepared for him and also for “the king.” “The breath of Jehovah like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it” (see Isa. 30:27-33; also Ezek. 38; 39; Zech. 14:1-3)

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

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

It was the Philistine, Israel's most persistent and formidable enemy, who felt more than any other the weight of David's arm. Again and again were they smitten, and it was over them that David's mighty men won their renown. Only among them were the giants found. But all, great and small, pay homage and tribute to David, and to Solomon, for David's reign is blended with that of

Solomon. The “David” character is not quite gone when Solomon begins to reign. David yet lives till after the last straggle of the enemy, as seen in the attempt of Adonijah to possess the kingdom, and with him are found Joab, the chief of the army, and Abiathar the priest, up to that moment head of the priesthood. But he is now thrust aside, according to the word spoken to Samuel long before, yet historically owing to his own act and deed; so marvelously does God blend man's responsibility with His own counsels. Zadok is called to anoint Solomon.

Adonijah said, “I will be king.” Did he not know that Solomon was the chosen of Jehovah? (1 Chron. 28:4-6). Here is willful rebellion, and, considering him typically, he is an antagonist of Christ. It is said of “the king” that he shall do according to his will. Does Adonijah in any measure present “the king” to our eye? We discern one or two of the same features in each, yet scarcely sufficient, taken with other circumstances, to say that Adonijah is a type of “the king.” The similarity is that both do their own will, and that neither is an external enemy; they are both in Jerusalem. But there is this difficulty, that “the king” as Antichrist is destroyed immediately at the appearing. The conspiracy of Adonijah, Joab, and Abiathar is at the close of David's reign just before his death, i.e., before Solomon, the man of rest reigns alone, and, as to time coincides rather with the judgment of the king of the north, who has the same mark of will upon him. It may be that the session of judgment closes with his being cast into Tophet. For at the time that Jehovah lays His rod upon him “in battles of shaking,” there will be with Israel “tabrets and harps.” The inhabitants of the unwalled villages where they dwelt in peace, at than same time, “shall have a song as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept” (Isa. 30:29, &c.).

The Assyrian, looked at through his type, Antiochus Epiphanes, who is the king of the north in his day, does “according to his will” (Dan. 11:16). Was the Holy Spirit looking at the future Assyrian through Adonijah? At most it is but a faint shadow, for self-will is the common mark of all that oppose Christ. Adonijah is spared for a brief moment till a more subtle attempt is made against the authority of Solomon, which brings judgment, and Adonijah is slain.

In these three men we see, in Adonijah the authority of the world, in Joab the executive power, in Abiathar the religious power, all combined against Christ. They are the representatives of the three great moral forces of the world. In the midst of their revelry the shouting of the people is heard; sudden fear seizes them, and destruction soon overtakes them. So it will be at the end.

The next prominent event we notice is the building and dedication of the temple. The glory of Jehovah fills it. It is a picture of the millennium. Solomon's prayer looks onward to it, but takes up also the intervening time. He, as it were, counts upon the coming glory, and pleads for mercy in view of it; he sees the scattering of rebellions Israel. His prayer is a divine forecast of their history, couched withal in the language of supplication. Grace will restore the nation to the role and glory of Christ. And even as it is grace, so it will not be limited to Israel, but the glory will be displayed to the world. The queen of Sheba—as representative of the nations—comes to learn the wisdom and see the glory of Solomon. And thus it will be when Christ reigns, not only King of Israel, but also King of kings and Lord of lords.

Moses said, “Show me Thy glory.” To us as to him, our faces are covered with His hand till the glory passes by; then we as he, shall see the back parts. When the glory of the kingdom shines over the whole earth, we shall be able to trace as we cannot now the lines of purpose and glory, the responsibilities of man and the dispensational dealings of God with him, all converging upon

Christ. God has been pleased to foreshadow the, coming glory for Israel and blessing for the world. We adore though seeing dimly. The church of God has not to search amid types for her peculiar glory. It is summed up in this—with Christ; and like Christ; and forever.

R. B.

Chapter 108

Thoughts on the Experience of Jacob

Now let us also examine a little more closely the life and history of Jacob.

Jacob was the inheritor of the same promise, and, as a believer, he valued it; but he did not trust in God alone. He did not walk, like Abraham, in daily fellowship with the Lord, and waiting upon the Lord. It is true he received the promise, but his experiences were very different from those of Abraham. Although at the end of his life he could say, “The angel that redeemed me from all evil” (Gen. 48:16), he nevertheless was constrained to add, “The days of the years of my life have been few and evil, and have not arrived at the days of the years of the life of my fathers, of the time of their pilgrimage” (chap. 47:9). The variety of his experience is a proof of unfaithfulness.

In compliance with his mother's advice, he employed unworthy means to obtain his father's blessing; and was obliged, through fear of his deceived but profane brother, to leave the land of promise (chap. 27., 28). Now his position is altogether changed; his unbelief has driven him out of the land of promise. His pilgrimage is not, like that of Abraham, in the land, but outside of it.

It is true, God watches over him, waits on him, and preserves him; but he does not walk with God. He has no altar till his return, after a course of painful experiences (chap. 33:20). He had no full communion with God till he returned to the land where he had last enjoyed the revelation of God, and where he had been strengthened by His promises. For one-and-twenty years he had to do with men who cheated and oppressed him, while God preserved him in secret; but he could not have an altar outside the land of promise.

We also worship God, and we have communion with God, while we dwell in spirit in heavenly places, there where God Himself has given us our proper place. But if we get outside of it, we can have no fellowship with Him, although He knows how to keep us by His grace and faithfulness.

At the end of twenty-one years God orders Jacob to return. He must flee far from his father-in-law like a guilty fugitive. It is impossible to be pure from the world if we have lost heavenly communion with God; and it is difficult not to carry away something that belongs to the world, if we abandon that communion. But God is faithful. From that moment a course of experiences begins for Jacob (as they are generally called), but which are nevertheless nothing more than the effects of his getting away from God.

Delivered from Laban, Jacob pursues his journey towards Canaan; and God, to comfort and fortify him, sends an army of His angels to meet him (chap. 32:1). Nevertheless, notwithstanding this encouragement from God, unbelief, which deliverance from danger does not destroy, renews Jacob's fear in the presence of his brother Esau. One does not get rid of the difficulties of the path of faith by trying to avoid them; one muse surmount them by the power of God. Jacob had brought these difficulties upon himself, because he had not trusted in God. The host of God was forgotten; and the army of Esau, who no longer cherished in his heart hatred against his brother, frightened the feeble Jacob (chap. 32:7). He could then employ all kinds of means to appease the presumed and dreaded anger of his brother. He causes flock after flock to pass; and this does more to show

the state of the heart of Jacob than to change that of Esau. Nevertheless Jacob thinks of God; he reminds Him that He told him he ought to return; he implores Him to, save him from the hands of his brother; he thinks of the state in which he left the country, and acknowledges that God has given him all his possessions (chap. 32:9-11). But his prayer discovers an ungrounded fear. He reminds God of His promises, as if it were possible that He had forgotten them. It is true there is faith in it, but the effect of unbelief produces a wild and confused picture. The timid Jacob has not only sent forward his flocks to appease Esau (chap. 32:13-20), but he sends his whole family across the brook, and remains behind alone (ver. 22, 24). His heart is filled with anxieties. But God, Who guides all, awaits him precisely there. Although He had not permitted Esau. to touch so much as a hair of Jacob's head, He nevertheless had Himself to judge him, and bring him into the light of His presence; for Jacob could in no other way enjoy the land of promise with God. God wrestled with him in the darkness till daybreak (ver. 24). It is not here Jacob wrestling with God of his own accord; but it is God wrestling against him.

He could not bless him simply, like Abraham; he must first correct the unbelief of his heart. Jacob must experience the effects of his conduct; he must even suffer, because God will bless him. Nevertheless, the love of God is acting in all this. He gives strength to Jacob during the conflict in which he must engage to obtain the blessings, to persevere in waiting for them. Jacob will nevertheless have to retain a lasting proof of his weakness and previous unfaithfulness. His hip-joint had been put out while God wrestled with him (ver. 25). And not only that, but God also refuses to reveal His name to him unreservedly. He blessed Jacob. He gives him a name in memorial of his fight of faith, but He does not reveal Himself. How great is the difference here between Jacob and Abraham! God reveals His name to the latter without being asked to do so, that Abraham may know Him folly; for Abraham generally walked with Him in the power of this revelation. He had no conflict with God; and, far from having to fear kinsfolk, he overcame the power of the kings of this world. He is there as a prince among the inhabitants of the land. God frequently converses with him; and, instead of wrestling with him to obtain a blessing for himself, Abraham intercedes for others. He sees the judgment of the world from the height where he was in communion with God. Let us return to the history of Jacob.

Notwithstanding all, his fear never leaves him. Blessed by God by means of his conflict, he still trembles before his brother Esau. He divides his children and wives according to the measuring of his affection, so that those whom he most loved were at the greatest distance from Esau. Only then does he undertake to go to meet his brother. But nevertheless he deceives him again. He evades the, offer of an escort which Esau makes him, and promises to follow him a little more gently to his residence near Seir (chap. 33:4). But Jacob went to Succoth (ver. 17).

Now Israel (Jacob) is in the country; nevertheless, his heart having been long accustomed to the condition of a traveler without God, he knows not how to become a pilgrim with God. He buys a field near Shechem, and settles himself in a place where Abraham was only a stranger, and where, knowing the will of God, he had not possessed a spot of ground whereon to set his foot (ver. 19). It is at Shechem for the first time, and after having returned into the land, that he builds an altar: the name of the altar recalls the blessing of Israel, but not the name of the God of the promises. He calls the altar “God, the God of Israel” (chap. 33:20). Thankfulness, it is true, recognizes the blessing which Jacob has received; but the God Who blessed him is not yet revealed.

'We now fled corruption and violence in his family (chap. 34.). The wrath of his sons, cruel and void of the fear of God, brings him out of his false rest, which was not founded on God; but again the faithfulness of God preserves him. Hitherto Jacob had not thought of the place where God Himself had made him the promise, from the time, of his departure, and where Jacob had promised to worship when he should have returned by the help of God. God Himself sends him there now, and says to him, “Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and there set up an altar to the strong God who appeared to thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother” (chap. 35: 1). God, who had guarded, guided, and chastened him, had prepared him to come into communion with Him. But first it was necessary that he should leave his false home, where God was not. He must lodge at Bethel (the house of God), and in that very place build an altar to God Who had first revealed Himself to him. We here see the instantaneous effect of the presence of God with Jacob, a presence which he had not yet learned to know, in spite of all his experiences up to that moment. The thought of that presence immediately recalls to his mind the false gods which were still among his furniture.

These false gods were the effect of his connection with the world; and Rachel, from fear of Laban, had hid them under the camel's furniture. Jacob knew well that they were there; nevertheless he said to his family, “Put away the false gods that are in the midst of you and purify yourselves, and change your garments, and arise, let us go to Bethel, and I will build an altar to God, Who answered me in the day of my distress, and Who has been with me in the way that I came. Then they gave Jacob all the false gods that they had in their hands, and the rings that were in their ears, and he hid them under the oak that was by Shoehorn” (chap. 35:2-4). The thought of the presence of God made him remember the false gods; it awakens in his soul the conviction that the gods, the objects of the adoration of this world, can never be kept together with a faithful God. Nothing else can awaken this conviction. No possible experiences can ever have the effect which the presence of God produces on a soul. Such experiences are useful to humble us, they are a means of stripping us of ourselves. Nevertheless it is only the presence of God as light which can cause us to condemn ourselves, and gives us power to purify ourselves from our deepest and well-known though hidden idols. Abraham had nothing to do either with Jacob's idols or Jacob's experiences.

The fear of God reigned over the enemies of Jacob, so that they did not follow him, notwithstanding the murderous violence of his sons (chap. 35:5). Now God could reveal Himself to Jacob; and although he remained lame, all went on as if he had not before passed through any experience. Jacob had come to Bethel, from whence he had started. There he built an altar to the. God Who had made him the promises, and Who had always been faithful to him. The name of his altar no longer reminds us pf Jacob blessed, but of Him Who blesses, and of is house. It is not called the altar of God, the God of Israel, but the altar of the God at Bethel, that is to say, of the house of God (chap. 35:7). God at this hour speaks with Jacob, without saying anything at all of his experiences. These had been necessary to chasten Jacob, and empty him of himself, because he had been unfaithful. God Himself appeared to him now without being entreated. We read in chap. 35:9, God appeared again to Jacob when he came from Padan-Aram, and blessed, him. He gave him the name of Israel, as if He had not given it him before, and reveals to him His name without Jacob having asked it of Him; He converses with him as formerly with Abraham. He renews the promises, and confirms them to him—at least, those which have reference to Israel;

and, after having ended His communication with him, God went up from him, for He had visited him (chap. 35:13).

Jacob was then returned, after a course of experiences, to the, place where he could have communion with God—to a position in which, by the grace of God, Abraham had almost always kept himself. Jacob is a warning to us, but Abraham is an example. The first has, it is true, found the Lord again by His grace; but he has not had the many and blessed experiences of the other, and does not pray for others. The highest point of attainment with him is Abraham's starting point, even the home of his soul. With the exception of a few falls, this was the habitual state of Abraham, the state in which he lived. “Abraham died in a good old age, old and full of days, and he was gathered to his people.” But Jacob said, “The days of the years of my life have been few and evil, and have not amounted to the days of the years of the life of my fathers, even the time of their pilgrimage” (Gen. 25:8; 47:9). He ended his life in Egypt.

The experiences of Jacob are the experiences of what the hearts of men are. The experiences of Abraham are the experiences of the heart of God.

We have described three kinds of experiences: 1, those which take place ender the law, the position of a believer not known; or when, without being ignorant of it, he is there, having his heart all the time under the law; 2, the experiences which one had of his own heart, from the time that one walks far from that position where God reveals Himself to cherish and keep up this communion; 3, the simple and blessed experiences which one has in walk with God, in the place where God has set us, to enjoy communion with Him in lowliness and thankfulness. These last are experiences of the heart of God, which bring us into the knowledge of His counsels, and of the faithful love which is contained in them. They consist in a close communion with God Himself; the others are, as it has been said, the painful experiences of the heart of man, among which the highest degree—and also precious for us—is, that God remains faithful in the midst of our unfaithfulness, and that He is patient towards our folly, by the which we put ourselves at a distance from His presence.

Our privilege is to walk like Abraham; our refuge when we are unfaithful (for God is faithful, Who does not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear) is that God remains faithful, and draws us out of all danger to the end. May God give us grace to dwell near to Him, to walk with Him, that our experiences may have for their end the growing knowledge of His love and of His nature. J. N. D.

Chapter 109

Jephthah

The son of a strange woman, Jephthah, had been disclaimed by his brethren in Israel, and cast out among the Gentiles. But this is the one whom the Lord chooses to be Israel's savior in the day of their trespass and trouble. But where is Israel's honor now? Where is the glory and worth of their own system, when he, whom his brethren despised and cast out as a base thing, is their only hope in their calamity? The honor was not theirs, nor was the strength of their own system their help and defense now. The Spirit of God in sovereign grace to Israel comes upon Jephthah. The battle was the Lord's. Israel had destroyed himself; but in God was his help.

Chapter 110

Jonah: Part 1

“The sign of Jonas the Prophet.”

All that I desire to do upon the Book of Jonah the prophet is, to suggest a few things which have struck my own mind with interest, leaving the subject to the further meditations of my brethren, trusting withal, that to whatever measure of knowledge we may, any of us, attain, it may prove to be the nurture and strength of the kingdom of God within us.

Jonah prophesied about the time of Jeroboam II. king of Israel. He was the witness that “mercy rejoiceth against judgment,” for he foretold of gracious, things to Israel, though the people were still a guilty and rebellions people. As we read in 2 Kings 14:23, “In the 15th year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years; and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin; he restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah the son of Amittai the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher.”

But in the book which bears his name, there is no notice of this prophecy. It opens, however, with something that is in character with it. It opens with the Lord giving Jonah a commission to go and preach against Nineveh, and Jonah's refusal to do so, because, as he tells us himself afterward, he knew that the Lord was “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repented Him of the evil” (Jonah 4:2). He had been taught to know that this was the way of the God of Israel, by his experience of His late doings in Samaria, and he thus suspected that such would be Him way now in Nineveh. But his Jewish temper, so to call it, was strong in him. He could not consent to be the bearer of mercy to the Gentiles. He had, without reserve, published the good tidings in Samaria, but he could not consent to do the same now in Nineveh of the Gentiles.

All this disclosure of the hidden springs of the prophet's °disobedience is very significant. He had fled from the presence of the Lord, but enmity to the Gentiles was the real cause of it all. And thus we may say, Like prophet, like people. Jonah's sin is Israel's sin. Israel has always refused the thought, that the Gentiles Could stand in the favor of God; and in delineating their sin, “forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles” is noticed by the apostle as the last great feature in the full form of their, sin (1 Thess. 2:16). Then the wrath came upon them to the uttermost, as now upon the prophet. He refuses to go to Nineveh, believing that God would turn the curse into a blessing; but turning his back upon the Lord, goes down to Joppa, and there takes a ship to Tarshish. The wrath, however, comes upon him to the uttermost. Vengeance suffers him not to live. A wind from the Lord lies heavily upon him, and upon those who sail with him, and the ship was like to be broken.

I need not here speak particularly of the excellent conduct of his shipmates towards him, or of his own indifference, for a time, to the fact that his back was turned upon the Lord. Both however are

remarkable: He was fast asleep, while they were crying out for fear. But he is soon made to hear not merely the roar of the wind, but the voice of God in the wind, and the sentence of death against himself. It was the voice of the Lord that was then upon the waters, and the sleeper is awakened from the sleep of a blunted conscience; he bows his head under the righteous judgment of the Lord, and will have himself offered as a sacrifice for the safety of those who were sailing with him. He takes the sentence of death unto himself. He now knows that he was the Achan in the camp, the ■ κατ■χων, that which letted the mercy of God from reaching the mariners. They were suffering; but his sin, he now sees, was “the accursed thing” that caused it all, and must be taken away. “Take me up,” says he, “and cast me forth into the sea, so shall the sea be calm unto you, for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.” It was a sin unto death and must not be prayed for. The mariners, in their kindness, may row hard, and harder still, but all will not do. The sea cries, “give, give.” The fire on the altar demands the victim. A sin unto death has been committed, and all struggle or rowing for life is vain. Joshua in such a case may lie on the ground, and cry, to the Lord all the day long, but it will not do (Josh. 7). The accursed thing must be taken away. Jonah must be cast overboard, into the belly of hell, as Achan must be stoned; and then, and not till then, Ai, the city of the enemy, shall fall, and the haven, the desire of the mariners shall be reached.

Accordingly our prophet is now cast into the sea. But the sea will not be allowed to be the pit of destruction to him, but he shall find rather a city of refuge, or hiding place for a season there. The belly of a fish is prepared to receive him from the sea, and there he abides. Like every city of refuge, the whale's belly was Jonah's shelter in the midst of judgment—the place of life to him in the region of death. And there he talks of salvation. “Thou hast brought up my life from corruption,” says he, “O Lord, my God...salvation is of the Lord.” He had before, when in the ship, heard the thunder of judgment, but now in the fish's belly, it is the still small voice of mercy. He looks to God's temple, the appointed place (2 Chron. 6), and he knows that grace and salvation are God's way in His sanctuary. There by faith he surveys the brazen altar for the guilty sinner, and the golden altar for the accepted sinner, and the mercy-seat for the Lord to sit on. And then he knows that sacrifices of thanksgiving and the payment of his vows are before Him, and he can talk of life in the midst of death. “I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again towards thy holy temple. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains, the earth with her bars was about me forever, yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God.” With as much certainty of heart, though not with the same comfort, he knows salvation as well as though he were on dry land again. As secure he is, though not as happy, by this distant sight of the temple by faith, as though he had been in Jerusalem. “How say ye to my soul,” in spirit he says, “flee as a bird to your mountain?...The Lord is in his holy temple” (Psa. 11). This was his joy.

And this is the manslayer's joy in every city of refuge. The avenger of blood is on the foot, it is true, but the gates of the city have closed upon him, and there he tastes and knows his full salvation, with the sure prospect of his home and kindred again. And every city of refuge which we trace in scripture, has thus its peculiar joy as well as safety.

Noah in the ark was in a city of refuge, and there he was as safe as though he had been in the new world. But he had his peculiar joy there also, as well as safety. He opened the window, and let out the raven and the dove, and the dove returned to him with an olive-leaf, the pledge that the new earth should soon be his in peace and fruitfulness. He could not, it is true, go forth till the Lord

gave him leave—he could not open the door, but he might the window of the ark, and from thence he looked out and saw the uncovered land again; and this was his joy and the exercise of his heart, though still amid the desolations of judgment. The blood-stained door was a city of refuge to the Israelite, while the angel of death was passing through Egypt. But there, he fed upon the Lamb, every morsel of which told Lim of his full security; and he might have looked at the staff in his hand, and the shoe on his foot, as the token that the time was short. The wilderness was another city of refuge to all Israel. For judgment was before and behind them. In the midst of death they were in life as in every city of refuge. Egypt behind had just been judged, and the Amorites before were just about to be judged—the waters were rising to cover the one land, as they had already covered the other. But Israel was in their refuge in the wilderness, as safe as though they had been in Canaan, and there learned wonders of grace and glory. Rahab's house with the scarlet line in the window, was another blood-sprinkled door, or city of refuge; but there though Jericho was the accursed place, she knew her safety, and to the joy of her heart (for she had loved and counseled for them) she might have looked on her kindred and known them to be as safe as herself. And so at the end. Their chambers will be a city of refuge to the remnant, while the indignation passes by. “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, bide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast” (Isa. 26:20). But then also they will have large exercise of heart. The Psalms give us much of this, I believe. In the 29th we see something of it. There the voice of the Lord is abroad, full of power and majesty, falling upon the waters and upon the cedars, and dividing the flames of fire. But the remnant all the while have found their sanctuary in God, and there in His temple, like Jonah, they thus in spirit sing— “the Lord sitteth upon the flood, yea the Lord sitteth king forever; the Lord will give strength unto His people with peace” (Psa. 29:10, 11).

(To be continued.)

Jonah: Part 2

And so the believer now. He sojourns in a judged world, but he is in the Lord his refuge, and he can there talk of salvation. He dwells in the shadow of death, but he can sing of life. The Spirit of God could enter where Jonah was, and, teach him the ways of the temple; and so has the same Spirit, the Holy Ghost—come to abide in the saints, though still in the place of uncleanness and death, to tell them of a far richer blessing, and of a more glorious love than ever Adam knew in the unsoiled walks of Eden.

It is the way of our God thus to do abundantly more than merely repair the breach. He makes the eater yield meat to us, and the strong man sweetness. That is God's riddle rather than Samson's. Jonah is now made to interpret it, as it were, for he is brought home to God with a new song in his mouth, and with richer experience of God's love than ever he had, and that too, in the belly of the whale; and then when this revelation of grace is thus made his to the joy of his soul, he is cast out again on the dry land.

Thus was it with our prophet, and all this judgment and mercy of God with him, this process of death and resurrection lead him out, not merely to deliverance, but to the obedience of faith also. "He arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord." And this it always does, whether in Jonah or in us. We rise to newness of life. "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." We were simply born of the flesh before, but now we are joined to the Lord, and one Spirit with Him.

We have thus all of us our common interest in these Jonah-mercies. Jonah is a sign to us all. But I am, of course, aware that our blessed Lord has claimed His likeness to Jonah also, saying in His doctrine, "for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." He thus found His type in our prophet, as the one who died and was buried, and rose again the third day. But He dwells much more on Jonah being a sign to others, than the type of Himself. He speaks of both Jonah, and the Son of man as signs; Jonah to the Ninevites, and both Jonah and the Son of man to that generation of Israel (Matt. 12:39; 16:4, Luke 11:29, 30). And this is a doctrine of great value. The death and resurrection of Jonah, was a sign to the Ninevites of what the Lord required from them, and of the way in which He would deal with them; and so the death and resurrection, whether of Jonah or the Son of man, is a sign to Israel of what the Lord expects from them, and of the manner in which He will deal with them.

For as one who had died and risen again, Jonah now goes and preaches against Nineveh; and as such a one he was a sign to them of what that preaching should lead them to, and of what it required of them. And we find that the sign was answered in them. On going to them the prophet at once puts them under sentence of death. "Within forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." And at once they hear these words as. the sentence of death against themselves, as Jonah had heard it in the roar of the wind before, and they bow their head under it as he did, accepting the punishment of their sins, and then, like Jonah, enter the grave, taking sackcloth on them, from the

least to the greatest of them, from man and beast—the king himself rising from his throne, and sitting in ashes, the place of death, and thus were they planted in the likeness of His death. And not only so, but they break off their sins by righteousness, and walk in newness of life, and thus were planted also in the likeness of His resurrection. This was repenting at the preaching of Jonah, or answering the sign of Jonah; then the Lord bids mercy to rejoice against judgment in their behalf, as He had in Jonah's: He repents of the evil which He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not, as He had brought Jonah again on the dry land out of the whale's belly.

Thus was “the sign of Jonah” answered in and by the Ninevites, and so must it be in Israel, that generation to which Jesus preached. And part of the sign is already witnessed in them. Sentence of death was, in principle, passed on them, when Jesus rose from the dead. But they have not yet heard it, and bowed their heads under it. To this day they are buried out of sight, in the grave where is no remembrance of them with God (Isa. 26:19, Ezek. 37, Hos. 13) They are as dry bones in the valley, or as a tree in the dead and leafless winter season (Isa. 6:13), because they have not repented. And there is no hope for them, but the repentance of the Ninevites. They must bow their heads under the punishment of their sins as the Ninevites did. The sign of Jonah, or of the Son of man, must be fully answered in them, as the sign of Jonas was in the Ninevites. It is not as yet so answered, and thus the Ninevites still judge them. But we know that it will be by and bye. As Jonah's sin has been the sign of Israel's sin, so will his repentance be of their repentance. They will mourn every family apart, and their wives apart. In their affliction they will seek the Lord, and say, “come, and let us return to the Lord, for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up; after two days He will revive us; in the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight.” They will thus identify themselves, in spirit, with the death and resurrection of their Lord; and then He will open their graves, and bring them up out of their graves, and say, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise, Awake, and sing ye that dwell in dust” (Isa. 26, Ezek. 37, Hos. 6). And then will “the sign of Jonah” be answered also in Israel, as it was answered in Nineveh.

It is death and resurrection which both Jonah and the Son of man signify; and death and resurrection is God's principle in a world where the power of death has entered. The ancient penalty “in the day thou eatest thou shalt die,” has never been rescinded. Everything in some form or another has suffered it; and it has been met with infinite value for us by the Son of God. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;” and Jesus has met this appointment. Death had its way against Him, and judgment, the judgment of sin, was upon Him. His soul was made an offering for sin; but by death He destroyed him that had the power of death, and rose with new life for those who had been subject to his bondage.

This was glorious triumph over all the strength of the enemy; and this was also the entire vindication of God. And all now that has any rest, must rest on this death and resurrection of the Son of God; and all that has life to God, or that will have any place in His system of glory by and bye, must have both in the death and resurrection character. Death and resurrection may introduce to different order and departments of glory, but it is the common entrance to them all. The leprous man and the leprous house in Israel were to be cleansed by the same ordinance of the slain and the living birds. Of course the man was more worthy than the house; but the Lord of Israel esteemed the house as well as the man a fit subject for the great reconciliation. Atonement was to be made for the one as well as for the other (Lev. 14:53). Both were equally liable to the

taint of leprosy; but the very same provision was made for the cleansing of both, and for the restoring of both, to their several places in God's system in Israel. And that was an ordinance which vividly, and with. out controversy, sets forth the virtues of the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

(To be continued.)

(Continued from p. 87.)

Jonah: Part 3

This, I do judge, is very striking—God's care for the house as well as for the man. And here I may observe that the principle of the divine procedure is always the principle of the conduct of faith. As it is written, “be ye followers (imitators) of God as dear children” (Eph. 5:1). It is, therefore, as thus being God's principle—His necessary principle, we may say to His praise, in a death-stained world, that death and resurrection are so often illustrated in the histories of God's servants. We find it more or less through all the line of the Old Testament worthies, as I may call them. Abel and Seth together present death and resurrection. Noah was carried, through the region of death and judgment, into the place of life that lay beyond it. Abraham had the promises, and was heir of all the land; but he walked in the place as a stranger and pilgrim, not having so much as to set his foot on. Joseph was to stand above his brethren; but he is first cast into the pit and then into the dungeon, as under sentence of death, till at length he rises into the glories of Egypt, which, mystically, were the heavenly and earthly glories of the kingdom. Moses was “drawn out” from the place of destruction, and afterward as a dead and risen man, like our Jonah, preaches to his brethren (Ex. 2:13); and again, after another burial as it were, in Midian, rises a second time to be the redeemer of Israel. David came forth from contempt and obscurity to be the slayer of the giant and the deliverer of Israel; and again, as from death in the wilderness, to rule the land as God's king in Zion.

And among all these, and others like them, we may especially notice Job among the patriarchs. Death and resurrection was the lesson he had to learn in his own soul, and to illustrate before us in his history. He had to take the sentence of death in himself, that he might not trust in himself but in Him that raises the dead, and gives brighter glory at the end than at the beginning.

In all these distinguished witnesses of God and His ways we see this principle exhibited as God's principle. And so it is, from the Son of God in the highest, down to the lowest orders in creation—all stand or are to stand before God as dead and risen, that the power of the enemy may be gloriously overthrown, and the holy honor of His own name, “the living God,” be vindicated forever.

And scripture thus teaches us this.—

1.-The Lord Himself is to take all His glories, as the One that was dead and is alive again. He is the Head of the church, the Heir of the sure mercies of David, and the Lord of creation as the Second Man, by this title (Col. 1:18, Acts 13:34, Heb. 6-9). The thought of this His title to everything passed across the mind of Jesus when the Greeks, the Gentiles, came to the feast desiring to see Him. He then owned that but for His death He could take nothing (John 12:24).

2.-The church has her peculiar life and glory in this way also. The saints were all dead in trespasses and sins, but have also been quickened together with Christ and raised up, and seated on high in Him; and by and by are, in body, to be fashioned after the likeness of His risen or glorious body (Ephesians 2, Phil. 3).

3.-Israel, as we have already noticed, are to stand in the same character, brought from their graves, and raised up as those that had slept in dust.

4.-The nations will be, after Israel's revival, as “life from the dead” (Rom. 11:15), as the Ninevites repent and come into blessing after Jonah himself is raised up. Indeed it is as the dead and risen one, that Jerusalem will be the mother of them all. The “barren,” the “widow,” the “desolate,” is to have many more children than she which had a husband (Isa. 54.).

5.-The creation itself will, in the “world to come,” return to rest and beauty, as after the dead and wintry season of “this present evil world.” The world to come will in principle be a risen world, the risen Son of man having it all in subjection under Him. Now it is all groaning and travailing in pain, but it shall be delivered into glorious liberty (Rom. 8).

Thus is death and resurrection the great rule of all blessing and glory; and this is the sign of Jonah and of the Son of man, and God's pervading principle through the ranks and departments of this death-tainted system of ours. And, beloved, it was the apostle's purpose, and should be ours, to know more and more of the power of this principle (Philippians In Christ we are already apprehended for the full fruit of His death and resurrection; but we should be as though we had not ourselves apprehended it. In Him we are complete and perfect, but we should be as though we had not attained neither were already perfect. Liberty and holiness, joy in the Lord, and life in the Spirit, would then flourish together in our souls, as well-watered gardens.

To teach this, as God's great principle with everything, is the purpose, I judge, of the history of Jonah the prophet. I have hitherto followed it to the close of the third chapter, seeing the death and resurrection both of the Jewish prophet and of the Gentile city. And that is the formal close of the book. The fourth chapter then comes as a kind of moral or appendix.

But on opening this deeply interesting chapter, let me observe, beloved, that we have, each one of us, to do with the Lord as well in the secrecy of His own presence within, as in the activities of His service abroad. We may have run the appointed course, and done the Lord's business, but this is not all. The Lord may still have many a personal question with us, and have to speak with us in the cool of the day. There may have been many a taint in the spirit of the service within, while without all may have seemed as splendid and devoted as the mission of a prophet to the first city of the Gentiles. And these will have at the end, to be brought before the Lord. Workings in the heart, hidden from the eye of man, will then have to be brought fully under the eye and ear of God.

It is so now with our prophet. Nineveh had been visited of Jonah, but Jonah must now be visited of the Lord—not to destroy, we know full well, but to chasten and humble, and thus to make him more and more partaker of the divine holiness. He had done the service abroad. He had gone the way of Nineveh, and fulfilled the word of the Lord there. But there is still a question for the presence of God yet unsettled. There were lustings within that must now be brought forth and made a show of openly.

He is still, as we find here, angry because of mercy t the Gentiles, and he goes outside the city of Nineveh and sits down there a homeless exposed stranger all in sorrow and displeasure, saying, It is better for me to die than to live.” There he makes himself a booth to sit under, and the Lord then comes, in the secret of His own presence, to talk with him of his sin. He prepares a gourd to come up over his head and be a shadow to deliver him from his grief. But He scarcely allows him to find

comfort in the gourd ere He prepares a worm to smite it and wither it and then a vehement east wind and the sun to beat upon the head of Jonah, till again in anger and die pleasure he says as before, “it is better for me to die than to live.”

Then the Lord catches him in the toils which He had now woven around him in consummate and divine skill. He convicts him out of his own mouth and makes his own words correct him. He shows him that he cannot retain both his proud and his angry sorrows. He must cease either to grieve for mercy to Nineveh, or for judgment on the gourd. If he will give up his anger because of the withered gourd, let him do so. But if he still judge it well to be angry on that account, as he says he does, even unto death then he must cease to be angry, because of preserved Nineveh; for Nineveh was to the Lord just what the gourd had been to the prophet, and if the prophet would fain spare the gourd, he must allow the Lord to spare Nineveh. “Thou hast had pity on the gourd,” says the Lord to him, “for the which thou hast not labored, neither makest it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city wherein are more than six-score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand and also much cattle?”

With these words the Lord ends, leaving that claim of His to Nineveh, its little ones and its cattle, upon the heart and conscience of Jonah. The echo as it were, of those sweet words is left in our ears, as we close this beautiful little book.

But however these words may have wrought on the prophet, as we may judge and hope they did with power, we have our blessed interest in them, and our exceeding great and precious comfort by them. For from this moral or parabolic action between the Lord and His servant, we learn that the Lord's desire if still to the works of His hands, that He would fain be refreshed and rest again in the creatures which He, of old, fashioned and made. He made them at the beginning for His glory and delight. For a moment He was allowed, so to speak, to rejoice in them. He looked on everything that He had made, and beheld it to be all very good (Gen. 1:31). He took His sabbath in His creatures, and walked with man in a garden of delight that was in the midst of them.

But all was soon beguiled from Him. The worm at the root of God's own gourd withered it. He that had the power of death did this, and left the Lord, as it were, a homeless stranger in His own creation (like Jonah outside Nineveh), a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry but for a night.

But they are still His creatures, and His desire is toward them. He seeks them all for Himself, the little ones and the cattle, as well as the cities and their people. All form to Him what the foliage of the gourd formed to the prophet, a shade and refreshing, where without it all is homelessness and exposure. And He would fain take His rest, His sabbath in creation again, as He here would have Jonah and all of us know.

And He will do it. He will accomplish the desire of His heart, for who can let Him? He will reconcile all things unto Himself by Jesus Christ. Israel and the nations shall revive and dwell in peace; the earth shall yield her increase, the hills, the floods, and the trees of the wood rejoicing before Jehovah the King; and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea making His name excellent in all the earth. For He has said of them, when the Branch grows out of Jesse's roots, “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, find the cow and

the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isa. 11:1-7). He pronounced them all good at their creation, the living creatures which the waters brought forth, the winged fowl, the cattle and the creeping things, as well as man. As here He would have Jonah knew that He valued them, and would spare them and have them, as well as Nineveh and its people.

And of this final redemption and joy of the creatures we have had many pledges. Noah carried them, "two of every sort," with himself and his household through the waters into the new world; and the same covenant, which settled him and his seed after him in it, provided equally for them (Gen. 9:10). Joseph purchased all the cattle as well as the people of Egypt for Pharaoh (Gen. 47:17). Moses redeemed them all out of Egypt afterward, when it had corrupted itself, and was no longer the land of Joseph's glory (Ex. 10:26; 12:38); and he sanctified them all, under the law, to Jehovah, the fruit of the land and of the cattle, as well as the fruit of man, thus showing us that Jehovah claimed the whole system as His own (Ex. 12:28, 29, Lev. 19:23-25). The first-born of beast as of man was sanctified to Himself (Num. 8:17). Jesus claimed lordship of them all, the beasts of the field, and the fish of the sea, and they owned His dominion (Matt. 17, 21.) and in the coming kingdom, they shall still own Him, for all shall be in subjection to Him, and join in the joy of redemption, beasts and all cattle praising the Lord (Psa. 148:10, Job. 2:8, Rev. 5:13).

These are sweet pledges of. the Lord's value for His creatures and that He will still clothe Himself with them all. And of this His care for them and His desire toward them He here speaks to Jonah. And He does more than that. He lets Jonah further learn that He had labored for them; that, unlike Jonah and His gourd, He would bring back His creatures to Him. at the cost of His own toil (4:10). And so we know it is. For "all things" are to be a part of that great reconciled system, for which the blood of His dear Son has been shed; as at the beginning they were all a part of that great created system, for which the six days' work was entered on.

It is our joy, beloved, to know this—to know that the blessed God still values all His creatures, and has, so to speak, "labored" for them, and paid a price for them. The ancient scene of His delight and glory may be disturbed and defiled, as we know it is; but as He once rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, so will He again; and as He once had the image of His dominion and glory over them all; so will He again in the Son of man and in "the world to come." The Lord did indeed of old take His joy in them, as I have noticed, and His glory was displayed by them. Every succeeding evening and morning witnessed His joy, for then He paused and lingered over His works, as they grew under His hand, that He might see them and pronounce them to be good, according to the desire and good pleasure of His own will; and when all were made, He looked at them all together as good, and took His full Sabbath in them. And the morning stars sang their joy and His praise. Then was His gourd a sweet and refreshing gourd to Him, as Jonah's at the first. But a worm began soon to work at the root. For all this rested on Adam, and Adam was beguiled by him that had the power of death. Tares were then sown in the Lord's fair field of fruits and flowers. An enemy did that. But so it was, and the Lord had to repent that He had made man in the earth. Then did He look a second time at the work of His hands, and, behold, it was corrupt; and it repented Him that He had made it, and it grieved Him at His heart (Gen. 6:6). Then the gourd of the Lord became the withered gourd indeed. But His creatures are still His. The field does not belong to the enemy, though he may waste and defile it for a season; and the gourd must flourish and bud again to reward the toil of Him Who has labored for it. And it will then put forth a more fragrant smell than

ever. Creation shall return to the Lord, to give Him more joy and more praise than ever.

He will joy in it as in the hand of One in Whom His soul delighteth, and by it not merely the skill of His hand but the riches of His love shall be praised. To Him as well as to us shall the eater then yield meat, and the strong man sweetness. The blood of Jesus shall efface the trail of the serpent. That will give “all things” in “the reconciliation,” a sweet smelling savor with our God, and over such a sacrifice, He can say, in the deep satisfaction of His heart, “I will not again curse the ground for man's sake” (Gen. 8:21).

And of this we have had early notice in the history of Noah. When Adam was created, he received a command to replenish the earth and subdue it. But we do not read of the way in which he owned his Creator in the midst of all this blessing, nor did the Lord God then say, that He would not curse the ground which He had made. But when Noah came forth of the ark, as man redeemed (not like Adam merely created) for the earth, he at once takes the earth as debtor to the blood of Jesus for it. He raises his altar and offers upon. it of every clean beast and of every clean fowl; and the blood of these victims (in type the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God) the Lord smells as a savor of sweet smell, and it awakens in His heart thoughts of abiding complacency in the earth. The blood on the altar, and not the evil of man, governs His counsels, and they are all counsels of grace (Gen. 8:21). And then He again gives Noah dominion of the earth; with the sign of the covenant of abiding complacency in the earth and its creatures, signifying that by the virtue of this blood, though not before in the hand of Adam, the creation could be established without fear or curse again. And then He gives Noah also, not only the herb of the field, but the flesh of everything that lived to be meat for him (Gen. 9:3), in token that his life now rested on the flesh and blood of another, that it was no longer the life of a creature merely, but of a creature redeemed, and redeemed by blood. Thus both he and his inheritance now stood only in the value of the blood of Jesus; but, standing in that, they stood secure.

All this was very significant, telling us of the character of that kingdom which is to arise in the last days, when the true Noah takes the dominion. Then shall the earth and its creatures be established in the covenant of abiding rest and certainty, the rainbow encircling the throne that is then to rule over all. And then shall the Lord God rest in His full complacency in it all, for it shall all stand in the sweet savor of the sacrifice which the Son of His love has offered, i.e. in the great reconciliation. As it is written, “and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, by Him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven” (Col. 1:20).

And thus will God's praise and delight spring from the same source which gives us sinners our everlasting security, and puts a richer and sweeter song into our lips than that which awakened the morning stars, when the foundations of the old creation were laid. Such is the divine skill, weaving God's glory and our security together, and His delights with our delights for over. His own grace must account for this, for nothing else can, passing (as it does), all the fondest thoughts of our hearts. And then this redeemed creation, this gourd of our God, shall bud again, and be still in its freshness before Him. The worm, the power of death, shall not touch it to wither it; but under its shadow will He find His sabbath again, as it is written, “thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewed the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure forever, the Lord shall rejoice in His works” (Psa. 104:30, 31).

“Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man that thou makest account of him?” J.G.B.

(Concluded from p. 103.)

Chapter 113

Judaism and Christianity

The position and the character, which distinguish the servants of God, are always, and necessarily, in unison with the principles of the relations which exist between God and men. When God only recognized certain families, the head of the family was its priest and prophet. We find examples of this in Abraham, Noah, and the other patriarchs. But this principle acquires a more general and important application, when a whole dispensation is in question, as in the case of Judaism and Christianity: the ways of God, and the principles of His dealings with sinners, are there unfolded with many more details for the conscience, and more distinctness and splendor as to the accomplishment and the revelation of grace.

Observe, accordingly, the marked distinction between these two dispensations. In Judaism, under Mount Sinai, where the law was given, and those ordinances established which regulated the intercourse between the people and God, we have a people already formed and recognized as such before God—a people whom God had already brought to Himself (Exod. 19.); whose existence and whose rights depended on their being the children of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and who, with few exceptions, were perpetuated by natural descent. In a word, they already existed as a people, when God entered into covenant relationship with them; for it pleased God to try if man, so privileged, and put in possession of every possible advantage for the maintenance of his position, could stand before Him.

The work and principle of Christianity are altogether different. Christianity supposes man to be lost; it supposes that the trial, to which God has subjected him by means of the law, has only served to prove more plainly how impossible it is for man, whatever his advantages or his privileges, to stand before Him. But, this having been proved, Christianity presents to us God in His grace visiting this ruined race; beholding the Gentiles sunk in ignorance and idolatry, and degraded by the most revolting crimes; finding the Jews still more culpable, having been unfaithful to higher privileges; and exhibiting both Jews and Gentiles as the terrible proof that human nature is fallen and corrupt, and that in the flesh good does not dwell. In Christianity God sees man wicked, miserable, rebellions, lost; but He sees him according to His infinite compassions: He only notices the wretchedness of man, to bear witness to him of His own pity. He beholds, and comes to call men by Jesus; that they may enjoy, in Him, and through Him, deliverance and salvation, with His favor and His blessing.

The consequence of the position of the Jewish nation was very simple: a law, to direct the conduct of a people already existing as such before God; and a priesthood, to maintain the relations which existed between this people and their God—relations which were not of a character to enable them to draw nigh to Him without mediation. The question was not, how to call or to seek those without, but to order the intercourse with God of a people already recognized.

As we have already seen, Christianity has an entirely different character: it considers mankind as universally lost; proves them in reality to be so; and seeks, through the power of a new life, worshippers in spirit and in truth. In like manner does it introduce the worshippers themselves into

the presence of God, who there reveals Himself as their Father—a Father who has sought and saved them; and this is done, not by means of an intermediate priestly class who represent the worshippers because of the inability of the latter to approach a terrible and imperfectly known God; but it introduces them in full confidence to a God known and loved; because He has loved them, sought, and washed them from all their sins, that they might be before Him without fear.

The consequence of this marked difference between the relations in which Jews and Christians stand as toward God is, that the Jews had a priesthood (and not a ministry) which acted outwards, i.e., outside the people; while Christianity has a ministry which finds its exercise in the active revelation of what God is—whether within the church or without—there being no intermediate priesthood between God and His people, save the great High Priest Himself. The Christian priesthood is composed of all true Christians, who equally enjoy the right of entering into the holy places, by the new and living way, which has been consecrated for them; a priesthood, moreover, whose relations are essentially heavenly.

Ministry, then, is essential to Christianity; which is the activity of the love of God in delivering souls from ruin and sin, and in drawing them to Himself.

On earth, then, as regards the relations subsisting between God and man, a priesthood was the distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish dispensation; ministry, of the Christian—because priesthood maintained the Jews in their relations with God; and because, by ministry, Christianity seeks in this world worshippers of the Father. I say on earth, for, in truth, when we consider the portion of the Christian in its highest point of view (namely in that which has relation to heaven), Christianity has its “kings and priests,” that is to say, all saints. The worship of God is not ministry; it is the expression of the heart of the children before their Father in heaven, and of priests, before their God, in the intimacy of the presence of Him, who, in His love, has rent the veil, which His, justice had opposed to the sinner; and has rent it by a stroke, which has disarmed justice, and left her nothing to ask but the happy task of clothing with the best robe those to whom, before, all entrance had been denied.

To suppose, then, the necessity of a priestly order, is to deny the efficacy of the work of Christ, which has procured for us the privilege of our presenting ourselves before. God. It is in fact, though not in words, to deny Christianity, in its application to the conscience, and to the justification of the sinner. It is to overthrow all those relations which God has established that He might glorify Himself, and place man in peace and blessedness. On the other hand, God acting in Christianity according to the active energy of His love towards sinners, Christian ministry becomes the expression of this activity. It has its source in the energy of this love; whether it be in calling souls, or in feeding those who are called, and whom Jesus loves.

Chapter 114

Judas, the Tares, and Judge Not: Correction

My dear Friend,

Your plea (which is not an uncommon one), that Judas Iscariot was present, and a partaker with the other apostles at the institution of the Lord's supper, is hardly based on adequate scripture testimony. Even if it were true, the plea would be pointless unless it were used to justify our tolerating known Judases, i.e. thieves and traitors to Christ, at the Lord's table. But it is so used, and this is why I trouble you with these few lines; and I appeal to conscience in a child of God whether such a plea is just and holy. Christ knew all then as now.

If you will read carefully John 13:1-29, I think you will perceive, that all that is there recorded took place at the paschal table, during that supper (ver. 2, R.V.), and not when it was “ended,” as the Authorized Version says. Judas was evidently there, and the devil had already put it into his heart to betray the Lord (ver. 2). Afterward; when the Lord had given him the sop, Satan entered into him (ver. 27), thus exercising him to carry out his purpose—a fatal consequence of not at once repelling a first suggestion or form of evil (1 Thess. 5:22, R.V.). “He then having received the sop went immediately out;” and the dark and awful night of this sin-stricken world has continued ever since. The institution of the Lord's supper (Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19, 20) took place after the paschal meal. The “all” in Matt. 26:27 and Mark 14:23 presents no difficulty. It means simply all the remaining disciples. If the order of Luke 22:21 were chronologic, the question would be decided; but who would affirm this?—

Again, as to the tares, you say that the wheat and the tares are to grow together in the church The scriptures do teach, not this but, the very reverse. Even the passage which speaks of the wheat and the tares growing. together, tells us expressly that “the field is” not the church, but emphatically “the world,” and that the taros are the children of the wicked one. Are such to be knowingly allowed to participate in the most significant and precious and the holiest act of worship of the children of God? Scripture (1 Cor. 5:13) says even of a believer who had fallen into sin, “Put away from among yourselves that wicked person;” and when through grace he had repented, the saints were to confirm their love to him. Is this the unholy toleration of evil persons—tares—children of the wicked one in “the church which is His body,” the complement of Him that filleth all in all? If you read the parable carefully again, you will surely see that it has nothing whatever to do with the toleration of evil persons in the church.

You condemn your own ecclesiastical system as strongly as it could be condemned, by identifying it with the world.

I am thankful to know that there are therein so many true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. I love them with all my heart because they are dear to Him; but their identifying themselves with the world does not make it the church of God. You have in it heterodox teachers and infidel clergymen of every shade; and there is no power to act for God and for Christ by putting them away; and so in order to justify their being allowed to remain, you plead Judas and the tares! You should rather

have mourned that such might be taken from among you (1 Cor. 5:2). Instead of this, you try to make out that others, who have at great cost left your state of things for the Lord's sake, are wrong for having done so, or are as bad as what they have left. I am sure we have sinned greatly against the greater light given to us; at least we do not excuse or justify ourselves, but judge ourselves for it before God. The divisions you reproach some of the Lord's people with, are largely the result of their faithfulness to the Lord and His truth in seeking to walk, according to His revealed mind, as much apart from the world's formalism as from its profaneness. The Lord has forewarned us that the effect of His coming and testimony (not its object) would be strife, dividing even the nearest and most precious natural relationships (Matt. 10:34-37).

But you say we must “not judge,” and you quote Matt. 7:1, “Judge not that ye be not judged.” This is an important word of the Lord's, but it is misused to cover our cowardice and want of zeal for the glory of the Lord in not judging sin in ourselves and others. But read on and in ver. 6 you will find we are directed not to give that which is holy unto the dogs, neither to cast our pearls before the swine. Is not that an injunction to judge? How can anyone act upon the word without judging? The fact is, my dear friend, there is carnal judging which is only the indulgence of an evil propensity at the expense of our neighbors, and there is a godly spiritual judging which is a duty we owe to the Lord and to each other, and which begins with ourselves. He knows which is which, if we do not.

Believe me, yours in Christ, G.O.

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Chapter 116

Latter Times and Last Days

It is sorrowful to have to look at departures from God and His truth. It has been said of the Lord, that His soul tasted some of its bitterest grief, when He looked on the treachery of Judas; and ours should be thus affected when we think of the corruptions of Christendom, which are as the kiss and the treason of that apostle again.

The “mystery of iniquity” had begun to work, we know, in the times of the apostles. And as the small seed cast into the ground carries with it the form and character of all that which the harvest is afterward to manifest and yield, so the leaven that was working secretly then, to the keen eye of the Spirit in the apostles had in it the varied evils, which, in the progress of corruptions, were to be manifested in Christendom: so that Paul guards Timothy even then against the pravities of both “the latter times” and “the last days,” as though Timothy himself were in the midst of them.

But these pravities are different. In “the latter times,” there was to be a departure from the word of God, or from the religion of “the truth,” which alone is “godliness.” Consequently there would be the giving heed to something beside the word or the truth, to “seducing spirits,” and to “doctrines of devils” or demons. Then there would be speaking lies “in hypocrisy,” making an exhibition of religion; and all this man's religion, or what man has got up, would “sear the conscience,” deaden it to God's religion, or the religion of “the truth,” fortified, as it would be, by man's “forbiddings” and “abstinences,” which must be complied with and practiced, though so contrary to the thoughts and gifts of God (see 1 Tim. 4).

“The last days,” on the other hand, were not to be religious, but infidel. Superstitious vanities were to yield to man's will and independency. He was to be a lover of “himself,” and in the train of that “heady,” “high-minded,” “disobedient to parents,” “covetous,” and such like—all qualities and characters making him as one who had broken the bands, and east away the cords; not religious, but willful. And in the midst of all this, there was to be the “form of godliness,” —the appearing to return to that from which the “the latter times” had departed, “godliness,” or the religion of “the truth;” but, when looked at a little within, no “power” would be found, though so much “form” (2 Tim. 3.).

Now, here we see a great moral reaction. All the cords and bands of the latter times cast away, and man indulging and admiring himself—religions vanities gone, but human independency asserted.

And these things have had their day. In the two great characteristic eras in the history of Christendom we get them—in the times before and since the Reformation. In the times before, there was man's religion, opposing itself to “the truth,” and having its own vanities; in the times since, there has been man's pride; asserting his independency and breaking off all bonds. These have been the characters of the two eras. Of course, something of the second was known during the time of the first, and much of the first still lives in the second; but these different pravities are the characteristics of the two eras.

And, what is a very solemn truth, I judge that the history of corrupted Christianity will close by a kind of coalition between the two pravities. And of such a state of things we get the pattern in the time of our blessed Lord, when there were both man's religion and man's independency combined against Him—the unclean spirit who had gone out, having himself returned and brought other spirits more wicked than himself. There was Jewish religion, which would not let its votaries go into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; and there was Jewish infidelity, which would say: “We have no king but Caesar.”

This is a solemn, and fearful prospect. Surely there is real godliness in the midst of it all, but the sight is dreadful.

And there was the counterpart of what I have been here tracing in the wilderness. There was first the calf, then the captain—the two ensigns of Israel's departure from God during their journey from Egypt to Canaan, the two distinct standards of rebellion set up at different eras.

The calf was the ensign of man's religion. Man had his own gods then, and in eating and drinking and rising up to play man exhibited his religion spake “lies in hypocrisy.” The captain was the ensign of man's infidelity. Man was his own God then, setting up himself to be his own leader, as though answerable to none, breaking all hands, “heady, high-minded.”

Thus, by either the calf or the captain, man is ever working against God and His truth. It is either false religion or a spirit of independency that is moving him. And reaction is always to be dreaded, even by the true worshippers and saints of God, as is also the spirit of the times in which they live. Both of these must be watched against. If the present time exhibit much of the spirit of human pride and independency, of course the saint has to guard against being drawn into the stream, and carried along the current which has set in around him. But he has also to guard against reaction. He has to watch and pray, that he may not, through dread and hatred of the present form of evil, look for relief by a return to the previous form of evil. I believe there is much of both of these at present. I see people who should have stood only in godliness, dropping into the current of these times; and in the revival of high-church principles, and return to ecclesiastical ceremonies and observances of human imposition. There is evident unhealthy reaction among men of a sensitive righteous order of mind, who have marked the evil that is now predominant, and have sought relief from it, but have been turned back by Satan to the righteousness of man and away from “godliness” or the religion of “truth.” In avoiding the evil of “the last days” they have returned to that of the “latter times,” at least in measure.

In the midst of all this condition of things, believe the poor saint of God, “who walks in the truth,” as St. John speaks, may now see himself. His path is narrow. Errors on both sides threaten and attract him. The calf and the captain are erected as the standard of rival parties. The word alone is to work his passage through both, and the Spirit to lead him along it; he is to “'purify himself by obeying the truth through the Spirit.” He had been baptized to the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and his soul is to know its living communion according to this. He has to continue in the things that he has learned, knowing the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make a child, a fool in this world's wisdom, wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. He is to know that, as a sinner, he is cast only upon God—God, and not man, has to do with him as a sinner. And taking his sin, yea, his sins too, into the presence of God, he is to see them there, by faith, washed away by the precious blood of a precious Sacrifice. He has to keep his conscience

unclouded, so that his living communion with the Father and the Son, in the life of the Holy Ghost, be not broken, and to walk in the love of the Spirit with all who are Christ's, and in the charities of the gospel with all men. Let him do withal what service among the saints he may be fitted to do by gift of the Spirit, and what service to others he may have opportunity to fulfill, waiting daily for the Son from heaven, Who, he is to know, has delivered him from the wrath to come. J. G. B.

Chapter 117

Law and Redemption

Man was not treated as a sinful people when put to the test of the law, but as being under trial; and redemption is here wholly and absolutely out of place. The question was, Could righteousness be by law as a means of title to life? It was shown it could not. God does not put man on his trial by redemption, but saves him (because he has failed in it) by faith, which is just the opposite of law.

Chapter 118

Lawful Use of the Law

To apprehend aright the place of the law is a difficult thing; because we must be fully led by the Holy Spirit in order not to be ourselves in some sort under law, as to our feelings at least. We must have rightly seized the power of the work and resurrection of Jesus otherwise one would be lawless if not under law. We are in no wise under the law. Grace does not recognize any participation of the law in our hearts. But how is this if we acknowledge the law as good? Because Christ exhausted it in His death He was under the law up to His death, and in His death; but evidently He is not so now. He may employ the law to judge those who have been under the law; but we are united to Him. As Adam was not head of the old race until after his fall, so Christ is only head of the new race as risen from among the dead. He places them in His own position as a risen Man: they begin with Christ there. They quite acknowledge the power of the law, but in that it has put Jesus to death—there where it has lost all its power, and its dominion over the soul. We belong to Another.

We can employ the law, if there be need, against the wicked; because, having the divine nature, we can handle the law, and it cannot inflict its mortal wound upon the divine nature from which it has emanated. We can show where man is if under the law, in order thereby to bring out the perfection of redemption: it is what the apostle does in Romans and Galatians, in order to make it clear that we are no longer under the law, because we are dead with Christ. Through the law we are dead to the law; we are crucified with Christ. A Gentile was never really under the law. In becoming a Christian he takes Christ at a point where He had done with the law; but, having received the Spirit of Christ, he has no longer need of the law to discern the perfection of redemption, he has intelligence to understand the things accomplished in the history of the Messiah—His perfect work. But this is far from being clear in the minds of Christians; for in fact the greater part among them have made of Christianity a law, and have put themselves under the law. They must come out thence in order to enjoy peace. For them the discussion as to what the law is becomes a very important thing, and very opportune on that account.

Besides, the human heart so naturally places himself under law, that it is very important for every soul to be well enlightened on the subject. The law, let us always remember, reveals to us nothing of God, except that a law implies a judge. It gives the measure of our responsibility. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” and “thy neighbor": that is the law.

It may be said that the gospel gives new motives for our fulfillment of the law; but these motives are drawn from a fact which gives to Christ all that right over our hearts to which the law could lay claim, and by death puts an end to the power of the latter; for we are dead and risen with Christ. We shall do or avoid many of the things found in the law; and the summary of it which has been given us remains the principle, or rather the fruit, of the life of Christ in us. It is now fulfilled in all that flows from that life; but we are in no wise under the law, for we are one with Christ, and Christ is not under the law.

The law condemns not only conduct but men. The law says not only “Cursed is everything,” but “Cursed is every one who continueth not,” etc. Thus we must be under the curse if we are under the law. But it is because we are not under the law that we can make use of it, if needs be. The Jews attempted to apply it against the adulterous woman; but they were under the law in the flesh. The law pierced their hearts to death and condemnation. Christ made use of it, or at least allowed it its efficacy; because, though He was born under the law, it could not touch Him for condemnation, the life of God in Him being perfect. United to Him in the Spirit we can make use of it, because we are beyond its reach by the death and resurrection of Christ, enjoying His life in our, souls. This is why people are always more or less under the law until they have understood the resurrection of Christ, and also whenever the flesh obscures the, power of redemption.

The practice of righteousness flows from the life of Christ in us. But in this life we are by the Spirit united to Christ, and enjoy the righteousness of God and before God, being made well pleasing in the Beloved. The resurrection therefore is the pivot of it, for it is the proof of expiation, and it introduces Christ according to the power of this eternal life (in which we participate) into the presence of God. Around the person of Christ, regarded as risen, all the truths found in the word revolve. The union of the church with Him is the completion of them. In the tomb resurrection leaves behind all that could condemn us, and ushers the Lord into that new world of which He is the perfection the head, and the glory. Now we are united to Him J. N. D.

Chapter 119

The Lord's Prayer .1

(Matt. 6, Luke 11.)

I propose to examine the Lord's prayer, as briefly as is consistent with a perspicuous exposition: first, looking at it, as given most comprehensively in the Gospel of St. Matthew; next, comparing the form which Luke presents; and, thirdly, seeking as far as the Lord enables to gather His design touching its use, whether then or afterward.

The first thing I desire to point out, is the accordance of the Lord's prayer with the place it holds in the first Gospel and with the object the Lord Jesus had then in view. It occurs in the sermon on the mount where He is addressing Jewish disciples, and leading them out of their previous thoughts and feelings and ways into the new principles of the kingdom of heaven, which He was about to introduce. This is important to remember for understanding either the meaning or the object of the prayer. It does not contemplate, as it was not addressed to, the whole human race indiscriminately; it does not express the state, wants, and feelings, of every person who has holy desires after God or a due fear of coming wrath.

Thus, when the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast, realizing his sin and unworthiness, he does not venture to say, “Father,” or “Our Father which art in heaven.” He has no thought of taking up the profound and lofty petitions with which the Lord's prayer opens; nor has he leisure of heart to think of the full supplies and the tender mercy counted on in God, which the latter portion breathes. “God be merciful to me a sinner” was the just and becoming cry from his contrite heart. Here was a man under the guidance of the Spirit of God, contrasted by our Lord Himself, not with the disciples of course, but with the Pharisee who trusted in himself that he was righteous and despised others, whose prayer, if prayer it is to be called, betrayed his self-gratulation, and whose thanks were not for what God, but for what he, the Pharisee, was. The publican, on the other hand, might be dark, but at least, as far as his conscience was enlightened, he really felt and owned his condition as a sinner before God. He, Who is mighty, despiseth not any; and the publican went down to his house justified rather than the other. At the same time, it is not to despise a man, if we call his attention to the actual condition of his soul, and remind him that the Lord's prayer supposes discipleship and the relationship of children with a Father. Sincerity can never change wrong into right, and ignorance, though loss guilty than the constant utterance of language which goes beyond our state and experience, is a sorry excuse before the full blaze of God's revealed light in His word.

If asked how we are to know for whom the Lord's prayer was meant, it suffices to answer that there are two ways of ascertaining, which, if rightly applied, lead to a right conclusion. First, we have to observe whom the Lord had in view in the prayer and the context in which it occurs; and next, we must consider the nature of the petitions, separately and as a whole: which, if duly appreciated, will be found in harmony with the true wants of those for whom the prayer was designed.

Now, it is obvious that, when the sermon on the mount was pronounced, there was an immense crowd listening, but it was not directly addressed to them. They heard the Lord and were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes. Wherever confidence in man usurps the place of the truth, uncertainty before God is the never failing result; and hence the craving after tradition, official and successional authority, and such like props of conscious weakness. This was the case with the scribes in a very large degree. Their employment even of Scripture had no power in it, neither flowing from nor producing simple happy-hearted confidence in God. They were a class who handed down a measure of Scriptural knowledge, crusted over with a coating of tradition which often obscured and perverted even what was true in itself. Such is the inevitable effect of tradition; it always brings in foreign ingredients, which so mix themselves up with truth as to put a blind between the soul and God. The Spirit of God, on the contrary, uses the word to detect and expel all hindrances, and thus places the soul without disguise in the presence of God, there to learn His thoughts. And if what God thinks of me as a poor convicted sinner crushes me, what He reveals of His own perfect love towards me calls me from the dust, sets me firmly on my feet, and bids me fear not. It is so even now where the Holy Spirit works in any power by the vessels whom He deigns to use; how much more when Jehovah-Jesus was there! “For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure.”

In that discourse, then, the Lord had His own disciples immediately before Him. For their wants, as having been Jews and not yet taken from under the law, He was providing. “And seeing the multitudes He went up into a mountain and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him; and He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit” &c. The disciples were a class, who (excepting Judas or any other special case of the kind if such there were) had truly received

Jesus as the Messiah by the Spirit of God. They had not chosen Him, but He had chosen them that they should go and bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain. They were gathered around Him as His witnesses, and separated from the rest of the nation even now in a measure (i.e. in faith and affection to His person), soon to be so far more fully by His death and resurrection, and in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. These were the persons to whom the Lord addressed Himself, in the sermon, and of whom He thought in His prayer.

Hence, while the discourse consists of an admirable exposition of the principles of the kingdom, and announces great and precious truths of God, which must ever abide, the actual circumstances of the disciples were not overlooked by their gracious Master. On the contrary, the proper application and only full meaning of many parts in detail are found in their necessities and adapted to their condition. And most blessedly He did provide for them, as One who, though a divine person, was come of a woman, come under the law, and thus by experience, and not omniscience only, knew what they lacked most, and where their real dangers lay. “For though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.” For Him obedience was indeed a new thing, assuredly not because He had a rebellious nature as we have (for He was God, as well as with God, and even as born of the Virgin He was “that holy thing"), but because from everlasting He was the Word who had spoken into being all things, all creatures, heavenly and earthly, visible and invisible. Therefore had He to learn obedience, and learn it He did in a pathway of suffering as none but He could know. What, then, was His first, last, and constant thought as He walked and

served in perfect grace here below? It was His Father's name: as He says elsewhere, “the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father.” Viewed as man it was the power of His communion, as it was the aim of His work. And it is as the One who was thus familiar with the Father, whose heart was ever overflowing with the sense of His glory, that He puts forward His own heart's feeling, as the first and prominent thought for His disciples in their intercourse with God. Some of the petitions He was about to put in their mouth were very suitable for them (e.g. that about the forgiveness of their debts or sins); but He would have them begin with their Father, not with themselves.

Accordingly the prayer, viewed in its structure, naturally divides into two sections. The first portion is made up of the desires proper to righteousness in the largest and highest sense—the atmosphere, I think I may say, in which our Lord Himself lived and moved here below. The second part is composed rather of supplications suited to those who were needy in every way, but withal true objects of grace. The three first petitions form one division, and the last four the other.

The very opening title or address to God appears to me in beautiful keeping with our Gospel and the then position of the disciples: “Our Father that art in heaven.” It is a phrase which constantly occurs in Matthew's Gospel, and there only. It is true that the Authorized Bible has it in the corresponding passage of St. Luke (ch. 11:2); but it is known to every person of competent acquaintance with these matters that there are weighty reasons for reducing the clause there to the single word “Father.” My own conviction is that the enlarged form which appears in the text of Luke was borrowed from Matthew; and this probably either through the mistake of some ancient copyist who trusted to his memory, and thus introduced confusion, or through the graver fault of designedly making as exact a harmony as possible in the language of the two evangelists. It is unnatural to suppose that, if an open enemy tampered with the sacred text, his corruption would gain currency in Christendom. On the other hand, no friend of revelation could possibly justify the deliberate introduction of a discrepancy with another Gospel. The tendency, therefore, and more particularly in the Gospels, has always been, on the part of misguided professing friends, to interpolate words or clauses from one into another, so as to give not only concurrent testimony, but as much as might be of verbal resemblance. I need hardly say that it is grievous and presumptuous thus to meddle with a word or letter of that which the Holy Ghost has inspired; that such a step, even if well meant, invariably spoils, so far, the beauty and perfection of Scripture, though of course the substantial truth remains; and that they are the truest friends of the Bible who seek to go back to the earliest and purest sources, relying on the abundant evidence which the goodness of God affords, in order to arrive at a just decision.

Assuming that this difference is well founded, what does it teach us? or why, we may reverently ask, is it thus written? In Matthew, one sees, the disciples are regarded according to their connection with God's ancient people Israel, accustomed therefore to look on or hope for the earth as the sphere of their exaltation as a nation. Here the Lord is gradually breaking their merely Jewish links by the revelation of a Father in heaven with Whom they would have to do. It is not now “the Lord of all the earth” causing the Jordan to be not a barrier but a highway for His conquering people to pass over and take possession of the land. Neither is it “the God of heaven” conferring imperial power, in His sovereign will, on a heathen when His people had utterly, sinned away, for a season at least, their heritage. But, again, it is no such fullness of blessing as was conveyed in our risen Lord's message to the disciples through Mary Magdalene: “Go to My

brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God."

The address, in Matthew, wears to my mind an intermediate or transitional character. Certain elements in the ancient oracles which Israel had are supposed, but there was an accession of light in accordance with the state of the disciples, who wore associated with a Messiah Whom the people did not receive, and who were thus in process of weaning from their former prejudices and of training for yet higher privileges. "The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath He given unto the children of men." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." These sentiments from the Psalms, or sentiments akin springing from the Lord's divine wisdom, seem to me the basis of the address, though there is (naturally, when we think Who the speaker was) that degree of progress in it which exactly met and reflected the duo place of the disciples at that time. The Father is regarded as in heaven, and those who look up to Him were on earth, far from Him as it were, and in circumstances of weakness, want, and danger, though with hearts in a measure yearning for His glory.

The Lord, in the address, would fix their first thought on the Father above, would familiarize their spirits with looking up to Him, as infinitely blessed and benignant as well as the most high. There was not, nor could be at that time, the sense of nearness which was afterward their privilege: nevertheless the Lord assumes them to be real believers from among the Jews; and, while maintaining the authority of the law and enlarging its scope, leads on their souls to higher things. But there not an allusion to redemption in, the prayer not indeed throughout the whole of the sermon on the mount. Those who are taught to pray are in no way regarded as worshippers once purged, having no more conscience of sins: indeed, far from having and enjoying such a place, they would scarcely, I think, have understood then what such language meant. There is no thanksgiving to the Father "who hath made us partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." All this and more could not be so said; because the work of redemption was still a promise merely and not accomplished. This gives its tinge to the whole prayer; for there is no haste in the ways of God, nor would He so far slight the suffering of His Son, nor the mission of His Spirit, as to anticipate in the experience of the saints the Precious results which were to follow from these two glorious facts, when once they had come to pass. God forbid that I should insinuate anything imperfect as to the Lord's prayer or His sermon. For any one to speak disparagingly of either would be blasphemy.

The Lord takes up the disciples where they were. If He had uttered the as yet undeveloped truth which was revealed when redemption was wrought and the Holy Ghost thereon given, His language would have been unintelligible to the disciples. If anything had exceeded what was suitable to their then state, if the then standing, experience, or worship proper to accomplished redemption had been supposed, it would not have been the perfect prayer it was for them.

Take the instance of a person in prison. A petition is framed on his behalf to the sovereign. If the document were rightly drawn up, two things at least would characterize it: a full owning of the majesty offended against; and a humble thorough acknowledgment of the prisoner's guilt. This would be the only language becoming one under such painful circumstances. He might have sure grounds to believe that the petition might find favor in his sovereign's eyes and that its prayer

would be granted. This would not be by ignoring the actual circumstances of the case, but rather by a frank confession: to adopt the tone of a freeman would be false ground. Now, the condition of those under the law was, in the main, analogous to this, till redemption, when accomplished, changed all. Confidence in God that He would save, they had, and it was right; for it rested upon a believing estimate of God's character, and upon His positive promises, spite of what they knew themselves to, be. He had announced over and over again, by word and oath, type and prophecy, that He would, through Messiah, accomplish the deliverance of all who trusted in Him. Still they were not yet set free, however certainly they would be, because this depended on His faithful goodness and truth; and “God is not a man that He should lie.” But as yet it was a thing desired, not possessed—a privilege longed and prayed for, but not bestowed and enjoyed as a constant settled portion, till the death and resurrection of Christ made it to be God's righteousness so to deal with the believer.

This consideration, by the way, explains much in the Psalms, and in particular the alternations of conflict found there. Sometimes the speakers are hoping, sometimes fearing; one moment confessing themselves the sheep of God's pasture, and the next moment afraid of being consumed in His hot displeasure. All this was the experience of the saints, before the cross of Christ made it possible for the Holy Ghost to bear witness to the soul of a complete and eternal putting away of sins. It was well and of God that they should feel their state, without presuming to run before the condition of God; and thus it was with the dealing of the disciples also. Many prophets and kings had desired to see what they saw and to hear what they heard; but redemption, with all its fruitful issues, was still a blessing in prospect only. And the Lord's prayer was the perfect expression of their desires and wants, before that mighty change came in as a fact. It is essential to an adequate understanding of the prayer, that we should realize the position of those to whom primarily it was given; and it always must be misapplied, if we do not appreciate the new ground on which accomplished redemption sets the faithful.

It is well to observe also that the prayer is the proper expression of individual wants. I do not mean that the disciples may not have used it together as well as singly, but it nowhere supposes the Christians formed into one body. A prayer for the Church, therefore, as such, it is not; for it never passes beyond an aggregate of individuals, irrespective of the uniting bond of the Spirit Who baptizes into one body. But this may appear more distinctly as we look briefly at its several parts.

“Hallowed be Thy name” is the great foundation of all, the first and strongest feeling of a renewed mind. Flowing from the sense of the holiness due to the Father's name and obligatory on every soul that has to do with Him, as well as on His house forever, there is also the desire of the glory in which all shall answer to the Father's heart and character— “Thy kingdom come.” It is not exactly Christ's kingdom, but the Father's. The Gospel of Matthew, if examined with care, shows that the Father's kingdom is distinguished in Scripture from that of the Son of man. Thus, in ch. 13:41-43, we are told that the Son of man Shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals, and them which do iniquity...then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. At the end of this age the Lord will take the world as His kingdom, and must have evil purged from it, sooner or later, by His judicial power. But the Father's kingdom is another and heavenly sphere where only the righteous shine.

But it does not satisfy the heart that the Father's will should be done in heaven only. Accordingly the third petition runs: “Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.” When the Father's kingdom comes, this will be the moral answer to it, if I may so say, though in a lower sphere. The Father's will, instead of being despised or resisted, is yet to be the guide and ensurer of all blessing in that which was still a rebellious province. The disciples were to pray that it might be done on earth, where there was nothing like it yet, save in His ways Who thus led their desires Godward. This closes the first division of the Lord's prayer.

Next, comes what was suited to the disciples as the objects of divine compassion, in circumstances of sorrow and trial here below. First, their bodily need is confessed, then that of the soul. “Give us this day our daily [or, sufficient] bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgave our debtors;” the last being put on the ground or pattern of the merciful spirit which had been so strongly inculcated on the disciples at the close of the chapter before. It was no longer to be “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;” no longer evil for evil, but good only, good always. The model for their imitation was their heavenly Father, and not merely God as God; because as such He has vindicated Himself from time to time, and He shall yet deal most righteously with all that demands judgment in man. A Father in heaven, He makes His son to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, not to speak of His intimate and everlasting relations with His children, who enjoy the outflow of all His love. So here the Lord teaches His disciples, not as a question of remission for sinners, but of divine government as children, to say, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgave our debtors.” That is to say, we have this principle of forgiving mercy to others, not only enjoined on the disciples as the will of the Lord, but solemnly interwoven with their own habitual need of it when they lifted up their hearts to their Father.

The application and value of this to such as had been Jews must be manifest; because as a nation they were responsible to walk according to the law, the character of which was not, mercy in case of wrong, but the infliction of just punishment on the guilty. Thus it was that Israel of old was employed to purge the land of Canaan of its defiled and defiling inhabitants. And therefore it was that they themselves, when they and their kings thoroughly apostatized from God, fell under its terrible lash. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.” But now another principle was about to govern—not earthly retributive righteousness, but heavenly grace, which has power to transform as well as forgive the guilty. The Jews who believed were then led on gradually out of their previous standing and set in a new place as children, having to do with their Father in heaven, and responsible to reflect His character on earth.

Again, we do well to remember who they were that the Lord instructed thus to plead with their Father. They were disciples, who were thereby shown the continual necessity of dependence upon Him and of confession. Nevertheless it is the Father besought to forgive the debts of His children, not of a poor sinner in an agony about his iniquity and without the knowledge of Christ. Scripture provides for such an one elsewhere, but it is not the question here; and if the Lord's prayer were applied to, or appropriated by, an unrenewed soul, as the prescribed means of blessing for his case, a real injury would be done. Does God make the forgiveness of an unconverted man depend, in any sort or degree, upon his forgiveness of others? By no means. This were to ask a very high practical requirement from a person in the lowest possible condition; it were to impose a new law more fatal to the sinner's hopes than that of Sinai: in a word, it would

ruin and deny the gospel, which in that case would be of works and no more of grace. Thus, the very petition, which ignorance would cite to prove that men indiscriminately were provided for here, is enough to show the utter inapplicability of the Lord's prayer to their condition. It supposes a living with God by faith, and proves that the nature of the petitions is an additional ground for affirming that the prayer was not meant for men in their natural or unrenewed state. Those whom the Lord was instructing how to pray were persons ignorant, it is true, of redemption and of the new rights, its accomplishment would usher into, but possessed of real faith in the Lord Jesus—persons who would assuredly have gone to heaven, had they died then. They were, so far, on the same footing with the Old Testament saints; they were all alike forborne with, by virtue of a work not yet accomplished but sure; they were safe in God's mind, because He was looking on to that work. The disciples had the privilege of the Savior present with them; but the rich, blessed, perfect salvation which He was to bring in by His death and resurrection was still vague and dimly understood, if at all. In and for this condition of things the Lord's prayer was given.

Then they were to ask their Father not to lead them into temptation, which cannot therefore mean sin here. With temptation, in the sense of lustful evils, as James says, God tempteth not any man, as He, of course, cannot be Himself. But Scripture uses the word in the same chapter, and in other places from Genesis to Revelation, for a man's trial and sifting in a greater or a less degree. Take Peter's case in the Gospels. It was no sin that he should be put to the proof, whether he world in the face of shame confess his Master. The Lord had already warned him of his weakness; but the too confident apostle heeded not the word, slept when he should have been praying against the temptation, and consequently, when it came, he fell—fell miserably and repeatedly. It was quite right, therefore, for the disciples, conscious of their own powerlessness, to ask that they might not be led into circumstances so sorely trying. Knowing their liability to fail under its pressure, they ought humbly and earnestly to deprecate such a sifting. No such prayer is or could be in the Bible as, Lead us not into sin; for this would be to impute moral evil to God. The temptation here was the putting a person throughly to the proof, and the consequence of it would be that, if there were unjudged evil in the heart, it would come out to his humiliation. The undetected mischief working within would be brought to the surface and the light. The Lord Jesus Himself passed through every kind of temptation, first in the wilderness, and again at the close, in the garden of Gethsemane, when the power of darkness came upon Him to the uttermost. But He had nothing in Him that could be touched by Satan; as He said, “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me.” In us there is a great deal that is brought out by the temptation; and thus, if we do not lean very simply on the Lord, we break down in sin against Him. Therefore it is added in the next and last clause, “but deliver us from evil [or, the evil one];” because the effect of temptation ordinarily is that evil is manifested, and he who is its source and prime mover acquires advantage over the soul.

We do not enter into the doxology which concludes the prayer in the received text of Matthew; for while every body agrees in leaving it out of Luke, it is well known that its authority, even in the other Gospel, is worse than doubtful. Probably it was an accretion derived from ecclesiastical usage in the fourth century, or perhaps earlier. Chrysostom comments on the doxology without a note of distrust; but previously to him not a trace of it appears in any exposition or citation, either in the East or West. It would appear that the prayer began to be, or at least was, spoken of in the third century as “oratio legitima et ordinaria.” But this seems scarcely to have been the case in the days of Justin Martyr, who speaks of the ruler offering up prayer and thanksgiving gap ■ση

δ■ναμις α■τ■ (that is, extempore).

But that which we started with has been shown—the special suitability of the prayer to the class with which our Lord was then dealing. I do not go farther now; for the question of His will as regards latter times will be considered before we have done. But it is well to bear in mind, that, everlastingly true as is every word which our Lord spoke, we have to take care that all be rightly divided and applied. I yield to none in reverent admiration of the most sublime and the most pregnant form of prayer ever written. The question, nevertheless, remains, not of its intrinsic value, but of its due and intended use, after redemption and the descent of the Holy Ghost.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 120

The Lord's Prayer. 2

We must now turn for a few moments to Luke's report of the prayer, which differs in several respects from Matthew's, though both be of equal (i.e. divine) authority, and the points of distinction therefore not the slips of the evangelists, but the result of a different object in the mind of Him Who inspired them. Difference there is, unquestionably, even in our common and excellent English Bible; but that difference is considerably greater if we adopt the text which flows from the combined testimony of the most ancient and best witnesses (manuscripts, versions, and Fathers). It is notorious that there has always been a tendency on the part of copyists to assimilate the language of various portions of scripture as much as possible; and clearly from its nature we might expect, as we find in fact, that no part has suffered so much in this way as the synoptic Gospels. These copyists seem sometimes to have assumed that, if they found the same truth or fact variously presented in Matthew and Luke, there must needs be an error; and then they sought, by marginal glosses and even by textual changes, to make the corresponding passages almost a verbal repetition one of another. This of course has entailed trouble on those of our day who desire in all cases to know the very words of the Holy Ghost; for if they, resting on the weightiest authorities, recur to a better text than the vulgar one, they are open to the charge of innovation—at least from the ignorant or the prejudiced. Most groundless charge! for they are in truth those who alone vindicate the oldest vouchers for the word of God against comparatively modern change and corruption.

To return however: the place or connection in which the prayer is given in the two Gospels may be noticed with profit. In Matthew the Lord speaks as Jehovah-Messiah, not neutralizing the statutes of His servant Moses, but with the conscious authority of the Master. And hence it is that, whether or not the questions of the disciples drew out any part of that instruction, nothing is permitted in the first Gospel to break the onward continuous flow of its sententious wisdom and lofty discourse. Hence, such notes appear as “Ye have heard that it was said to [not by] them of old time... but I say unto you,” not annulling the law or the prophets, but giving fresh heavenly light on some things, and opening the way for other things far higher. Hence, too, the prayer is introduced by Matthew in pointed contrast with Jewish or Pharisaic love of publicity and lack of pitifulness. It is one of the three examples of the righteousness (not “alms” in ch. 6: 1) which was not to be done before men to be seen of them.

In Luke, on the other hand, the Lord meets the condition of man here below—if there was any difference; of the Gentile more emphatically than the Jew. Therefore it is that here only we have the scene of the woman of the city that was a sinner (whom there is no good reason for identifying with Mary Magdalene or with the sister of Lazarus), the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, the preaching at Capernaum, the Samaritan leper, Zacchaeus the chief tax-gatherer, &c. Facts and parables like these plainly indicated the affections of God, about to burst the barriers they had been pent up in under the Jewish dispensation, and soon to overflow wherever there was need created by sin and wretchedness. At the end of ch. 10 the Lord shows us the all-importance of the word of God—of His own words indeed. This had tested the two

sisters, Martha and Mary, both of whom He loved (John 11). While Martha was cumbered about much serving, and her love, most true in its way, went forth in actively providing for the Lord's outward need, Mary, unconsciously perhaps, proved her stronger faith and deeper love by sitting at His feet and drinking in His words. The thought of Martha's heart was, What a feast! must give the Messiah, when I receive Him at my house! Mary, on the contrary, felt that the best feast for Him, as for herself, was to receive and treasure up all she could from Him—to see, and hear, and be with Himself. If we are learning thus from the Lord Jesus, we honor and please Him incomparably more than by anything we think to confer upon Him. In the long run, too, it is the listening at His feet which best fits for the most acceptable worship and service (compare John 12:1-8).

But besides the word of God, we want another element and exercise of spiritual life. By that word we were begotten again, and then nourished (1 Peter 1, 2.); by it we are cleansed, and instructed, kept from the destroyer, and set apart to Christ in heaven. But withal we need something more, and that is prayer. Without prayer the word, not being received in dependence on God, may be used as new material for mere mental activity, and thus the soul may find a positive and grave snare. Really to thrive in the things of God is from hearing the word, not with the ears or mind only, but with conscience quickened and heart freed by the Holy Ghost's presentation of Christ. Now, prayer is the great means by which we are practically kept in God's presence, and the word is made welcome, profitable and sanctifying. It is the proper expression of our weakness to God and of our confidence in His love and care day by day and evermore. Instead of presuming, as men, to enter into the deep things of God or to take and pursue the path of the cross of Christ, we confess in prayer our constant need of dependence upon God. And hence it is that throughout Luke the Lord Himself, “born of a woman,” is so often brought before us as One that habitually walked thus with God (ch. 3:21; 5:16; 9:18, 28, 29; 22:32. See also His exhortations there to perseverance in prayer -ch. 11:5-13, and 18:1-8—besides the following parable). It was indeed His own praying which gave occasion to the request of the disciples in ch. 11.

In comparing the prayer in Luke with that in Matthew, it will be observed that, though the manner of its introduction be somewhat different, the application to the disciples is, if possible, more precise in the later Gospel. “And it came to pass, that as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father.” It has been already noticed that the formula, “Our Father which art in heaven,” was in all probability an interpolation from the first Gospel, Matthew's. A scribe, from habit of using the longer address, may have written it down by mistake in Luke's Gospel, or he may have designedly assimilated the two reports of the prayer.

“Father, Hallowed be Thy name: Thy kingdom come.” These two petitions are alike in both Gospels. It did not matter under what circumstances the Lord spoke, or with what special aim or outlook: that the Father should be exalted in His holiness; and that the bright scene and season may come when His love and power shall establish it without dispute or effort, must always be the prime desires of a true heart, and the necessary conditions of unalloyed and changeless blessing.

But it is remarkable that the next clause in the ordinary text was foisted in, probably in the same way as the address has suffered. “Thy will, be done, as in heaven, so in earth” is a petition peculiar o the earlier book. And let me now state once for all that in these questions of the true text, I never

give a mere conjecture, but a judgment founded on a full survey of the extant evidence, and one which is generally received by those who are best informed and most able to pronounce on matters of the kind. If the omission be allowed here, it becomes us to ask why it is that the Spirit drops that clause in Luke which He had given by Matthew. What are we taught by the omission? It is well known that, throughout Luke, God has Gentiles in view, and not Jews merely. Therefore such words of Christ and such circumstances as bear upon the uncircumcision, both in their natural outcast condition and in the character of their privileges when brought in, are recorded here with care and precision. With this agrees the very genealogy of the Savior; for He is not, as by Matthew, traced down from Abraham and David, the heads of Jewish promise and glory, but traded up beyond all such limits to the first man, the head of the whole human family, to “Adam, which was the son of God.” What, then, would the poor heathen have known about the righteous expectation of Israel as regards the earth? To the latter it was an ever present desire of faith, whatever their temporary degradation through their deadly sins. “For Jehovah loveth judgment and forsaketh not His saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell therein forever.” Then and thus would God's will be done on earth as in heaven. This expectation is kept up in the Sermon generally as well as the Lord's prayer in Matthew, while other and brighter hopes accompany it; but from Luke it disappears in the wisdom which ever marks the Holy Ghost. Peculiarly familiar to the Jew, it was foreign to the Gentile's proper hope even when converted; his outlook, when eyes were given him spiritually, was to be exclusively heavenly.

Then we have a perceptible difference in the language of the next petition. Luke says, “Give us day by day our daily bread;” Matthew had, “Give us this day,” &c. The believing Jews looked simply at the one day, it might be, before them. It was a definite request for the present exigency. How soon the trumpet of Jubilee would sound, and the true liberty and final return and everlasting possession would come, they knew not; meanwhile they say, “Give us this day our daily bread.” But the Gentile believer, for whose instruction the Lord was specially providing in Luke, is characterized by a more constant spirit of dependence— “day by day” is the word. He was never to expect rest, or establishment on the earth, as the other might. His inheritance lay elsewhere; his portion here was to be always that of a stranger. And I think that this is strengthened by the mode of its introduction here. The prayer is much later, and nearer the close, than in Matthew. All hope of Messiah's reception by the Jews was manifestly at an end. Thus in ch. 9 He had His rejection and death ever in His view, and repeatedly names it to the disciples, both before and after His transfiguration (cf. 1 Peter 1:11). In ch. 10 the mission of the seventy follows, as a sort of final message, in which He pronounces woe on the cities which had seen His mighty works but had despised Himself. Grace is then shown as replacing law, and doing what law could not do. The prayer in ch. 11 partakes of the progressive character of the circumstances which surround it.

But this is not all. In the next petition, “Forgive us our sins,” the expression is worthy of note. The only right principle for interpreting God's word is, that God never changes without reason. It is our own ignorance if we do not see the bearing of different words used, in scripture. Thus, if in Matthew it is said “debts,” and in Luke “sins,” there is a slight shade of difference that ought not to pass unnoticed. What is the distinction? I believe it to be this: that “sin” expresses, in all plainness of speech, the depth of the soul's moral need. The simplest Gentile would understand the word “sin.” The Jew would feel what a “debt” was in his responsibility to God: it supposes a known

relationship in which he had been placed and had failed. To the Gentiles who had not been in such a position, the idea of “debt” was not so obvious or applicable, unless the word “sin” prepared the way for it and made it more intelligible. The word “sins” has a more evidently moral meaning, being equally true whether people were without law, or under it. “Debt” is figurative rattier, though perfectly understood by a Jew. The parable of the merciless servant in Matt. 18 sets forth the Lord as dealing with Jew and Gentile in a way substantially similar. The servant that owed his lord ten thousand talents is the Jew guilty of the rejection of Christ. How deeply was he involved! Forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, &c. But, moved with compassion, he forgave him the debt. Then the same servant went out and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him one hundred pence. The Gentile was certainly indebted to him, but now found no mercy (1 Thess. 2:14) for a debt small indeed compared with that which had been forgiven the Jews; and therefore wrath is come upon the Jews to the uttermost (compare also Matt. 5:25, 26, and Luke 12:58, both of which refer to Israel's position in our Lord's time). There is another expression which confirms this, the Gentile dispensation being one of full grace; “for we ourselves also [poor as we are] forgive every one that is indebted to us.” It is not only the habit, but more unrestricted and universal than the expression in Matthew.

The conclusion in Luke appears to be, “And lead us not into temptation,” what follows ("but deliver us from evil”) being probably copied into it from the first Gospel. No motive can be assigned for leaving out this clause, like the former one, if it had been originally inserted; whereas it is natural that men, observing that the words undoubtedly are found in Matthew, should hastily conclude that they ought to be in Luke also. Nor is anything lost thereby, but the contrary. For the omissions in an inspired book, as well as what is declared there, are meant to arrest attention and to instruct.

The last clause is most appropriate in Matthew, where it has special reference, I think, to the power of Satan; which, beside what is ordinary, is directed against Israel as God's great earthly witness, and the severity of which is yet to fall upon them in the last days (cf. Zech. 3) Luke, as usual, brings out general moral principles, and hence retains the petition lest we enter temptation.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 121

The Lord's Prayer. 3

Having stated these points of distinction, I come now to a question of great practical importance: What was the Lord's intention in regard to the use of this prayer? The answer is involved in my first statement. I showed that, while intended for disciples, it exactly suited the condition they were in before Christ had finished His work. It therefore follows that when redemption became a fact and a known basis of relationship with God, the prayer that suits those who stand in the enjoyment of its full results, would be formed according to their new circumstances. In other words, referring to my former illustration, the man's prayer when out of prison would not be the same as his prayer in prison unless he were under a delusion. If he had afterward to do with the Sovereign, he would owe not a petition for deliverance, but a memorial of gratitude and a lifelong service of devoted loyalty.

But besides this, we shall find that the accomplishment of redemption was the foundation of another and a most exalted privilege—the gift of the Holy Ghost, in a way of which the Old Testament saints had no experience. It must be remembered that there are certain operations of the Holy Ghost, common to all saints in every age, such as the new birth, conviction of sin, holy obedience produced in the heart and ways. These ways of the Spirit are not peculiar to any time; they were always true of every saint of God from the first; true of Noah, Abraham, David, &c. They were all men born of God and believers. But while this is matter of common knowledge, there is another thing equally true, but not so generally acknowledged. When the Lord Jesus Christ was about to finish His work on earth and ascend on high, He promised His disciples that the Holy Ghost should be given in a way never before known. The disciples were certainly believers then, and possessors of eternal life. Yet we find that when the Lord was about to depart, He says: “It is expedient for you that I go away.” What could make it expedient that they should have their best Friend and Savior no longer here? Why was it not rather preferable for them in every way that He should stay? The word is plain: “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but, if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” Does not this imply that there was to be some further and immense blessing imparted to them that they had not enjoyed before? Clearly so. But more than that. There are persons who confine the gift of the Holy Ghost to tongues, miracles, ministerial gifts, &c. But “the Comforter” is not to be confounded with the various powers which the Comforter produces. It is the Holy Ghost in person Whom the Father would send in Christ's name. This was the grand truth that the Lord was teaching His disciples. All saints had had the Holy Ghost operating upon them from the beginning; but besides and beyond that, after the departure of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost Himself was to come down, in a more direct, and immediate way, to be in the disciples and with them unto the end. The Son of God had come down in proper person and become incarnate. The Holy Ghost would come after Christ had accomplished redemption and gone up to the Father. Therefore it is said in Acts 2: “Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.” The powers that were conferred on the day of Pentecost drew attention to this blessed divine Person, Whose presence these powers

indicated; they were valuable chiefly as the outward evidence and effect of that unprecedented gift, the promise of the Father.

This, then, is the great truth that lies at the bottom of the question as to the Lord's prayer. It was intended for those who were true believers, but for whom redemption was yet a prospective thing, and to whom the Holy Ghost had not been given in this fuller and unexampled way. In this very context in Luke the Lord says, a little afterward: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” This was their condition—they were already children, and yet were to ask the Father to give them the Holy Spirit. It could not mean the Holy Spirit to make them believers; such they were already, “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” But there was still the Holy Ghost to be given personally, to bring them into all the full consequences of the redemption, of Christ, when that should be effected, and to form them into union with Him as the glorified man at the right hand of God, members of His body, of His, flesh, and of His bones. These privileges, which were neither known nor possible to be enjoyed by the saints before the cross, are nevertheless the essentials of Christianity, properly so called. Therefore, one need not hesitate to say, that while the Lord's prayer was the perfect expression of the disciples' requests to God in their then circumstances and actual condition, for this reason it was not intended to be the. expression even of the same men when their whole standing and condition was changed: when the work was done and all trespasses were forgiven; when all that believed, whether Jew or Gentile, were by one Spirit baptized into one body, and were all made to drink into one Spirit.

The change, indeed, was so momentous and complete, that our Lord Himself prepares the disciples for it solemnly, in John 16, when, after having fully brought out the mission and presence of the Comforter in and with them, He says: “In that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."....."At that day ye shall ask in My name,” &c. What did our Lord mean when He said, “In that day ye shall ask Me nothing?” This was what they had been doing while He was upon earth; they always went to Him as their blessed and gracious Savior, and were quite right in doing so. Yet He adds: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, &c.... Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name.” What! asked nothing in His name? Had they not been using the Lord's prayer for some years? Certainly they had; and yet they had asked nothing in Christ's name. Now He says to them, you are going to be put upon a new ground—no longer to be merely coming to Me and asking Me, but asking the Father and asking in Christ's name. What is meant by asking in Christ's name? Is it merely saying “for Christ's sake” at the end of a prayer? No. The meaning seems no less than this: that, by virtue of redemption when accomplished, and by the Holy Ghost uniting them to the Lord Jesus in heaven, they would be put in the same position as Himself. Therefore it is said in 1 John 4: “As He is, so we are in this world.” And so Paul, in 1 Cor. 6, “he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” This may illustrate the meaning of the asking in the name of Christ, or rather of the ground on which it rests. Not only to ask the Father in the consciousness of all their sins being put away, and of their being actually brought nigh to God, and in the full enjoyment of His favor, without a question or cloud between God and their souls: but going to God and making application to Him as standing in the possession of the full blessing to which Christ above, and the Holy Ghost below, should entitle them in that day: this is asking the Father in Christ's name. The Lord had given the prayer already,

and the disciples had been using it. Yet He intimates to them here that there was a new position into which they had to be put, and that the old ground would no longer do. Their circumstances being changed by the gift of the Holy Ghost, prayer must now take its form from the new standing, the full grace into which they were brought. What is the effect of believers now putting themselves back into the position of disciples before redemption was accomplished? They never can know what it is to have settled peace; they cannot take the place of worshippers once purged, having no more conscience of sins. In a word, they forfeit, as far as enjoyment goes, the vast and entire sum of blessing which Christ's death and resurrection have procured.

Still more manifest is the mistake for a company of believers, or of believers and unbelievers mixed together, to take up the Lord's prayer, as the expression of common public worship. Not Christ's body is the thought, but the aggregate of God's family. Indeed, just before, the Lord had told them, when each prayed, to enter his closet, and then follows this prayer as the suited language of an individual's wants. But whether it be a company or an individual now expressing wants to God in the Lord's prayer, one has only to repeat, You are putting yourselves back into the state of the disciples under law and before the Lord had done His work of reconciliation; and thus you are doing unconsciously disrespect to the will of God the Father, to the work of Christ, and to the witness of the Holy Ghost (comp. Heb. 10). If a son! converted indeed, but still under bondage of spirit and ignorant of the Lord's ways, and of the full extent of His redemption were to kneel down and pour out his heart in the words of the Lord's prayer, one could quite sympathize with the feeling; for in point of fact such a condition of heart and conscience as nearly as possible approaches that of the disciples whom the Lord actually had before Him. Still, under the gospel of God's grace, the state described is surely anomalous. It is themselves who go back—not God who puts them—as it were, before redemption. Though believers in Christ, they are not quite sure that they are forgiven their sins, or whether they stand in the present favor of God or not. They certainly do adopt and use a prayer given to disciples who could not know what every Christian since the cross ought to have his heart filled with, and what his prayers should assume and more or less express to God. So that, without questioning the final security of such believers in Christ, I ought not to withhold the conviction that they do not see their most precious privileges, and thus, without ill-tending it, are guilty of real dishonor to the Lord's sufferings and glory.

The fact is; then, that in the prayer, saints on earth are contemplated and provided for before Christ died and rose, and before the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, the witness of perfect acceptance in the Beloved. True honoring of Christ is to apply His words as He intended. If our souls have entered into this, that we are brought nigh to God; that our sins are all forgiven; that we have got the Holy Ghost sealing us, and uniting us to Christ in heaven; we are on altogether new ground, and our prayers should savor of and express it. This would be to ask the Father in the name of the Son.

It will be said, How was it that the Lord gave the prayer in His word, if it was not intended for the permanent use of all His people? I answer that the Lord said much which did not and could not apply to all. Look, for example, at Matt. 10. While there are of course principles there which abide for our instruction, who will deny that the mission of the twelve was Jewish? Supposing a person were to quote verses 5 and 6, and to say, “These are the Lord's own words: we are not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor to enter any city of the Samaritans, but rather to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” the absurdity would be manifest. We ourselves, poor Gentiles and yet saved,

are proof enough that such an application of our Savior's words would be false. It would set a few words here against the great mass of the New Testament, which supposes special mercy to those very Gentiles. As the Lord then was sending out the disciples on a special errand, so He had previously provided for their then state in the prayer. The death of Christ, in my judgment, necessarily interrupted the prohibition of testimony to the Gentiles, deepened and extended the ground of prayer, and laid the foundation for the introduction of another order of things. Therefore, after His resurrection, the Lord, at the close of the same Gospel, charges them to go and make disciples of all the Gentiles; as in the Gospel of John He, anticipating His ascension, tells them that they at that day were to ask the Father in His name. Hitherto they had not done so.

Much, therefore, as one would sympathize with those who continue to use the Lord's prayer now, or at least feel for their difficulties, it must be said that we ought to understand His word and will, besides having upright intentions. And what intelligence can there be if it is not seen that the redemption of Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost have wrought a total revolution as to conscience, communion, worship, and walk; have brought us out of bondage into liberty, and consequently put our prayers on a different footing from what would have been right and comely before our deliverance?

Hence, in the Acts of the Apostles, not a trace appears of such an use of the Lord's prayer as is become the traditional practice of Christendom. And when you read the various prayers which the Holy Ghost inspired. In the different Epistles, such as those in Romans, Ephesians, &c., everywhere the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ form the great Substance and basis. The petitions were founded thenceforth upon these great and glorious facts, on which rest alike our faith and hope; they were not made, and were inapplicable, before.

Evidently this is a question of no small importance for the child of God who desires to know his full standing in Christ since the Holy Ghost has been given. We all believe that the Lord's prayer was divinely suited to the actual state of the disciples. But for this reason it could not fully express their subsequent relations nor the outgoing of affection proper to them. Those who appreciate the extent of the change can profit by every clause of the prayer, even if they do not repeat it literally. But to ignore the results of redemption is not to the honor of Christ, while it is a slight upon the presence of the Spirit, and voluntary poverty in the midst of the riches of grace which are now lavished upon us. The humble and obedient heart will seek to know and do the Lord's will in this, as in all else.

The last verse but one of Matt. 6 may be helpful to some, as an instance of the modifying effects of redemption, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” says the Lord to the disciples in the same chapter which contains the prayer. Does that adequately describe the condition of a Christian man now? Certainly not; because he is now made the righteousness of God in Christ. When the address was given by the Lord, the righteousness of God was a thing still to be sought; as yet none could be said to be made it. But since then for us “He has made Him to be sin Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” There (2 Cor. 5) we are not said to be in quest of it; we are made God's righteousness in Him. Planted in Christ, a new and divine righteousness is ours. It is our present portion, but none could say so before redemption. They were told to look for that righteousness and to ask for the Holy Ghost previously. But when they received both, never will you find the saints still seeking and asking for them, as if

they had them not: it would have been to overlook their best blessings. Again, in chap. 7: 7, it is written: “Ask, and it shall be given you,” &c. Here there is not, and could not be such a thing as asking in the name of Christ. It was precious and most surely not in vain, even then; but what an accession of blessing was there, when Christ, in view of their being set in this world in and as Himself before the Father by virtue of His all-sufficing work, could add “in my name!” “Hitherto” (I must repeat) “have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

May we too receive things as the Lord puts them in His Word. May we rise above our natural thoughts and be thoroughly rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith as we have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Chapter 122

Ministry

God is the great minister. He serves all His creatures in their place and according to their order. He serves out the rain and sunshine and fruitful seasons, filling the heart with food and gladness. And when the need came, He spared not the Son of His love.

The Lord, the Son, is the personal or manifested minister. In every passage of His life He was the servant of man's sorrows and necessity; and though now in heaven He is still the Servant of His people's interests, and will be the Servant of their joy in the coming glory (Rom. 7:17).

The Holy Ghost is the hidden effectual minister. He is ever tending the church, serving oat to each saint the things of the Father and of Christ, and sustaining and comforting and teaching according to God and our infirmities. And thus we get a blessed display of ministry in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The angels are in ministry. “They are not all ministering spirits.” And those of them who stand nearest the throne are perhaps the, most abounding in ministry; as well they may be from their nearness to that source of goodness. For Gabriel again and again appears in ministry; and he could say of himself as being thus very near the throne, “I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God.” The church is in ministry, divine ministry, ministry in the grace and presence of the Spirit. And the nearer we stand to Christ, the brighter and more abundant that ministry is, as we have seen in the angels. Thus in Paul, who stood so near to Jesus, what do we see but one unbroken course of self-sacrifice and service? He is in sympathy with every infirmity of the saints. Who was offended without his burning? The care of the churches came upon him daily. If He were afflicted or comforted, it was for others. Death worked in Him, but life in them. But every saint has some office to fill. We are all to be found in the great divine ministry of reconciliation which the Lord is now conducting in this world of sinners. If we are not ambassadors, yet we are appointed to fill some place in the great ambassador's train, if it be but in washing a saint's foot, or being in any wise a fellow-helper of the truth (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

And thus we have ministry down from God in the highest to the weakest and most distant companion in the ranks of the redeemed. And when the glory comes, where the kingdom is established, there will be ministry still. The Lamb shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; the Lord of the kingdom will gird Himself and wait on His people; the water of life shall flow forth, and the leaves of the tree for healing; and the heavens will hear the earth, and the earth will hear the corn and the wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel. The less shall be blessed of the better even all through the kingdom. J.G.B.

Chapter 123

Miracles and Infidelity: Part 1

I send you some remarks on the scriptural view of miracles, from which infidels and the defenders of Christianity seem to me to have alike wandered.

As to infidels, any moral apprehension of what miracles are, or anything else is, of the misery of man, or of the love of God, or of the power and value of the truth, is absent from their minds. Exalting man as he is, the false fancy that in these days of enlightenment the lancet and the microscope have found out everything, and exploded God's truth and love and man's ignorance both together, reducing everything to general laws without being able to tell us where they came from, and thus to a materialism which, as an able but honest materialist has said, leads them up to a blind wall, beyond which they cannot get—such is the true character of modern science; very interesting in the discovery of laws which govern matter, that is, the material world beneath us, but excluding from man every moral principle, every excellent affection, and all divine goodness and truth. They tell us that this is no part of science. I quite agree.

But are there no such things as love, and goodness, and morality, and right affections? no knowledge of God? When they come to “the blind wall,” can they assure us there is nothing behind it? or tell us something of what is? Neither. It is simply excluding man from everything beyond matter, even to openly denying all responsibility, degrading man and denying God. The first they do pretending to exalt him; the other is the stupid pretension to deny that of which they confess they are wholly ignorant (and they are quite right); though (thank God) it is a knowledge that is as open to them in God's love as to those who already enjoy its light.

There is an evidence of truth which one who has the Spirit of God cannot use to a mere natural man, though it often carries the strongest evidence with it, and in that way may tell upon him—the possession of the thing that the other is disputing. To him who has it, it is the strongest of all evidences, different in its nature from external proofs. Take even natural things—I am in pain. No surgical evidence is required for him who is in pain in order to make him know it; there is no deception as to it for the man who suffers. The surgeon may show the physical cause, a stone in the bladder, or what produced it; or inflammation of the blood, or of some mucous membrane; but with all his science he cannot tell me why it gives me pain, nor what pain is. Yet who that suffers it does not know what it is? He may talk to me about ganglions, or sensitive nerves distinguished from motor nerves. But this does not tell me one atom of what or why pain is; though he may talk, and in a surgical sense rightly, of what its cause, its material cause, is; but this is not what, pain in me is. Does anyone doubt what it is when he suffers it? That is, the most certain knowledge even in the lower creation is entirely out of the reach of science. I do not blame science for this; it is not its sphere. Science—it arranges phenomena, learns by experience their sequence, and often with great sagacity. Nobody denies it. But it cannot go farther. I can say I suffer; I am so made, constituted, that under certain circumstances I suffer. But no one can tell me what makes me suffer. He can tell me, very likely better than I can, the circumstances through which I suffer, and perhaps relieve them; he can relieve an animal that knows where and what it is suffering; he can

trace the material part, bring in electricity or any other biological power; but what makes me sensible and suffer pain, he cannot tell me. Let him trace it to nerves and electricity and whatever you please; yet electricity does not make a true or a stone suffer, though it may make a dead frog leap perhaps (that is, produce material effects), but it cannot make dead matter feel. I feel, and hence have no doubt of it; I have absolute certainty of it, much greater than any of his science, however extensive and accurate it may be. You will tell me a dog knows it. Just so, but the scientific man does not; and that is the point I am upon just now—that there are kinds of knowledge which are the most certain of all, which science knows nothing of, and has nothing to say to, which the boor is just ascertain of as the philosopher.

Now I say distinctly there is the same kind of knowledge in the things of God; its effects may show to others that it is there, but it is not to be explained to or by men. A man groans or writhes, and a dog howls, if he is in pain. That is not the pain, but a testimony to it. So where God dwells in man, where His Spirit dwells in him, there is no uncertainty in himself; the effect is one of which he is perfectly conscious in himself. It cannot be in itself a proof for another, because it is in himself, and another cannot be a partaker of that any more than he is of another's pain; but it is absolute certainty for him who has it, and its effects make themselves known to others as pain and illness do to those who are not suffering. It has another effect which can hardly be communicated to another. It confirms, by its inward effects, the truth and authority of the word of God; because—if the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost given to me, if I enjoy that love inwardly as a deep source of happiness; if I can look up and cry, Abba, Father, in the unquestioning consciousness of what He is for me; if my soul is at liberty before Him in unfeigned confidence, and at liberty from sin that beset me before, and from a sense of guilt which I had; if I am conscious of my connection with Christ and His presence with me—I find all these things which I have in my heart recognized and taught fully in that word. I find what is there said connected with the glorifying of the man Jesus when He had accomplished the work of redemption; this, with a life here wholly without parallel in holiness and love, absolutely unselfish—meekness and self-denial and patience, understood of none—a life which condemns me in spite of me by its perfectness, and which is yet not what men admire in their heroes, though more heroic in reality than all. This, with a statement that this man that none was like—save indeed in a distant measure as following Him—was the Word, that is, God made flesh. I find, that is, my own every-day new but actual and known happiness (proved to others by the change they see in me) connected with an immense system of truth unfolded in the word, but which I find experimentally verified in my own soul (though the source of it be hidden from sense and science, and science can go no farther than inference from sense); but what the word declares to be the effect in me, by which the unseen is known and the revelation of what is divine is made to my soul—is in fact produced there, so that what is unseen is known, and what is divine revealed; not a history, but what God is now, though revealed in that history in its outward facts; and I know the truth of it by what I possess, and the inseparable connection with all the revelation made, which is but the divine development of that of which the effect is in me.

And so scripture speaks. “He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself; and he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he hath not believed the record that God hath given concerning His Son.” The infidel will say, That is no proof for me. In effect it may be; in itself I recognize that it is not. He has not, and of course cannot have, the proof that having it gives.

But this does not weaken it for those that have. No more does the doctor's not having pain alter my knowledge of having it; and if he were to tell me “I was perfectly in health: all the tissues right, and there was no cause for pain, it was imagination,” I should know better; it would only prove his science did not reach to the knowledge of the cause. He will despise, too, my enjoyment of divine things because he does not know what is enjoyed. He will tell me it is imagination but imagination does not produce holiness and godly affections, but poetry. There is nothing permanent. It may take me out of self and sorrow for a moment, but never delivers from either—leaves the man what he was, or worse. No man can stay the hungry edge of appetite by bare imagination of a feast. Imagination deals with things outside us which are not real; this is what is actually and abidingly in us, a present reality. It is based on what is in its perfectness objective as a source outside us, just as my friend is though I am conscious of my affection and of his. But, when human imagination seeks to make a scene with which it can be occupied, it fails entirely, bringing cannon into heaven, and making Satan the most interesting person in the dramatis personae!

Proofs may and do leave responsibility without excuse, but enjoyment of the thing itself within takes the need of proof away. “Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; but one thing I know: whereas I was blind, now I see.” Where was the proof that Christ could open the eyes of one born blind for him who was so? And note here, we are not speaking of the truth of that history, but of the nature of the proof.

Let it be remembered that of love, obligation to God or man, to a father, or a wife, science can know nothing. It is not its business. But man's happiness or unhappiness even as man here, and everything right and comely, depends upon this. Science knows material phenomena and their laws and connections, and no more. Up to a certain point they may prove a connection of thought and organic structure; but of one single moral idea it is incapable. I do not blame science for this. Phenomena and their laws are its sphere. It is degrading man's moral nature I denounce. There is no love in geology or chemistry; and if, as they have done, they deny responsibility, the best answer is they are not be trusted with my keys. Who would trust his child to them, if he had any love or sense of obligation?

They have assumed that science has left all witchcraft, possession, and the like far behind in the dark, and in the light they have these things dare not show themselves. But they delude themselves. That if men are completely infidels, trusting their puny reason, there is no need of superstition to dazzle them with what is false, is true because they are stone-blind already. But what is all the spirit-rapping that is in the midst of their pretended light, and putting people to sleep, and taking their minds, in a certain sense, into possession, and the coming up of spirits of the departed, but the identical necromancy which we read of in scripture?

That there is a vast deal of deception I have, no doubt, but they have not explained and cannot explain half, of it. Witchcraft not gone. You may find half the housewives in parts of England stop hemorrhage instantly with a few muttered words; give them the number of your warts one day, and have none the next. To this day there are, un France stones with certain marks upon them, to which women who desire to have husbands or children go, and which they worship, and which have jovial celebrations attached to them. They are similar to others consecrated to Mahadeva (Siva) in India—Whose symbol is the lingo, and worshipped by women in the same way, a little more grossly. They come with a dead child in them to revive it. They are probably also connected

with the worship of the dead or fairies.—See Materiaux pour l'Histoire de l'homme, 1878, 6e livraison.

It is very easy to sit in a drawing room or a lecture-hall and say, See how, with our wisdom and science, all these things have disappeared! They have not disappeared; it is mere pretentious ignorance to say they have. It is very possible that infidelity, if it had penetrated where superstition reigns, might make it disappear, though bringing up the dead or spiritism is no great proof of it. Our infidels may not believe that they are spirits of the dead (I do not), but their science cannot explain what happens now.

It is very easy to say, I do not believe the facts; but plenty of other people know they happen, and at any rate the superstition is there if the facts are not facts. There is no difficulty in distinguishing such things from real miracles; but the things to be accounted for are there. It is quite idle to say it is in dark places—I do not doubt or question that certain of them are—not spiritism. If a man finds to-day he has no warts when he had yesterday, and you tell him he is living in an ignorant condition, he may say, May be so, but I have no more warts; and it he has been among the more enlightened, he may reproach them with spiritism, a great deal of which none of them has explained yet. If you ask me I say a great deal of it is deceit, but there is that wherein there is power, not of man, and certainly not of God. Of what, then, but of Satan? In their infidelity all is of Satan to shut out God more completely in another way.

Nor is it in the country parts of England only that superstition wields its power. I suppose we have infidelity and scientific light enough, and philosophy of all sorts in France; yet superstition reigns there. Not only has the worship of the Virgin Mary taken largely-increased proportions in general, but La Salette (proved false by judicial investigation of the civil authorities, and condemned by the prelate of the diocese thereupon) is new approved and in full vigor, and the poor railroad that passes by Lourde makes a very good business with holy water and pilgrims—confessed to be false yet educated English pilgrims going there: And what has science done to hinder it? It leaves both the imagination and the higher wants of man's heart and conscience wholly unreached; it cannot satisfy heart and conscience, having none; it can explain the development of ova and protoplasm; but of what comes of me when all my ova, and what they tell me can alone rightly be called protoplasm—a living combination which chemistry cannot reach, are gone in death, not one word can they say; no gleam of hope, no cry of conscience met. A God unknown on earth makes all darker still beyond it: for God, or even for man, no love; for self, no conscience. What has science to do with them? Affection is at the utmost warmer blood, as to this world!

The whole moral world is wholly and absolutely outside their reach. Morality they have none: they will tell me it is the pursuit of the good of all. And what is that good, and who is to decide it? Their happiness; but for no two men is it the same, if I take man's thoughts. It may be scalping, or opium; for the existence of passions forms no part of their philosophy. Many good people are not aware where philosophy has got to Kant, in his treatise on morality,—a man not nearly so bad as the fruits of the philosophy he set going—declares in terms, that, if the will of God, or fear of God, be introduced, there can be none! It is a principle outside man. Morality is the principle of pure, reason applied to practical conduct. But he admits at the end that how the principle of pure reason can be so applied it is impossible to say. Mill tells me that justice is the animal desire for vengeance modified by utility to all. Kant's is merely natural conscience with the name changed,

and shutting out relationships with God and man, on which all morality is based. Mill, remark, feeling a motive was needed as a rule, makes vengeance the motive. Animal vengeance the sole motive of morality—the rule! one which has been never settled yet, save by Christ.

But my object now is to take up specially the question of miracles, and see how scripture presents them. There are those who are opposed to infidelity who take them as the basis of Christianity. Infidels tell us there cannot be miracles in the nature of things, that general laws cannot be infringed, that the vast mass of evil alleged to be removed by them is the effect of natural laws, and cannot be taken out of their uniform operation, that where they are such as cannot be so viewed, as demoniacal possession and the resurrection, they use proved to be mere superstition, or false. The first famous proof is, that they are contrary to experience; and we had not experience of miracles, but had of human falsity. But first it is to be remarked here that it is a question of induction (not deduction), which only affords probability; and this Mr. Hume admits. He weighs probabilities, the greater against the less. But inductions have nothing to do with facts. Hume says— “When at last he fixes his judgment, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call probability.” Now I conclude, for all practical purposes (and man as an earthly creature has to act on such induction), that, the sun having risen day after day, it will rise tomorrow. But do I believe it shines today by experience, or by induction? Clearly not by induction. That is induction, which calculates in the future from experience of the past, having nothing to do with facts at all. And note here, talking of concluding for along time hence how it will be is throwing dust in the eyes. For it is because it has always been the same, I conclude it will be. But the whole proof rests on its remaining the same. There is nothing to, foretell. One is the certainty of a fact, the other the probability of an induction. I may deceive myself, reasoning badly; my senses may deceive me. as to foots. But the nature of the proof is different. Induction has absolutely nothing to do with facts. Take even sunshine. I believe the fact that the sun has risen every day, not by any induction but as a fact on testimony, and hence conclude that it will; but the ground of my believing is distinct. I may question the evidence of a fact; but question it or not, it is not induction; and if I have to reason on experience of motives or circumstances, and bring in induction, it is then only a probability and not a fact. The scientific men say the course of the physical world is such that it must have had a beginning, and must come to an end. If they are right, the sun will cease to give its light as it has done, and the experience of the past would not be a sound induction in an absolute way. And, this leads me to another important principle, the character of the experience and the induction from it, and the whole hath s of reasoning from it. It is based on this, that the material phenomena in which we live are the limits of all man has to do with. Hence, in speaking of the good of all, the view of the object of man's life is confined entirely to the material system in which he lives. It is perfectly clear that phenomena and experience exist only in what is phenomenal; and that induction from experience, as to what may or must be, cannot go beyond the sphere to which the experience applies. It belongs to that: It may so far go beyond what is material, as that we have a certain experience of men's passions and motives; but the motives are too various and unknown, and the will and circumstances have too much to do with it to have any definite general laws. And this Mr. Mills admits, though he reasons as if it were not so, and declares that he was founding a new science, to which he gives the name of Ethology, as sure as any science referring to matter; for these men can pretend to anything.

But this system of general laws, which in ordinary material things no one denies, is assumed to be the only possible existing cause for anything. Yet no one can go one step beyond observed facts with which reason has nothing to do, save classifying and binding them by experience as cane and effect, from which man has an instinctive habit of thought that they will continue. But it is only what is observed and continuously observed. Take such a thing as death. It was only after centuries—if the patriarchal ages' are true—many long centuries—that death could be taken to be a law of nature. Seeing a man die, or a world destroyed, would not prove it, as Mill so illogically states. Man must have seen, what was practically, all die, to make it a general law. Till then life was the general state, and death might be casual. Thus the conclusion as to anything could be only after a regularly consecutive experience of facts not known by reason at all, but by sight or testimony, facts which (in its very nature, as I have said, and it is all-important to observe) reasoning never gives. It gives conclusions, or the natural tendency to think that what is as a general law, will go on as it has because it has hitherto, which, while sufficient to act and no doubt meant to be acted on, yet can only give probability, which is never a fact, but necessary if the principles are true. That is, reasoning never can, in any case, give us a fact or truth, but a conclusion by deduction, or by induction a mere probability. (To be continued.)

Chapter 124

Miracles and Infidelity: Part 2

Let us have it fixed in our minds—no facts are known to reason. Thus the facts of Christ's existence in the world, or His miracles, cannot be the subject of reasoning, but of sense or testimony. All the conclusions of reasoning, or the inductions of man's mind, are founded on facts which are known without those, and form the basis on which they are grounded. But, further, experience does not touch the origin of that of which observation takes notice. The experience being of phenomena cannot go beyond phenomena. Thus, the sun rises; but what makes it rise? We may find successive sequences (and come to where we can go no farther), as well as immediate ones; but this alters nothing. First or last we come to a point where something has produced the facts, or produces the facts, which form the experience. With that something science has nothing to do. Science does not go beyond the phenomena and conclusions from it. But here I come to a power producing these facts or these laws, of which reason has no cognizance. I do exist. I did not always exist. I began to exist. Of that, the first cause to which it leads, there can be no experience. Now whether I take “causa causata,” or “causa causans,” it is all one. I have something that has given rise to the phenomena, something which science cannot touch or reason about—admits it cannot (even Mill and materialists do). That is, a thing being no matter of experience and yet existing is certain. If I say anything had a beginning, clearly when it began, it was contrary to experience, or rather no experience did or could exist. This cannot exist, till the constant succession expressed by general laws had lasted long enough to be known as such. Science tells us things had a beginning. That is, there was a time when judging by experience had no place at all, and yet facts were there and true, or experience never could have come to exist.

I quote one passage from Mill: “This class of considerations leads to a conception which we shall find to be of great importance; that of a permanent cause, or original natural agent. There exists in nature a number of permanent causes, which have subsisted ever since the human race has been in existence..... These have existed, and the effects or consequences which they were fitted to produce have taken place (as often as the other conditions of the production met) from the very beginning of our experience. But we can give no account of the origin of the permanent causes themselves. Why these particular natural agents existed originally, and no others, or why they are commingled in each and such proportions, and distributed in such and such a manner throughout space, is a question we cannot answer.....The co-existence therefore of primeval causes ranks to us among merely casual occurrences. Not only, for instance, is the earth itself a permanent cause the rotation itself is entitled to be ranked as a permanent cause. It is, however, only the origin of the rotation which is mysterious to us.” This last I may touch on, but do not pursue here. He then states that no event happens in the known universe, which does not depend on some preceding one, the necessary, or, in other words, the unconditional consequence of some former collocation of the permanent causes. He admits that these effects, though invariable while these causes co-exist, would, if the co-existence terminates, terminate along with it. “We can only calculate on finding these sequences or co-existences where we know by direct evidence that the natural agents—on the properties of which they ultimately depend—are distributed in the requisite

manner.” —Logic (Ed. eighth, pp. 398-400). But all this, “at least unless some new condition of a power capable of constructing the universe should supervene” (400).

Another able materialist, but who declares himself at the same time a Christian, arrives at the same result, after quoting indeed part of what is quoted above from Mill.

The method of science is thus essentially skeptical, and continually leads to reject all interference of casual powers, not themselves phenomena, till we reach a point where analysis can go no farther, and we are compelled to admit a primordial cause or causes, of whose nature logic and science can tell us nothing.

Thus we are conducted to a blank wall by a method which is wholly powerless to penetrate the mystery which lies behind. The only thing it conducts to not really what these authors say. The last says, “What we may term logical or negative atheism;” the former, who could not—being melancholy almost to madness for several years—but see the misery and degradation in which men were and even creation itself, and, not believing in the fall of man, concluded that a God of very feeble power, but in the main benevolent, had made the best He was able out of the materials He had at hand! The simple and only true history of the matter is this—man is so, constituted that he cannot conceive a thing which has a form or individual existence without a cause. He sees something so existing: it came into existence by a cause. Hence he goes on to a primordial cause, because he cannot conceive anything existing without one. But this is exactly what a first cause does; it exists without one. That is, he cannot conceive it. He knows it must be. What it is he cannot conceive. That is where man's mind ends, so that such is the result of science; “it conducts us to a blank wall by a method which is wholly powerless to penetrate the mystery which lies behind.” Poor comfort to those led by it! or, to use the larger work, and say with Mr. Mill, “We can give no account of the origin of the permanent causes themselves. Why these particular natural agents existed originally, and no others, or why, etc., is a question we cannot answer.”

Now, in these statements, the substantive truth of which cannot be denied, we have the proof that the whole a priori argument against miracles entirely fails. Science, based on experience, reaches no farther than the actual sensible Course of things already set in motion within the present limits of our senses or experimental discovery. Now, within that course—and science know nothing, but that, as science—we have of course no reason to expect a change so far as we reason from that; and this is all we can do. It is indeed tautology. It would not be a course of things else. But it does do something more. It leads us to the blind wall, to its own end, but to what discloses that there is something of which it knows nothing; for it proves that everything we know comes from something that preceded it. This is a fixed principle, then. There are primeval causes of which we know nothing but that they exist, safe that they must have a cause of which science is simply, wholly, ignorant, and cannot touch, as beyond its kind and sphere of knowledge. Things exist of which to science the origin is not known. What the men of science know is only the actual course things follow when they exist. Of their origin, of the force which gave them that course, what imposed on them the form of operations we find them to have, of everything that is constituent, science is ignorant; the constituent it cannot inquire into. Not only this, but it must, for its conclusion have the circumstances, the collocations of existing things, their condition of existence, just the same; or else all conclusion fail, indeed are false, and have no basis, for they are drawn from what exists. Hence the condition is inserted by Mr. Mill, and very justly, “unless there is a counteracting cause.”

One step farther. Mr. Mill tells us, that any one who knew all the agents, their collocations in space, the laws of their agency, could predict the whole subsequent history of the universe, at least unless some new volition capable of constructing the universe should supervene. Now, there is not much science in this; which merely says that a state of things going a regular course would continue what it is unless something changed it: a proposition which (I suppose) no one would contradict, save by reason of another possibility that the course is a changing one (as is said to be the case), so as to come to an end.

Farther, I must add that it is not necessary to change the universe: a power which could originate anything could do that without changing an atom, anything whatever, of the regular course of things, though it might introduce something which was not of that course. Thus a man might rise from the dead and go to heaven, or an angel come down from heaven and leave the course actually known to science untouched. I am not saying any such thing happened, but that a power which can originate does not necessarily change anything in. that beyond which science cannot go. Men may go on eating, drinking, dying, and an. angel come down, or a man may be raised, without anything of experienced phenomenal order being changed. This might go on as usual, and, physically speaking, its course be predicted jest as before. When the man died, science came to its absolute end, to the blind wall, as much as in primeval causes at the other end, and the angel go away again, and no one care whether he had been here or not. Science can know nothing but the existing course of phenomena, and presume its continuance as it is, if nothing interfere. If he attempts to go farther, it must say, I cannot answer, or knock its head against a blind wall.

But then, mark, we have this positively recognized, that there is a primeval cause, perhaps causes (for. they do not like to own one—it would be too near God—though Mr. Mill in the most wretched way did), whose origin is wholly unaccounted for. Science has its sole task to investigate their course when they are at work; but their origin and the origin of the laws which govern their course must be ascribed to a source of which science is ignorant. The course they follow is the whole it can inquire, into; their existence is a “casual circumstance,” stands by itself, is no part of the general law which science can discover when it is in operation. The conservation of force now insisted on alters this in nothing; it is only a more general law which we cannot apply beyond the, universe subject to observation, nor does it reveal its origin more than the rest. Let evolution be true, which in some respects, it may be, and cells and protoplasm be the starting-point of everything. You only have the starting-point of development—only what is material with possible action, as organic, on mind. As to the origin, you are exactly where you were. A volition capable of originating, science can tell nothing of—cannot say it does not exist. For science, save that there is the insuperable conviction of a cause, it is the other side of a blind wall.

This being so, all that denies the possibility or credibility of a miracle is wholly out of court. Experience has nothing to do with it. It is not the subject of its knowledge, or the knowledge would not be experience. This knows the course of what is, and nothing more; but the origin of all that is, and of the force that acts in the uniform operations which they call a general law is out of their reach, but must be, for these things so governed exist; and it may of course operate independently now, as it did in the origin, when it could not be a matter of science, for the knowledge of a general law was only when they had existed long enough, and been so operated on as to enable them to predicate a course. Of these causes or cause there never was knowledge in science. They were there when the ground of science was laid. They had an origin, and what originated them may

originate a miracle, a casual circumstance; for the things originated were only “casual circumstances” at first. Science can tell us nothing about those “casual circumstances:” such are altogether out of its sphere. No experience, applies here, and so of miracles.

I do not say this proves any particular miracles true, but it proves the reasoning as to their credibility and possibility utterly foundationless and false. Whatever power produced was the origin of the first, may be of the other, and is just as active in one as in the other. All the appeal to experience is only to say that the continued action of general laws, which they can explain as a mere fact, is not the same as the power that originated them, which they cannot explain at all. And even this, which in a certain sense may be admitted, so far as that it is a different kind of exercise of it, they cannot say. For my own part, I am satisfied that the force or power which created and set the universe in movement is a power which keeps it in movement. The material world would not move itself unless it was moved, and the power and will which started it must always operate to continue it, or it could not continue. This is the true conservation of force: the perpetual operation of divine will, just as it operated at the beginning in setting what appears now as general laws aging. It is always exactly the same thing. This force was acted by and followed a certain order in starting, by will and power, and it continues by the same power and will every instant. It has never been proved that the power which sustains is not the same power which at first. originated. Science knows no more of one than the other. It only know, phenomena and the recognition of general laws by which they are governed, that is, the fact of constant sequence, or uniform effects when all is already there, the whole of which is as to its existence confessed to be a casual circumstance, just as a miracle is. Both are known by sense or testimony, and by no other means.

The infidel argument is utterly illogical. It is this— “We cannot admit a proposition as a law of nature, and yet believe a fact in real contradiction of it. We must either disbelieve the alleged fact, or believe we were mistaken in admitting the supposed law.” But this is merely, saying, there is no possible power in existence but the law of nature; which is not only not proved, but the contrary is admitted. We have seen that it is admitted that there are primeval causes, of which science knows nothing—that is, were contrary to experience. The effect B, they say, must follow from A, as it has always done, unless there be some counteracting cause; confining thus all possibilities to the existing phenomena. This assumes the whole question, denying anything else can be, yet admitting primeval causes. That anything happens not the consequence of existing phenomena, they say, must be disbelieved. A general conclusion that the usual phenomena will follow no one disputes, because it always has. How the phenomena themselves did originally, unless it be a changing, not an unchanging, course. But it is not the question. That is, whether Z cannot do something which is neither A nor B, or set A in motion to produce B. The consequence is supposed in the order of known phenomena. But the conclusion cannot go beyond a positive one: that there will happen a consequence when these causes act according to the known course. The act of power (for law is not power, but order produced by power) cannot be touched by that order, unless originating be denied; for this is power independent of existing order; and an origin, no part of the sphere of science, is admitted: were it not, its possibility cannot be denied. With that science has nothing to do. Mill then takes the ground that we must first believe in the existence of a being with supernatural powers before we can believe miracles. Now this proceeds on the supposition of our large ignorance of natural causes: a pretty plea for men of science who profess so to know nature, that the course of it is so fixed, that we cannot believe anything that contradicts that

course—nay, which is not part of it. Now, when there is the consciousness that they cannot be denied, there must be previously the belief of supernatural power. But supposing we did so believe, which it is clear to me that we may and must without any miracles at all, that would not help us on a bit, because on their own sheaving it may be from some unknown cause. Nay, they say that He who formed the cause could not interrupt it! But this previous belief is not necessary. I may now assume miracles for the question is their cause. Events happen which no known cause—ever yet produced. They happen not of themselves. There is no antecedent natural cause discoverable. They happen only by the intervention of particular persons, and do not exist when these are not there. A man walks on the sea, stops the earth going round, raises a dead man, who was buried and passing into corruption. All outward evil disappears before a given individual, a word suffices even when he is not there. No sorrow or evil withstands his word. The facts happen before hundreds of thousands, and to thousands; and nobody is able to call them in question. They cannot deny it.

You say, But I do not believe what really would be miracles, as Joshua's stopping the day, or Lazarus' resurrection, etc. I quite understand you; but you do not believe, because they would prove the supernatural power if admitted. Now that is our present question, and you contradict your own statement. And I say, that a man who could deny that miracles cannot prove miraculous or supernatural powers, as they might be attributed to causes unknown to boasting science, ought not to write on logic, or pretend to analyze the true character of induction. “Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought". The truth of alleged miracles may of course be disputed, their character investigated; but to say that miracles, if true, cannot prove supernatural power, but that this must be first assumed, is in every sense absurd, and worthy only of infidelity, or of men of Science who cannot get beyond phenomena and the petty investigations of the general laws which govern them: very entertaining, I admit, but in no possible case leading to a right affection or the sense of moral obligation.

Miracles and Infidelity: Part 3

And this is the proposition of the Humes and Mills and the anonymous author of Supernatural Religion.

But Mr. Mill makes one or two remarks of great importance here: “The miracle, as an extraordinary fact, may be satisfactorily certified by our senses or testimony.” But then there is a power which can interrupt the course of general laws and act by its will so as to produce “casual circumstances.” Mr. Mill will say there is no miracle, but a previously unknown law. I only admit an extraordinary fact. But I have a fact that is not accounted for by any known law or cause. Adequate evidence is admitted of facts, and that there is no way to account for the fact. Suppose the fact to occur at the command of an individual, and repeatedly, and to be contrary to every known law, as walking on the sea: we have clearly what is not the effect of general laws but Contrary to them, and attached to an individual and those empowered by him. That there may be evidence of it is admitted; to deny it is merely returning, not to evidence or science, but to the assumption that there cannot be, which is just a petitio principii, which before he did his best to deny practically, but now, pleading, the ignorance of science, seeks to throw necessary uncertainty on its being supernatural. We find, if, adequately certified, they always happened by the intervention of given individuals, never without them; that they never happened before at any time, by any natural cause known or unknown. They belong to no general laws, and they always happened when the will of these gifted persons interfered.

The other remark is that an important element of the question will be the conformity of the result to the laws (read “character,” for with “laws” given to others, save as sanctions, they have nothing to do) of the supposed agent.

I have said that the statement that a miracle can be certified by observation or testimony is important, as it was sought to be proved impossible. This may be easily understood by the statement, “If an alleged fact be in contradiction, not to any number of approximate generalizations, but to a completed generalization grounded on a vigorous induction, it is said to be impossible, and to be disbelieved totally.” —Mill's Logic (8th edition, ii. 115).

We have already seen there is no ground for this; for the induction is only from the course of nature known as general laws. And the miracle, if such, is “a casual circumstance,” like the origin of permanent causes, and has nothing to do with these “laws,” or it is not a miracle. The statement, then, that “we cannot admit a proposition as a law of nature and yet believe a fact in real contradiction to it” (Mill, ii. 167), is simply a statement that there can be no exercise of power—than the course of nature known to us. But this is simply absurd and a mere assumption, contrary moreover to their own admission—that the origin of all is by some power of which science knows nothing.

In sum, we come to the conclusion, or rather gather up their admissions, that casual circumstances have taken place, revealing power not within their experience or the general laws of

science, and of which science can give no account. And that is just what a miracle is.

Let me now consider the way in which scripture presents miracles. It is alleged, and Christian apologists seem to acquiesce in it, that miracles are the proof of Christianity. This is a great mistake. They are graciously given of God in compassion to man's weakness to confirm the word. But the revelation of God in the word, His nature and actings, are the first things. Thus we have in Mark 16 the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following. So in Heb. 2., God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy ghost. And this is so much the case, that a faith founded on miracles is not owned of the Lord; the moral element which links man's quickened soul with God is wanting. “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover on the feast day many believed in His name, seeing the miracles which He did; but Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” It was a human conclusion, drawn from the testimony of His works, and a just one; there was no new life, no moral renewal; it was “what was in man.”

Hence we find as a fact clearly revealed to us in the ways of God, that, as a role, miracles were wrought only at the introduction and establishment of a divine religions order, or where it was abandoned by those whom He had not yet abandoned; in a word, where a testimony needed to be confirmed in this way. Thus Moses wrought miracles, but no prophet in Jerusalem (where, however evil, the people were, as a system, the religion established by Moses remained) over wrought miracles. When Israel had set up the golden calves, and God visited the people to maintain a testimony of the truth for a poor remnant, Elijah and Elisha work miracles.

Again, whatever the miraculous power, it was to confirm the truth proposed, never for self. Paul leaves Trophimus at Miletus sick. Yet how many had he healed? Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him.

Hence, if a miracle was wrought leading away from divine truth, the miracle-worker was to be stoned (Deut. 13.). In mercy to man, adequate outward testimony was given, leaving man without excuse; but faith. which God owned rested in the word, and its effectual working morally in the heart.

So the Lord puts the double character of His testimony: “If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin, but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father.” But while condemned for rejecting this testimony, faith formed on this alone is not owned, because it was purely human faith and not the moral power of the revelation working in the heart. And faith which is Owned is always by the word. Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth. “My sheep hear My voice.” “He that heareth My word, and believeth [on] Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life.” “The words that I have spoken unto you they are spirit and they are life:” It is equally even the ground of judgment. “The word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day." Thus, while special miracles confirm the truth, yet if they are not attached to the truth known from the word they are to be rejected. The word is the test.

Further, closely connected with this is the fact that these miracles were entirely separated from any honor attached to the persons who wrought them, though of course they attested the divine

character of their ministry; they were wholly a testimony borne to the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all He taught. This is true even as to Moses' works of power; as. Ex. 16:8, and elsewhere. “What are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord.” And when once they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips, saying, “Hear now, ye rebels: must we bring you water out of this rock?” as an expression of the strict regime of the law, he was not suffered to lead the people into Canaan (Num. 20:10). So, Ants iii. 13, Peter disclaims all regard to himself or John, putting Jesus alone forward. The Lord's power and resurrection are that to which the miracles testified. This gives a definite character to them. There was no personal relief, as we have seen, no self-aggrandizement by them, no glory sought for themselves or for their company. So Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:14).

Now, it was the opposite to this in every other case which tradition records. It was to glorify the individual, a St. Anthony, or Gregory Thaumattirgus, or Martin, or the church corporately—in a word, themselves. They were always from motives, or for objects, which the scriptural miracles never were.

The religion was already established as a religion, for which they had been needed. They were wrought in mercy to a tigress who brought a deer-skin in recompense to the saint for giving sight to her cubs, and was told the saint could not work miracles for her if she went on with such work; or setting a cow right which a demon was riding, whom the saint only could see, the now coming and kneeling to him, and she was ordered to go quietly back to the herd, which she did. This saint promised Satan salvation if he ceased to tempt man.

Or, to go back farther still, let any one, take the miracles of the pseudo-gospels, and see the miracles attributed to Christ; and if they cannot discern the difference of these and scripture, we need not be troubled about their judgment as to anything. The things I have referred to, were in the first centuries. The church was utterly fallen, it is a constant fact in the ways of God that He gives counter-checks. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. The form of holiness cannot be received as of God if it be not founded on the truth, nor what is presented as the truth if it be unholy, nor one who presents truth itself as a minister of God. if he be unholy. So pretended miracles, or apparent works of power, if used to confirm what is not the truth of the word, are to be at once rejected. I may be, unable to explain them: this alters nothing.; they are not of God. He can only give testimony to the truth. If the sign, be one of real power as we have seen in Deut. 13, if it deny the Lord or his word, it condemns the worker, but does not deceive him who knows the Lord, and walks with Him. This supposes the truth known, the testimony of the Lord in the word received; and that is our case, or else a heart deceived by falsehood which of course cannot discern.

And here we see the importance of the scriptural fact that miracles were on the introduction of the truth and to confirm it. There holiness of walk, truth, and power, went inseparably together. It was not a record of past miracles; nor, on the other hand, when truth was there, a meaner to judge pretended ones by, but the truth introduced with the accompanying testimony which none could deny. In the case of Christ neither heathen nor Jews denied them; they might ascribe them to Beelzebub, or magic, or the sham-hammaphoresh;, but the facts were there. Miracles were a present visible testimony which, in point of fact, did so affect men that the religion was established in the face, and in despite, of all the power of the world.

For, after all, Christianity exists, and has had a cause of its existence. That that existence was identified with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is unquestionable for any sober-minded person. Next to His person and death, of which even heathen authors (of course of more weight with infidels, because they believed no truth) testify, came the truths they testified of, which indeed could not be separated from Christ's person and work; but with these, both in the case of Christ Himself and those He sent out, miracles accompanied the testimony to confirm it, and the testimony was believed, and the religion was founded, in the midst, doubtless, of violent opposition and persecution; but the testimony and the miracles were before the eyes of those who did believe. The account is that they saw persons, who had been dead and buried, alive again and conversant with men; all sickness at once healed; lunatics, and those held to be possessed—for the difference is clearly made—instantly healed and delivered. And a religion, which has possessed the civilized part of the world, was founded through the effect produced making head against every prejudice and the whole power of the Roman Empire; and divine truth such as meets and heals man's soul introduced by it.

Other religions have been compared with Christianity. Mahometanism, every one knows, was propagated by the sword, and gives a sensual paradise of houris consecrating men's lusts. Buddhism, the most interesting phenomenon in the world, had no god, and was in despair at the state of human nature without a remedy, and its founder obtained Nirvana—practical annihilation by eating too ranch pork when he was fully eighty years old. Now he is a kind of god, and, in one vast country where it prevails, embodied in a man, and when he dies another is ready prepared, and the living power passes into him.

The miracles the word of God insists on were for the establishment of the faith; and the faith was established, and the grace and truth taught in it shines yet with undiminished and undeniable moral luster; while its shell is picked at by those who do not like the truth itself, because it has a power which speaks too plain to conscience—proves itself too clearly divine for the conscience to like it.

Chapter 126

Miracles and Infidelity: Part 4

And this leads me, too, to the character of the miracles; which, as Mr. Mill says, ought to be characterized by what suits the law (character) of the author of them. Let us consider them in this view.

Christianity views man as guilty and lost by sin, and while recognizing the law as the just measure of what was required from man, yet (none having fulfilled it) purports to be the revelation of God in sovereign goodness to save what was thus lost. Now, Christ's miracles and those of His disciples were not merely signs of power, but all of them of goodness as well as power. There is but one absolute exception, and the accessory of another. The cursing of, the barren fig-tree, a usual figure of the Israelitish nation, that is, of man under the old covenant. This is finally judged, and it was never to bear fruit. The other was the case of the swine, when the miracle itself was a striking and mighty act of delivering goodness, and a sufferance thereupon of the demons showing themselves such as they were: a sad picture of what happened to the Jews when they rejected Christ, as the Gadarenes had. The allowance of the manifestation of the reality of these evil spirits is a remark of one of the old fathers so-called.

With these exceptions, all the miracles of the Lord were the expression of goodness present in power, that man might be won back to confidence in God. Every outward effect, of sin, all the evil that was in the world, was removed and set aside when met, by the power that wrought in goodness amongst men. This did not change man's heart, but it did reveal God's; and this was what man wanted. God came into the midst of sinful men showing that love flowing from His own thoughts and nature was greater than the sin and evil that was in the world. For what we have in Christianity is what never was before. God came out in grace revealing Himself in goodness when man was a sinner, and man gone in, in righteousness, into the divine glory; so that God's love and God's righteousness should be revealed to sinners far from Him. Now, no one can show that one miracle of Christ's, or of those sent by Him, was not thus power displayed in a way suited to the present need and sorrow of man. Moses' miracles, though partly the glorious deliverance of. a people and the proof of governmental care, were not always this. They were judicial wonders suited to the position of the people when God was hid behind the veil and the people placed under the law and tested there. To be exact, I should add one temporary judgment pronounced by Paul on Elymas, a sad picture of the state of the Jews resisting grace, and after all, the means of far better blessing to the pro-consul, before whom the question of the truth of Christianity was raised.

The miracles of Christ were then not only perfectly suited to God's nature and character, but perfectly suited to man and the purpose of Christ's mission, and the expression of it where man's heart could feel and understand it. His birth (if God was to be thus manifested, so that man should learn God's nature, and feel His profound interest in him) was exactly what it must have been, a true real man, born of a woman, but perfectly sinless; such was the faulted temple for God as near to man as God could be, and yet God near to him. As to the resurrection, having become capable of dying to accomplish the work of redemption, and having accomplished that work, there was the

recognition of its effectual value for the justification of every one that believed. God had accepted it, and inseparably from this, a—to us—new life, and a new state of it beyond the effects of sin, in a people of which He was the first-born and head. And thus mark that all His miracles were an essential part of an immense scheme of truth, the only key to man's state in connection with God's righteousness and mercy, and the only fall and real revelation of what He is which exists in the world.

The infidel may condescend to have to say to God, provided He keeps far enough away from him for them to have nothing to do with one another; but this is a revelation, when man, beyond all controversy, is in sin and misery and degradation, as a fact, if there be no revelation—a revelation of God having to do with him in grace and love, and yet maintaining His holy and righteous nature, no trace of which is found anywhere else.

But, further, while miracles were a confirmation of the word, which was the proper and express revelation of God's mind, they were also a testimony in and of themselves; for they told not simply of power, but of goodness, of God working in goodness in the midst of sorrow and misery, and that in the most definite and distinct way. “He had compassion on the multitude.” Still there was distinctly and definitely a testimony to the person and truth, or, to speak again as Scripture speaks, the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, and word and works were a like testimony to it. Hence, too, both belonged specially to the person of the Lord and His immediate followers, whose part after His death I will speak of just now Thus, in John 10:87, 88, we read, to the world, “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in Him.” To the disciples (John 4:10, 11),'“ Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.” I add what follows for another point that will come before us. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father.” Again, 15:22, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin, but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.”

Thus both the word and the works give testimony to all the expression of the perfectness of the Person Who was there—of God's living dealing with men. As to the word, this is the force of John 8:25—τ■ν ■ρχ■ν ■τι κα■ λαλ■ ■μ■ν— principle and wholly what I also say to you. His words were the expression of Himself. He was the truth, and the truth thus expressed, was the revelation of Himself and so of the Father. This gives a distinct character to His words and miracles, and the difference between His and all others. None could be in themselves a similar testimony. The fact that the apostles, and probably some on whom they had laid their hands, wrought miracles, and more and greater works than Christ Himself, may seem a contradiction to this.

A few words here may be called for. It was a necessary consequence of the truth as to Christ. As to His life He was the necessary and natural witness to Himself. But this manifestation of God in grace in the world was only half the truth. If He as God descended here in love, becoming a man, as man He is gone up into heaven, the righteousness of God being so revealed to men through

the Holy Ghost sent down. For of this the Holy Ghost, speaking and acting in men sent oat by Christ, was the witness. “Greater works than these shall ye do because I go to my Father.” But the testimony was still to Jesus alone; the apostles disclaimed all glory for themselves. The miracles were all for the establishing of Christ's religion upon earth, and belonged entirely to that testimony, either as to His coming here from on high, or to His being gone up on high as man. NO miracles of wandering Jews or. Christians in subsequent times can be compared to them; and he who can compare warnings to grateful lionesses and demons riding on cows' backs, done to the honor of thaurnaturgs, must have lost every trace of moral sense and divine apprehension. The infidels must remember that the judgment we form on things is sometimes a test of the state of our minds: The state of the church fell with the departure of the apostles, and even in their time. All, says the apostle, seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ; and John and Jude both testify that the failure was come in their days.

The history of the church shows it utterly fallen in doctrine and practice at once, as all that had been entrusted to man ever had. It is all very well to talk of the primitive church, with those who know nothing about it. But the doctrine and practice were such as are not fit to put upon a drawing-room table for common reading; and that is what was read in the churches forty or fifty years after John's death: one hundred years after this, corruption was general. That superstition and spiritual ignorance governed the “Fathers” minds, there is not the smallest doubt. Milner in his Church History admits that not one oven held the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith. I should go further, but let that suffice. It became quite early the practice to get drunk in the churches in honor of the saints whose memorial had taken the place of that demigod on the same site. In Africa Augustine tried to put a stop to it, and was nearly stoned for his pains; he excuses “the primitive church” by saying, they thought it better to get drunk in honor of a saint than in honor of a demon. But more of this in detail hereafter.

The disposition of the Jews to believe all sorts of signs and wonders is insisted on by infidels, as in the book entitled Supernatural Religion, referring to Lightfoot, and Schoetgen, and Gfrφrer, quoting the Talmud, etc. Now this is freely admitted. But such infidels forget that the Jews as a body did not. receive Jesus as the Christ. Light had come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light. John the Baptist claimed repentance without miracles; those whose consciences were reached received the Lord's testimony, but none else. They might rejoice in the miracles for present comfort, but did not believe; so that the faith in Christ was exactly in contrast with this superstitious temper of the Jews. One would think that these wise men had forgotten that Christ was crucified—rejected—and that the Jews' wonderful love of the marvelous failed to reconcile them to the light, perhaps helped to darken their eyes. At any, rate the argument is worse than nothing, because they did not believe, because of the truth that came with the miracles, but rejected Him that wrought them, ascribing them to Beelzebub—anything rather than receive the truth; and the judgment they were warned of came upon them.

I should not demand better evidence of the difference of the human mind and the divine as communicated in the Gospels than for a person to read the spurious gospels, if he has patience to get through them, and compare the senseless fatuities of what was not written by inspiration in those days and the four Gospels; and if he cannot find out the difference, he is quite fit to be an infidel author. Christ when a child was making little mud, birds and ponds, and it was the Sabbath, and a big boy came and broke his ponds: the birds took flight and went away, and Christ said, As

you have dried my ponds, may you be dried up! So be dried up and died, In this kind of way He became the means of the death of so many that His mother had to keep Him at home in the house. He maltreated the master that taught Him His letters in a like way.

Let me remark here, on the other hand, that Scripture gives perfectly and soberly according to God, what there are legendary traditions of, or the truth of God's ways in connection with Himself, where man's imagination has invented a mass of false statements to impose on man's fears or love of the wonderful. Thus take the book of Tobit, the expression so far of Talmudical and Jewish ideas when they had not present revelation, and the Scriptural account of the service of angels, and see how the last is worthy of God and comfortable to us. The denial of these things, as if it was a settled point, and sober men had given it all up, is all very well for infidels and those who are afraid of them; but they must know that men, as sober and as sound as they, fully believe in the scriptural statements of angelic administrations and demoniacal power. The Saddnman denial of a world of spirits is prejudice not sober judgment, as if power (because it was not visible and material) could not exist.

Chapter 127

No Fellowship With Dishonour to Christ

I refuse the language used by brethren from whom we have seceded, that we have “excommunicated them.” This is not a just expression; and it produces indignation; and immediate determination in the mind to have nothing to do with people or with principles of such a bearing. It is not excommunication. It is standing at the door of the house of God, and, if certain persons come to the door seeking entrance, we act as the spirit of the apostle lets us know we ought to act, and we forbid them entrance.

We de, not inquire if they are saints of God or not: this we may know elsewhere. The apostle does not tell us to make any such inquiry. But we refuse to receive them coming up to the door of the house of God from the temple, of an idol (1. Cor. 10). They have declared or admitted the declaration, without judging it (and this makes them partakers with it), that they receive at their table one who comes from a place where Christ is dishonored, if he himself is sound in faith and morals, and has not imbibed the heterodoxy. And I say no more but just ask, Is a place where Christ is dishonored other in our eyes than an idol's temple, where the cups of demons are drunk? We have no such Custom, neither the churches of God. But we say, Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons (or of those who dishonor the Lord Jesus). Judge in yourselves, judge the principle in the light of the word. To me it seems, Self-evidencing, light, and power, and virtue, and holiness are in it.

But, now that I am on this subject with you, I will linger a little over it, though it be very painful, and has been so to me for many years; for I dearly loved those personally from whom I am separated congregationally.

There are three distinct elements—to use a phrase in much present use—formalism, socialism, and divine holiness.

Formalism obtains in all the aged systems or Romanism and the parish church.

Socialism has made great inroads on it in this day of ours. To a great extent it is the favorite principle of the present generation; whether in or out of the church, we see it in activity. The men of the world are combining, and form their joint-stock companies, their confederacies, for the advance of present accommodation and international brotherhood. Such is the day. The saints are always tempted by the spirit of the age, and are now very much acting on this principle. They receive one another in an abstract way, not under the condition the word of God prescribes, as in 1 Cor. 10. And the social atmosphere is very grateful: they breathe it freely and encourage one another by no means to disturb it.

Divine holiness pauses in the light of everything, and challenges it, however precise, amiable, respectable, and widely accredited, by the light of the Lord, and forces it to give an account of itself to the word of God. It has its peculiarities, which it can never surrender either to socialism or to formalism. It is something more than the moral sense of man, or even than a “charity” that refuges to judge or distinguish things that differ. It is the mind of God dispensed in scripture in any given

age, and walking in the light of His mind. This divine holiness is a separating principle, but not that of a Pharisee, all to the tradition of men, or assumed higher holiness in one's self, but that of obedience to God's peculiarities—the principles of His house revealed in His word.

It is easy nowadays to take the journey from formalism to socialism. There is much in the temper of the age to put a very large generation on that road, so that great Countenance is given to those who are traveling there. But to travel from socialism to divine holiness is another thing altogether. I add, and this only, that to as it is plain, that among the peculiarities, or attributes, of divine holiness is found that principle which I have already noticed—that if one come from an idol's temple, where the cup of demons had been drunk (though he be a saint of God), he is not to be received in the house of God. He may say, It is my liberty, and I may go where. I please. Divine holiness replies, I cannot combine with such liberty. Yours affectionately in the Lord,

To—— Nov. 18th, 1863. J. G. B.

P.S.—I should like with you to look at the Book of Nehemiah, as illustrating formalism, socialism, and divine holiness. We are now called “Exclusives.” If this title belongs to us, it belongs to the apostle who tells us to act upon the principle which has given us the title.

Chapter 128

No More Conscience of Sins

The grace in which we stand is, that we are sons of God, and priests to God. The true worshippers, as we are taught by our Lord in the fourth chapter of John, are those who in the Spirit of sonship worship the Father. But there is another relation, besides that of sons, in which we stand to God—an official relation as being His constituted worshipers; taking up the place which Israel once occupied as the only worshipping people in the whole earth, but after an entirely different order. We could not indeed be priests unto God unless we were sons. To be sons of God is our real proper dignity, because we have thereby relationship with God in the highest sense; but this does not hinder our having an official standing before Him; and it is this which we would now consider. The common standing of all saints is to be once purged worshippers before God.

The peculiar privilege of Israel was nearness to God: “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself” (Ex. 19:4). This placed Israel, comparatively with all the nations around them, in a priestly standing before God. Hence it is said that Christ “came and preached peace to you which were afar off [the Gentiles], and to them that were nigh” (Ephesians 2:17) In the time of Israel's declension, when they had become as the nations around them, in both their government and their worship, instead of standing in their original separateness—the Lord says of them, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, and thou shalt be no priest to Me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hos. 4:6).

The grace of God had brought Israel unto Himself, having led them all the way from Egypt to Sinai. But there they undertook to stand on their own obedience; and, on condition of doing so, were to be unto God “a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5, 6). They, however, failed immediately in obedience; and although relatively, as a nation, they still had nearness to God, yet immediately on their failure under the law a certain number are taken from among the nation to stand in peculiar nearness to God, and the people themselves were consequently thrown at a distance. Thus it was ordered of the Lord unto Moses: “And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons” (Ex. 28:1). They were to “come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place” (ver. 43). It was the privilege of one only to come nearer still, and this was the high priest, to go within the veil.

But after the sin of Nadab and Abihu, the privilege was curtailed so far as the frequency of entering in was concerned. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the Lord and died; and the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark.”

To Israel indeed pertained the service of God (worship), but it was a worship of relative nearness to God: the high priest the nearest, the priests next—these were inside worshippers; the Levites next to them—they were attendants on the priests, and employed about the tabernacle; and then

the people who were outside worshippers, as it is said, “the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense” (Luke 1:10). But even there, even in the outer court, no Gentile could approach (Acts 21:28).

Sacrifice and priesthood are essential pre-requisites for worship. How fully was this taught to Jews under the law I They were habitually reminded that there was no acceptable worship but on the ground of the accepted sacrifice; and that they needed the intervention of the priest authoritatively to pronounce them cleansed for worship. Hence a Jew under the law rightly connected justification with worship. He could not worship, because of guilt attached to him which needed the expiation, or of uncleanness which needed the intervention of the priest. The great act, however, which put Israel in the place of a worshipping people, was the sacrifice of the great day of atonement. This was an annual solemnity. “On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. . . This shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year” (Lev. 16:30, 34). Israel then stood on that day as the worshipping people of the Lord. But they stood not with a purged conscience. This was what their sacrifices never could give; for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. It required other blood to do that, the blood of Him who is presented to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews as the Son.

But here comes in the great contrast between worship then and now. In order to worship we need sacrifice and priesthood as much as Israel of old; but, though worshipping thus on the same ground as they, our worship is of an entirely different order. I say different in its order, as well as essentially different in the dignity both of the sacrifice and of the priest.

Of this most important contrast between the worship of Israel under the law, and that of the church now, we are not left to conjecture or inference. Blessed for us, we have the comment of the Holy Ghost in the tenth chapter of Hebrews, on the remarkable solemnity of the great day of atonement, given for the express purpose of showing that the standing of the true worshipper now is the very reverse of that of Israel under the law. Let us meditate awhile on it.

First, the sacrifices offered under the law never could put those who came to them in the place of constant worshippers (for so “perfect” clearly means in this passage); and this not only because of their intrinsic inefficiency, but also because of their repetition; for had they effected this, they needed not to be yearly offered, “because the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins.” Now mark, to be perfected as a worshipper is to have no more conscience of sins. This is, according to the aspect in which we are now considering worship, to be a true worshipper. Surely this exalts worship very highly. Because thus it is not in any wise the means of our justification, but that for which we are already justified. And how blessedly does the apostle show here, by way of contrast, that the comers unto Christ are made perfect! “By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Israel were perfected for a moment on the day of atonement; but even then not “as pertaining to the conscience:” the blood of their sacrifice could not touch that (Heb. 9:9). Their worship, therefore, must have been in “the spirit of bondage unto fear” (Rom. 8:15). There could have been no boldness (liberty), as we have by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19). The unceasing repetition of the sacrifice had only the effect of as unceasingly bringing sins to remembrance. But Christ, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God—not as one expecting to offer sacrifice again, but waiting for His

enemies to be made His footstool. And to this we have to add the blessed testimony of the Holy Ghost, in the special promise of the New Covenant— “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” And therefore there needs no more sacrifice for sin.

The one finished and accepted sacrifice of Christ is therefore of permanent efficacy. There is in it remission of sins to every one that believes; and he that believes has not to look for any further sacrifice for sin (ver. 17); for if he had, it would bring sin to remembrance, and charge the conscience with guilt. And this is always the case where there is not simple repose of soul on the one finished sacrifice of Christ. Faith sees that the one thing has been done in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” And hence the moment a Jew believed in “the precious blood of Christ,” he was in a condition to assert that these were his privileges; as it is written, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Thus praise, the highest part of worship can now be entered on: “I will extol Thee, my God, O king, and I will bless Thy name forever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee, and I will praise Thy name forever and ever” (Psa. 145.). While praise is silent for God in Zion, the mouth of the sinner, redeemed to God through the precious blood of the Lamb, is opened to show forth His praises. God Himself has created the fruit of the lips, speaking peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is nigh.

But to return to our chapter: liberty of conscience is the very basis of true worship. Not what men call liberty of conscience, but the ability to approach God without any sense of guilt upon the conscience. This, be it observed, is not presuming on innocence; neither is it the profession of unconsciousness of sin (for if “I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified”); but it is the fullest consciousness and acknowledgment of sin, with the profession (let us hold it fast) that it has been forever judged by the one sacrifice of Christ offered once for all.

All the gifts and sacrifices offered by a worshipper under the law “could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience” (Heb. 9:9). He might have approached God strictly according to the ritual prescribed, but it must have been a burdened conscience. No conscience can be at ease before God where anything depends on what the person himself is doing or has to do; yea, I would say, not if it had now to depend on what Christ has to do, instead of resting on that which He has already done. The worshipper must be once and forever purged, or he must have conscience of sins. But only let him by faith follow Christ through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, by which He has entered into the holy place; only let him see that it is “not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own, blood, that He hath entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption;” and where can be the conscience of sins? Christ has not to enter in again, He has no more sacrifice for sin to offer—no other blood to carry in; for where could any be found of like preciousness? All is done once, and once for all; hence the worshipper once purged, and purged by such blood (Heb. 9:14), has no more conscience of sins. He can serve the living God. Nothing now depends on what the worshipper has to do; all hangs on the accomplished sacrifice, the precious blood, and permanent priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But again—when God had to do with Israel, even before He could speak to them to bring them under the covenant, the injunction to Moses was, “Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes. And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God” (Ex. 19.). The people must be sanctified in order to meet God, and sanctified in His own. way; as God said when those came near to offer strange fire before Him, “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh unto Me” (Lev. 10:3): Who, after that dread example, would dare to approach God, if he, was not sanctified in the way of God's appointment, so that God might be sanctified in him?

And what do we learn concerning the true worshipper's sanctification now? What concerning God's appointment now for the once purged worshipper's approach to Him? “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body, hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt-offerings and offerings for sin Thon hast no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God.....By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Thus it is by God's own ordinance that we are sanctified. God's own will in this matter has been done; and therefore are we able to meet Him as once purged and sanctified worshippers, put in the place of the holy nation. Those alone who by faith rest in the one accepted, and never to be repeated, offering of the body of Jesus Christ, are constituted God's worshipping people. This unchangeable place of blessing is given them by the express will of God.

Once more to look at the priest, how busy was Aaron! He had not only the yearly sacrifices on the great day of atonement, but he had likewise much to do even daily, that the constituted worshippers might engage in worship. He had the morning and evening sacrifices, besides those which were occasional. He might be called on at any time to offer a trespass-offering, so that he never could have sat down as one who had finished his work, and could look on it with satisfaction.

But what a blessed contrast is here! “Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God.” This is the position of One who had finished His work, and could look on it with satisfaction, and could present it before God continually. Not like Aaron, expecting to be called on to offer another sacrifice; but, that having been done once for all, “expecting till His enemies be made His footstool: for by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

Lastly, the new covenant not only promises the same high privileges as the old, but it secures the attainment of them by the grace of God, when it had been proved they could not be attained by the obedience of the people. “If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” This was the tenor of the old covenant—its promises being conditional on their obedience. But “the better covenant,” based upon “better promises,” speaks thus: “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, earth the Lord; I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Here all is done by God Himself, and

therefore the promises necessarily follow—they become a kingdom of priests and w holy nation. And there is added to that above “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Thus, therefore, we have the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the truth, that “by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified;” because, “where remission of sins is, there is no more offering for sin.”

What amazing knowledge immediately results from the recognition of the one completed sacrifice of Christ; the dignity of His person giving to it its infinite value! Our blessed standing is as a spiritual house, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, privileged in this, to the exclusion of all others, to be the worshipping people of God on the earth. The place in which Christ by His own work, and the Holy Ghost by His distinct testimony, have set us, is that of worshippers once and forever purged; without any conscience of sins: able to approach the very God who can read our hearts without any suspicious fear, lest anything of guilt should yet be found on us, —any charge of sin not thoroughly purged away. “Blessed (indeed) is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

Could an Israelite, coming to God according to the law, be without guile before Him? I judge not. Lurking suspicion that God saw in him deeper sin than his offering could atone for, or that he himself might have neglected some prescribed duty, would make him anything but guileless. One, indeed, who came to God by faith, not in the ordered place, but under a fig-tree, might be found in holy confidence with God—an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile. Such was Nathanael, under the divine teaching, immediately recognizing Jesus as Son of God and King of Israel. Surely he is a sample of Israel by and by, under the covenant, taking the place of nearness to God, as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, by their recognition of Jesus as the Son—the sacrifice and the priest.

The worshipper once purged is a guileless worshipper. Be it known as our portion now, as it will be in glory. Amen.

Chapter 129

Paul a Servant of Jesus Christ: Part 1

It is important at all times to distinguish between that which is common to the whole family of God, and that which is the special relationship which any individual may hold to the family. It will be found that what we have in common is far more extensive than what, any individual saint can possibly have as peculiar to himself. And this must be the ease when we know that union with Christ is the portion of all that believe on Him, and that all the blessings flowing from this are not only the highest but also the common blessings of the church. Now we are very liable to fix our attention on that which distinguishes an individual member of the body of Christ, on account of some superadded gift from the ascended Jesus. We look on such an one as apart from the body, and on that account as removed far above our own sphere, so that we think him unable to sympathize with us, and ourselves unable to follow him. It is thus that we have insensibly been led to lower the value of apostolical example, and the tone of apostolical precept, little thinking that the change in the aspect of outward things could affect the essential distinction between the church and the world. In the case of the apostle Paul for example, we see so much strikingly singular, and the astonishing facts accompanying his conversion and ministry are of so extraordinary a character, that whilst we only contemplate him thus, we wonder but dare not imitate. And this is as it should be. For as an apostle, Paul has had none to follow him. In this his special relation to the church as the depositary by visions and revelations of the counsels of God and of the mind of Christ, and the communicator by preaching and writing of those things in which the Lord had appeared unto him, he stands singular and aloof from the body.

But there is another character in which he is presented to us, and that is as the servant of Jesus Christ, and when he mentions this in connection with his apostleship, he gives the title of servant precedence over that of apostle (Rom. 1:1). Now the servant was that character which he could only sustain by virtue of being not his own but bought with a price—it was a redemption character—one which belonged to the whole redeemed family as well as himself, and therefore essential not only to salvation but to glory. Truly as an apostle too he was redeemed, and sent forth as the apostle of that redemption, the power of which he knew in his own soul. But neither salvation, life, nor glory, was essential to apostleship, but they were to service. Apostleship was a gift over and above that which was common to all, and placed an individual in a distinct relation to others, but not so as to make the common and essential blessings of less value, but rather to enhance them. For although Paul might have been God's accredited organ of communication of all mysteries to the church, yet he himself would have lost his blessing and specialty of reward had he not used his apostleship as a servant.

And this is the Lord's own preventative against exaltation in any church office: if it be not used in service, the person loses his reward. “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” It is this which distinguishes authority exercised in the church from that which is exercised in the world. “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them, but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of

man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” The world's officer has all the insignia of present power about him, and demands to be acknowledged, and is to be acknowledged, as having power—the source of his authority is visible, and the exercise of it manifest to the eye. On the other hand the source of authority in the church is invisible; it is from above, from the ascended Jesus, and its exercise is in real spiritual control and guidance—and the great object is that the person who is the Channel by which it is exercised, should so lose his prominence, that Jesus and not the man himself should be exalted. And thus it is exercised in service to Him.

It was so in the case of the Lord Jesus Himself— “He took on Him the form of a servant.” And although His own proper and native dignity as the eternal Son was constantly shining forth, even whilst He was sustaining the character He had assumed; yet He strictly maintained it, and sought to hide Himself, that the glory of Him who had sent Him might appear. He was “among them as one who served” —serving them for His sake Who had sent Him. We have the beautiful portrait of the Lord as the servant thus given to us. “Behold My Servant, Whom I uphold, Mine Elect in Whom My soul delighteth: I have put My Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street—a bruised reed shall He not break and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law.” The way in which this is applied by the Holy Spirit to the Lord Jesus in Matt. 12, shows the parts of the servant character, which are truly valuable and of great price in the sight of God. He had restored the withered hand— “then the Pharisees went and held a counsel against Him—how they might destroy Him;” but when Jesus knew it, He withdrew Himself from thence— “He did not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard” against them; nothing escaped Him of what man would term honest indignation, no railing word against their malice, “He did not strive.” The patient Servant was upheld by the arm of Him Whose servant He was; and the Spirit which was upon Him, was another spirit from that of man, and led Him while serving others in blessing to show forth that He served not Himself, but that as the Servant He was only His Who sent Him, and reproach and malice did not make Him fail or discourage Him, because His object was only to do the work of Him that sent Him But we follow Him a step farther in this patience of service: “as He withdrew great multitudes followed Him and He healed them all; and charged them that they should not make Him known, that it might be fulfilled,” &c. &c. As the Servant He was not discouraged by opposition, neither was He elated by that which He had wrought; He tried to hide Himself that God might be glorified; and when He might have turned on the Pharisees with the multitudes He had healed, He would not allow any man to hear His voice in the street, but charged them that they should not make Him known. Here is the real Servant, the One Who hides Himself, that He Whom He serves may appear—the One Who loses all self-interest in the interests of others.

Now it is especially in this character that Jesus, the perfectly instructed and wise Servant, holds Himself up to our imitation. “The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord: it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household? Fear them not therefore.” But there are two spheres of service, and although the same principles guide in both, yet the circumstances are so very different, as to give a different character to the service. The

world and the church are the two places of service. The ministry of the Lord was chiefly confined to the former; for He came as the Servant of Jehovah to Israel— “He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him.” Here was active service, such as man could recognize, and in which He sought to hide Himself, that God might be glorified. It was attended too with present results, and had its value in measure appreciated by man. But if we look to our Lord's service in the church, we find it characteristically presented in one beautiful incident, leading Him to take a lower place than ever He had taken in His service in and to the world. “When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end—Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God and went to God; He riseth from supper and laid aside His garments, and took a towel and girded Himself: after that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well: for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his master; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them.”

It is in following out this example, that we trace the servant in the apostle Paul. The sphere of his service was the church, and although the perfect servant is only to be found in the above example, yet the details of service are more shown by the apostle than by the Lord Himself. But first let us notice the great principle of serving in the church: in the Lord it was the conscious possession of all things—had anything been lacking to Himself, He could not have served; but nothing could be added to Him to Whom the Father had given all things. Again those whom He served had no claim upon Him for service— “Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?” showed the service to be perfectly free. The apostle too, knowing the fullness of Jesus as his own, stood in the consciousness of one who possessed all things, and at the same time as one who knowing himself not his own, but bought with a price, could say, “though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself the servant of all.” In another place, it is true, he says, “I am debtor both to Greeks and barbarians; both to the wise and the unwise.” Man could claim nothing of him, but as the Lord's servant, he felt all had a claim on him. Blessed service indeed which is based on liberty, and whereinsoever exercised is always to the Lord.

On the first calling of the apostle Paul, as a chosen vessel to bear the name of the Lord before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, he was to be shown how great things he had to suffer for the name-sake of Jesus. The disciple was not to be above his Master, but everyone who is perfect is to be as his Master. And the more perfect the servant, so much more would there be conformity in humiliation, in weariness, and in everything which was sorrowful to man as man, to the Master Himself. It is thus that the Master connects service with everything contrary to that which the flesh would crave. He sat weary on the well, there was nothing around Him to relieve Him, but it was relief to the weariness to serve—My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. And so He taught. “He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man will serve Me, let him follow Me.” Truly

humbling to the Master to be denied the common refreshment which His own bounty had given to man—and so the disciple followed His steps, and if he was used of the Lord to dispense the living water, it was “in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst.” It is in contrast with those who were getting into ministerial ease and honor (1 Cor. 4:1, 9), that he brings in his own personal sufferings, as marking the character of real service. So again we find after he has described the apostasy in its features of self-love and self-indulgence, he silently contrasts his own conduct as properly exhibiting the servant of the Lord. “Hast thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Thus making his conduct a sample of that which would characterize faithfulness in any period throughout the dispensation. There might be many other general notices adduced as. proving that service to the Lord must be in sorrow and suffering, and that the instructed servant would always be able to say, “that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.”

But I would desire to notice a peculiar class of trials which do not so much outwardly appear, but which strikingly exhibit the servant of the Lord. They are marked by the apostle as “the afflictions of the gospel” —and while including outward trial, are by no means confined to it. It is as one having nearly arrived at the end of his course that the apostle mentions to Timothy—like-minded indeed with the apostle, but apparently failing in that endurance for the elect's sake which so marked Paul's service. “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.” It is probably “suffer evil with the gospel” —Jesus when personally present suffered evil—the gospel when preached drew out the same evil. Paul the preacher, suffered for preaching it—and now he calls on Timothy to be a fellow-sufferer with the Lord, His gospel, and Himself. Many turned back and walked not with the Lord when they heard His hard sayings, and a grievous trial it was to the apostle to find all in Asia turned away from him, and himself imprisoned and unable to visit them. How likely then was the heart of the comparatively young soldier to faint, and to grow dispirited, not from the attacks of open enemies, but from the desertion, suspicion, and luke-warmness even of friends.

How assiduously did the apostle seek to give to Timothy confidence in the same power, even a resurrection-Lord, which had sustained and carried him through. The shame of supporting a cause abandoned by so many and with its prime mover in prison was very great. Hard indeed to bear the scorn of being embarked in that which to man's eye was a tottering cause, and nothing but the consciousness in the soul of the apostle, that God was not looking for any sufficiency in him, but supplying to him all-sufficiency in all things, could have given him such a bounding spring as to make him rise above all apparent failure and disappointment. The confusion and disorder at Corinth, the turning to another gospel at Galatia, the danger of apostasy among the Hebrews, were all sources of trial, unheeded, unknown, and incapable of being felt by man as man, but wearing the mind, so as to make him very consciously to know, what it was to hate his life in this world. One thing too which tended to lead the servant in conformity with his Master, was that he stood alone. Timothy was like-minded, yet he could hardly sympathize with the apostle, who saw before his eyes, that his departure would indeed be the occasion for grievous wolves to enter in.

All appeared to be sustained by the energy of the Spirit in this chosen vessel, and whilst he is exhorting Timothy to steadfastness, the repeated charge, “thou therefore endure hardness,” “watch thou in all things, endure afflictions,” “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,” shows that he hesitated to expect that ability of Timothy to endure which had so characterized his own service in the church. It was the full consciousness that he did not go to the warfare at his own charges, that the Master Whom he served was no austere Master, that sustained the soul of the apostle. He might summarily and authoritatively have settled every question, but this would not have been to have served others for the Lord's sake.

The relation in which the apostle stood to the Corinthians appears to me to be especially that of the servant in suffering, the servant being perfected according to his Master. It is not persecution or outward hardship, but the laying himself out in grace to kindle the grace which was in them. The first seven chapters of the second Epistle are, in my judgment, the experience of the apostle as the servant of the church. No fainting, no discouragement, no striving, no lifting up, no quenching the smoking flax, no breaking the bruised reed, but a willingness even to suffer his own reputation for faithfulness and power to be questioned, so that he might serve them in the way they needed to be served. The first Epistle to the Corinthians sufficiently informs us of the grievous disorder of the church—a disorder I believe which would shock any of our communions—which have indeed by their regulations secured order, but it is order arising from outward regulations and not that which the apostle sought as the remedy, that which arises from the power of inward life and grace. If I were asked what there was, which could induce the apostle to act towards the church of Corinth, as he did, instead of proceeding to extreme measures in punishing their delinquencies at once, I would say there were three things specially noticeable in his conduct, which most clearly mark that his object was not mere outward decency, but life in the Spirit.

First—The apostle was able to reckon largely on the full supply of grace in Jesus for a case so extreme. He had known that grace in his own extremity—he lived on it himself. It was this alone which prevented his sinking under the pressure of “the care of all the churches.” Jesus was risen and over all. His own confidence was what he pointed out to Timothy, when he said, as encouraging him against many difficulties, “Remember Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, raised from the dead according to my gospel.” In utter insufficiency in himself to meet a case so desperate us that of the Corinthian church, except it were in immediate severity of judgment, Paul was enabled to reckon largely on the sufficiency which was in Christ Jesus—he knew no limit to the resources of His grace.

Secondly—The apostle did not judge after the seeing of his eyes or the hearing of his ears, grievous as were the reports that had reached him touching their disorders—but he judged of them as they were in Christ, and not according to their actual circumstances. He reckoned that there was life in them, although it was almost smothered, and the wisdom was to strengthen the things that were ready to die. The first nine verses of the first chapter of the first Epistle are most remarkable in this light. Had he gone on the ground of evidence, he might well have doubted if they were Christians at all. But the Lord had told him that he had much people in that city. They were “the seal of his apostleship,” for his word had come to them in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The name of Jesus had been confessed by them; and although the flesh and the world appeared almost to have overwhelmed them, and disputation to have taken the place of faith, yet he would not suffer Satan to make him set aside their confession, or to disown his own labor,

because of their present appearances. He takes them on the ground of being in Christ, and before a single word of apprehension escapes him, he so grounds them in the faith, that subsequent rebuke should not have the effect of unsettling but of establishing.

But, thirdly, there was the personal bearing of the apostle himself towards this church. He might have come with the rod, and doubtless his immediate presence would have stopped many abuses, and silenced many a prating preacher. He was fully conscious of the power that he had “to revenge all disobedience,” and “to use sharpness according to the power which the Lord had given him to edification and not to destruction.” Now had his object been to establish his claim to authority, this would have been the readiest way. But he was fully conscious of his authority, and the question with him was to use it unto edification. To have produced acquiescence to his commandments by his immediate presence was not his object. His delight was to see obedience flowing from grace, as he saw in the Philippians, who not only “obeyed in his presence, but much more in his absence,” and to Witness order produced by inward life and not outward restrictions. This was the object of his first Epistle: he took the place of the patient servant, neither fainting nor being discouraged, and waited patiently to see its result. He had the rod at his command, but he did not strive, nor lift up. He said indeed, “Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come unto you; but I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will: and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up but the power, for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye? shall I come to you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?”

(To be continued.)

Chapter 130

Paul a Servant of Jesus Christ: Part 2

Now in the Second Epistle we find that the apostle's patience had been turned against himself by some, as if he was afraid to come and had boasted of an authority which he did not possess; yea, he is even held up to reproach as a vain and fickle man, whose word was not to be depended on. But this does not move him: he endures all things for the elect's sake, and preferred their restoration to the vindication of his own character; even as the perfect patient Servant, when He was reviled, reviled not again, but committed His cause to Him Who was near to justify Him. Nothing but the consciousness of being in the place of the servant, entirely forgetting himself, that he might serve others for the Lord's sake, could have carried him through circumstances so trying. Ingratitude from those to whom he had been a father, personal reproach heaped on him by those who were accredited as teachers in the church, whisperings as to his honesty and integrity, all these trials, so hard to man, moved him not from his purpose of being their servant, as the servant of the Lord unto blessing. The mind which was in Christ Jesus was in him; and it appears to me that the Second Epistle to the Corinthians is the exhibition of that mind in the spirit and conduct of the apostle. It holds a very singular place among the writings of the apostle: there were questions to be answered and error to be corrected in the First Epistle, but in this all the blessed truth is brought out incidentally as exhibiting the reason of his own conduct. We have the experience of man under law given us by the apostle in Rom. 7. He speaks in the Galatians as one identified with Christ in His death and resurrection. He gives us his own estimate of all fleshly advantages in the Philippians. But here we have all the painful experience of the servant of the Lord in outward hardship and inward trial. But the spring of it all, the hidden spring of his unfailing energy in service, was the knowledge of, and communion with, the mind of Christ; which in result caused him always to triumph in Christ. With the exception of the eighth and ninth chapters, all this Epistle is of a personal character; in the first seven chapters he speaks both in the person of Timothy, as well as in his own person; in the last chapters he was compelled; although it were folly, to speak of himself. He who had taught to rejoice in tribulation now rejoices in it. He begins this Epistle as one who had triumphed— “blessed be God.” All his trials in service had only served to lead him to know God, as he could not have known Him otherwise, “as the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation.” It was in this school he acquired the ability to comfort others; so that the personal afflictions or personal comfort of the apostle worked unto the same end, even their profit, for he was their servant for Jesus' sake.

The manner in which the apostle met the charge of fickleness against himself, shows forth the dexteritousness of divine wisdom. Be it so—I am fickle, but He Whom I preach is not so; in Him is stability—in Him is yea—in Him is amen. The servant would exalt his Master, even apparently at his own expense. For there was no stability in the servant himself, except that which he had in common with them all, even that stability which God Himself had given them, by establishing them in Christ. He draws them away from looking to him, by turning them to those blessings which they had in common with him as believers in Christ. He thus makes them, as it were, judges, themselves, putting them in the place of exercising righteous judgment. Had he succeeded in most

satisfactorily answering the charge, it would have done nothing to establish their souls. This was his object: as one who knew that when the soul itself is unestablished in grace, it can only judge after the seeing of the eye, or hearing of the ear. But when he had thus set them in blessed security, the common security of the church, and had shown to them that the privileges which they had in common with the apostle, were the highest that either he or they could have; then he could solemnly tell them, that it was no fickleness on his part that had prevented his carrying his intention into effect; but that to spare them he had not come to Corinth. Surely the servant of the Lord must not faint or be discouraged under misconception or misrepresentation: even evil report is a means, of approving ourselves as ministers of Christ; even as deceivers, we are yet true. There is no self-seeking in the servant's place, but the using of every occasion to turn it to the Master's account.

He next gives the reason why he had written instead of personally coming to them; it was to prove his love for them and interest in them. He knew their value as saints. He estimated them as seeing them in Christ and not according to their actual standing, and disorderly walk: nothing but their recognition of their real standing would have been real reformation. His immediate presence might have produced that which was outward, but he sought to touch the inward spring. And here we find in the conduct of the servant that which would be judged blameworthy by those who merely looked on the outward appearance and sought not the mind of Christ. The servant knew the preciousness of the saints to the Lord, and knew also how much the glory of His name was implicated in their walk, and more than this his own energy depended on it; so that when he had before him the two services of preaching to the world or ministering to weak and disorderly saints, we find the servant, of the Lord led into that which might even have been deemed, by those who judged not in the Spirit, to be idleness. “When I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went from thence to Macedonia.” What a lesson are we taught here! The active diligent pains-taking servant, whom no hardship could move, no danger could hinder, has no heart or ability for the preaching of the gospel, because of his anxious care for distant disorderly saints. How did the apostle feel himself to be of the body! How little is this known in our days! Who among the servants of the Lord is tracing his own dispiritedness for the work to its right cause—the divided state of the body of Christ?

Again, it must be repeated, he might have set all right by his own immediate presence at Corinth, he might have exposed all their errors and declared infallibly the truth of God; but this would not have ministered life to them, nor gladness and strength to his own soul. But how blessedly his ways in Christ resulted, he subsequently states. “I am filled with comfort, I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation. For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears: nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted, in you.” It was this coming of Titus which made him so exult, and connects his triumphant language with his apparent failure in the twelfth and thirteenth verses of the second chapter. For immediately on having mentioned his going from Troas into Macedonia, he says, “Now thanks be unto God which always causes as to triumph in Christ.” He is not here speaking of any success in preaching in Macedonia, nor indeed of preaching at all, but that the way of Christ in which he had walked was. the way of triumph. It was

the way of self-renunciation, the way “in which the flesh had no rest.” To have power and yet not to exercise power—to be able to vindicate most satisfactorily an aspersed character, and yet to endure the contradiction of sinners against oneself, here is no rest in the flesh—here is the mind and way of Christ—here is the path of glory and virtue leading to certain triumph, conscious triumph even here. Now whilst it is most fully allowed that this is applicable to the preaching of the gospel, and that in this to the faithful servant there is constant triumph, since the testimony always prospers in that whereunto God has sent it, whether they hear and whether they reject it, yet I do assuredly believe that the whole context shows the mind of the Spirit to be the triumph which always follows walking in Christ.

There are two ways of testimony unto Christ; the one is by preaching, which may be done through strife or vain glory, and this hinders not the blessing of God to souls, because Christ is to be magnified; but the other way is that of His living power manifested in service. And it is to this the apostle adverts, when he says, “and maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place, for we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life.” The elect Servant of Jehovah was, in the eyes of man, one in whom there was no form nor comeliness; one in whom they saw no beauty that they should desire Him Yet He was ever a sweet savor unto God. If man despised Him, it only proved the justice of God's judgment as to man; and where there was faith, there “wisdom was justified of her children.” The apostles, and real servants of the Lord, were “the foolish, the weak, the base, the despised things of the world.” Yet as such, they always triumphed even as their Master, to whom it was said as the despised of men, “therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong.” And it is thus the apostle looks from himself to his Master. “For though He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him (with Him, margin), but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.” His very triumph in Christ was his own personal humiliation in the eyes of men; he knew that, just in proportion as Paul was hidden, Christ would be made to appear. And painful as the needed discipline was, he could say, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

In speaking of the Corinthians themselves, as his best letter of recommendation, he is led to contrast the ministration of the New Testament with that of the Old, and their different glories. Moses as the servant of the one exhibited the glory of the Old or of the letter, in its repulsiveness and obscurity; but Paul as the servant of the other was to exhibit its attractive glory, not only in testimony but in service likewise. Each ministration had the effect of assimilating its servant to its own character. And whilst the apostle states it as the common portion of all to have communion with that glory (3:18), he himself and his fellow-laborers through the knowledge of it were prevented from fainting. “Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have obtained mercy, we faint not.” There was indeed enough to make him faint: all human energies must have given way under the pressure; but the character of the ministry, “life and righteousness,” and “we have obtained mercy,” caused him not to faint. Official authority might have punished, but then the servant would have been lost sight of in the apostle; and although it put him in so low a place, yet he could thus minister that which their case required. How gracious indeed is it to know that, low

and degraded as saints may be, the ministration of the New Testament can reach to them and raise them up! But then it must be by the manifestation of the truth, setting man aside to show that the only sufficiency is in God. The exercise even of apostolic authority might have tended to obscure the luster of the glory of that grace; but when such a ministry was commended by the conduct of those who were themselves exhibiting the glory of it, it could only be the direct power of Satan that could cause it to be hidden. That the character of service is here intended to be brought out, is, I think, sufficiently clear from the connection in 4:5, “for we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.”

Now what follows is all characterizing service, in its abasement of the flesh. God's glory must be put in an earthen vessel, that it may be manifested as His and not the vessel's which bears it. The chosen vessel must suffer for the name it bears. Is it the ministration of life? How shall it be manifested? By seeing death as to man stamped on him who ministers it. It was life in Jesus, as being only in Him, that they had to preach and minister; therefore it was with them, “always bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, &c. It is most clear from the words, “so then death worketh in us, but life in you,” that the apostle is here speaking of that which is death to man as man—everything that would tend to exalt him in the estimation of others, the power of command arising from superior intellect, the influence of birth, the advantages of education—on all of them death was written. And the servant of the Lord had to know the deep trial of foregoing all these advantages, that life might work in others. What a practical comment was the experience of the apostle in service on the word of the Lord, “a man must hate his life in this world!” It was the deep entering in of the soul into the power of the resurrection, which made him practically acquainted with death as man. He had the same spirit of faith as He had Whom he served. Faith could say, “I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted. I said in mine haste, all men are liars. Yea, truly all men are liars—are vanity; and therefore it was faith in a resurrection—God which sustained the apostle in his daily dying. But whilst thus he was lifted above death, he could look at all his sufferings as being in service to the church, “for all things are for your sakes;” and therefore here was another ground of not fainting. The outer man might perish, but the inner man was renewed day by day by the power of unseen things.

The same leading thought runs through the fifth chapter and into the sixth, as is plainly stated: “giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed, but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God.” The fifth chapter is connected with the preaching by the word “for we know.” The expression, “we know,” is dogmatic with the apostle for that knowledge which is peculiar to a Christian, and seems generally to be applied to practical knowledge. It is the portion of the believer alone to be able to judge all things as from above. “We know that the law is spiritual” —this we could not know unless we were spiritual. “We know that, if our earthly tabernacle were dissolved, we have,” &c. This we could not know unless our soul had entered into resurrection as its portion. It was therefore not a vague, but a very distinct, apprehension of the resurrection of the body, which made the apostle patient under all hardships, groaning from without and within in earnest desire of deliverance.

There was another thing also which entered into the question of service, and that was the solemn apprehension of the light in which everything would be judged, when the veil was drawn aside and

Christ should appear. His service all had respect to that day, and therefore was not to be judged of by human prudence, but by the Spirit which alone could know the terror, of the Lord. He anticipated the judgment, and had been made manifest to God, and also he trusted to their consciences. This was the use in service which the apostle made of the solemn truth that all of us have to be manifested before the Bema of Christ. But, farther, the light of the resurrection-day had such a powerful effect on the soul of the apostle, that he would often appear to be acting extravagantly or inconsistently; but still he could say, “Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause; for the love of Christ constraineth us.” He labored as one who had already died, and therefore in a manner beyond the range of human thought. He knew no man after the flesh, and would not himself be manifested after the flesh. Everything was new to him, and he labored as it were in a new creation.

(Continued from p. 57.)

Chapter 131

Paul a Servant of Jesus Christ: Part 3

Beyond all this there was another most powerful principle at work in the soul of the apostle, and that was the so linking himself with God in His service, that he was not discouraged amidst the greatest trials. “And all things are of God.” It was God Who first reconciled him to Himself by Jesus Christ, and then gave to him the ministry of reconciliation. It was the ministry of reconciliation; and the minister of it was not to invest himself with the repulsiveness of God in judgment, but with the attractiveness of God in grace. He would put himself in the way of the patient grace of God, even according as God was exhibited in Christ. It was the incarnation which brought out all the bright effulgence of the divine character— “full of grace and truth.” It was thus He exhibited Himself in the world; but the world know Him not. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. But He is no longer exhibiting Himself personally in the world in this manner to the eyes of men. Man has rejected this manifestation of God, however he may try to hide from himself his shame (as the Jews did theirs of having killed the prophets by building their sepulchers), by celebrating the day of the incarnation. But God, though not personally thus present, is manifested in the same grace now; and where is He to be so seen? In the ministry of reconciliation— “and hath put in us the ministry of reconciliation.” It is in this ministry we see God yet in the world; not judging, not ordering it, but ministering to its wretchedness in the only way which would meet man's extreme necessity; that is, by the testimony to the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

Christ is now personally away; but on His behalf “we entreat, as though God did beseech by us.” God had stretched out His hands all the day long by His Son to a disobedient and gainsaying people; but after this was rejected, it was by the means of others on the ground of more marvelous grace. “We pray in Christ's stead be reconciled to God. For He hath made Him sin for us Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."!

But it was not only as in testimony to the grace of God, there was Jesus Himself in the lying exhibition of it. If the testimony was to the abounding grace of God in the cross, there were the apostles as crucified men, the offscouring of all things, giving power to the testimony by conformity to that humiliation of Jesus which they preached. This, I believe to be the meaning of chap. 6:1, not working together with God, as is supplied in our translation, but as working together with their own testimony—in consistency with it—that whilst their mouth expressed the truth, they might themselves be found walking in it. And then, well could they ask the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. There it was still in its fullest exhibition, able to meet all their wants, and to raise them up out of their sunken condition, It was still the season of acceptance: he puts them in mind of that, lest when they were awakened to a sense of their real state, they should be overwhelmed by the discovery of its evil. Their ease did not go beyond the reach of the ministry of reconciliation, and there was God exhibited. He feared to hinder this most blessed ministry: his own coming to Corinth with the rod might have hindered it, and therefore his conduct was regulated not by what man might judge fit and proper, but by ascertainment of the mind of Christ. “Giving no offense in anything that the ministry (the ministry of reconciliation) be not blamed, but in

all things approving ourselves as ministers of God—in much patience...by long-suffering... by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true...as dying and behold we live."

I do most assuredly believe the leading thought in these chapters to be the character of the service, corresponding to that of the grace ministered. It is not the laying before the church the dispensations of God as in the epistle to the Romans, or unfolding to it its own rich portion as in the Ephesians and Colossians. It is not argumentative as the epistle to the Galatians, but it is the working of that grace and truth in the soul of the apostle himself in service, of which he was the chosen witness. As he says, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." A great deal more to the same purpose might be noticed from the tenth chapter to the end, but I forbear to go further in this interesting subject except it be to present one trait of the servant most prominently set forth in the last chapter. It was a hard taunt indeed to be asked at Corinth, for a proof of Christ speaking in him, when they themselves were the mighty proof of it. But then, as it had been with the Master Himself to be in the eyes of men a worm and no man, so was the servant content to be. "For though he was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you." It was resurrection-power in which the apostle was strong, and everything that could make man appear glorious and powerful, was taken from him in order to manifest that his power was from above, not from man. But outwardly weak as he was, the fact of their believing was the proof of his power, for he it was who had ministered Christ to them. If they had proof of being Christians then had they proof of Christ speaking in him. This was the proof which satisfied the soul of the apostle; but if they sought others he had them ready, but he wished not to be put to the test. The best proof to him would be that "they did not evil" which might call forth severity; and he had rather by their well doing, still continue under the imputation of having put forth pretensions which were not made good, than make them good in their punishment.

Here is the servant hiding himself entirely that only He Whom he served might appear. Could the flesh do this? assuredly not. It was service in the Spirit, in the gospel of the Son, and therefore the pattern of all real service. And although as to outward hardship, we do not find the same trials now as in those days, yet, in all which arises from the church itself, the case is so sorrowful, that nothing but the deepest self-renunciation and self-abasement will at all enable us to serve in it, or lift us up above the painful pressure of present circumstances.

It is now high time to awake from ministerial ease. The Lord and the time are calling for energetic service. But it must be in endurance.— "I therefore endure all things for the elect's sake." With uncompromising faithfulness, no weapon must be used that is carnal—only those which are mighty through God. Well may the servant say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But it is not unprovided for. The Lord will still bless faithful service; and however little it may be crowned with present success, no labor in the Lord ever is in vain.

(Continued from p. 75.)

Chapter 132

Person and Deity of the Holy Ghost: Part 1

My Dear Sir,

I felt myself much drawn to you from the little intercourse we had on Sunday, so that the apprehension, as it grew upon me, of anything that might prove a necessary hindrance to further intercourse, I need not say, was painful to me.

I have since farther meditated on the subject that was then between us, and have committed the guidance of my mind upon it to the Lord; but I feel only more consumed in the judgment which I then had, and I have remembered the words of the apostle. “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.” I desire now to write a little on the subject, as I promised you.

I believe the glory of God as He is, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, might have been learned from the scriptures of the Old Testament. But I will instance only Isa. 6. There the Seraphim cry, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts!” The, New Testament scriptures show that Christ and the Holy Ghost might have been apprehended in the vision and audience, which the prophet then had: for, says John, referring to that chapter, “These things said Esaias, when, he saw His (i.e. Christ's) glory, and spake of Him.” And Paul; referring afterward to the same, says, “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers.” (See John 12:41; and Acts 28; 25.)

But I instance merely this place; for I have no design to go into the divine testimonies to this truth which might be derived from the Old Testament. But when the work of the, Son was “accomplished, and He had risen from the dead, and was about to depart unto the Father, the fall manifestation of God was made, for then the due time for this, had come; and the commission to the apostles was this: “Go ye; therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them onto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

And this was just the time, as I have observed (as doubtless everything in scripture is perfect), for the revelation of this glory. The work had now been done by the Son which had been given to Him by the Father to do; and the Holy Ghost was about to be sent down to make that work effectual in and to, the church. Therefore the saints were now to be brought into the knowledge of God, and baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son; and of the Holy Ghost.

But so likewise is the church blest in Him, the benediction pronounced upon the saints formally and fully running thus— “The grace, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.”

And from these things, if we had nothing further, we know Him “with whom we have to do,” to whose name we have been thus, baptized, and in whose grace, love, and communion, we thus have our life and blessing.

But there is much more than this. The scriptures of the New Testament throughout assume that which the form in baptism thus distinctly declares. There is not the constant repetition of the

already declared truth in a full formal manner; but there is the constant assumption of it, and the presenting of it in its moral power.

I will just instance the passages which, on the moment, without an effort occur to me.—

“For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18).

“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints” (1 Thess. 3:12, 13).

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2 Thess. 3:5).

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:2).

“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” (Titus 3:5).

In passages like these, the truth already declared in baptism is assumed and shown farther out in its moral power and relation to us: and we learn that as saints, we are vitally concerned in the actings of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And we are saints by thus knowing God (having fellowship with the power and grace of our God) through His own actings—the only way in which He ever can be known; for man's thoughts will never discover Him, and will therefore leave him but a worshipper of idols still. And this should teach the church of God that she dare not recognize any one who does not thus stand with her in the knowledge of God, to whose name we have been baptized, and with whose blessing we are blest. I am confining myself here rather to the doctrine of the word concerning the Holy Ghost; for that was the subject between us. We did not so much speak as to the Deity of the Lord Jesus.

As to the person of the Holy Ghost, I would then further say, that a full revelation of Him is made, not only in the Baptismal and Benedictory forms; but also, though in another manner, by our Lord to His apostles in John 14-16, and there, too, I would again say, in due time as we may thus see. When our Lord spake those words, it was just after He had told His disciples that He was about to be withdrawn from them. Such a declaration filled them (as it well might, for they had given up all companionship with Him, not as yet knowing Him in resurrection) with sorrow; and in these chapters He brings them the consolation. And the consolation He brings them was twofold.—

1st.—He tells them that His present departure was not final separation, but that He was going away only to prepare a place for them in the Father's house and that He would return and receive them to Himself. This was great consolation, but this was not all; for—

2nd.—He tells them that in the meanwhile, while He was thus absent from them, and abiding with the Father, He would send the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, to be with them, and that He would do wondrous and blessed service for them, such even as His own presence with them could never accomplish. What this promised service of the Holy Ghost for the church was, I will not here detail: it is graciously spread out before us in these chapters of John, as well as in the other scriptures of

the New Testament. But here it stood revealed by the Lord to His apostles, that the Holy Ghost was to be with them, and in them; when He Himself had returned, and was for a while with the Father. Such is the revelation of the person of the Holy Ghost to the saints, such the blessed promise from the departing Son of God, that the Spirit of truth should come to make effectual to their souls, the testimony which He the Son had given to the Father, and to seal upon their hearts all the life, and joy, and power of that calling, which had been prepared for them before the world was.

Here the church rests—here she abides in peaceful assured joy, knowing that God in all His fullness is for her, that her security depends on no creature strength, that God Himself began, did continue, and is now ending her salvation; that what in covenant had of old been planned for her, God manifest in flesh had wrought out, and God the Holy Ghost is now making effectual, to the joy of all who believe. This is the blessed way in Which, if I may so speak, scripture vindicates the Baptismal form; this is the way in which the name of God, there fully and formally published, is made known in life and power.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 133

Person and Deity of the Holy Ghost: Part 2

I would further say, that without this there would be the giving of God's glory to another. For not only is equal tumor required for the Son (John 5), but the Holy Ghost stands with the Father and the Son, as we have seen, in the work which is doing for poor sinners, the divine work of salvation. The subjection of the Son to the Father, and again of the Holy Ghost to the ascended and glorified Son of Man, is abundantly exhibited in scripture, and more than exhibited, for we are instructed in the need of these things. The. Lord says, “The Son can do nothing from Himself;” and again, speaking of the promised Comforter, “He shall not speak from Himself” (John 5:19; 16:13); both passages intimating distinctly these subjections. And we learn the need of this wondrous and blessed economy. What could have canceled the offense of Adam, the offense of a creature seeking to be as God? What could have preserved the honor of the throne of God while extending pardon to the seed of this Adam, but Jehovah's fellow being Himself smitten, and He that was in the form of God emptying himself? This we learn was the needed way in which God could be just and the justifier of sinners (Rom. 3).

And what power less than that of God could make the work effectual to us? Having begun in God, are we to be made perfect in the creature? He that has been sent to be with the church, while traveling here in weakness and patience during the dreary night of her Lord's absence, is the Spirit Himself the Lord, who during that night is sought unto and trusted into direct our “hear into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ.”

I know there may be perplexities in the thoughts of the saints at times on many of the great matters of revelation, and Satan is busy to corrupt, the mind from the simplicity that is in Christ. But his advantages are gained, because he finds, something in us. I am conscious of this. It is the god of the world that blinds the mind, it is the evil heart that departs from the living God. At the root of many of our difficulties there is a real, though it may be undetected, desire to keep God at a distance. Just (as has been observed by another), as with the children of Israel in the wilderness. It was not because the manna was not pleasant, for we are told it was as coriander seed, sweet as honey; but still they loathed it; and why? It came from the hand of God—it brought God too nigh to them. And in like manner, the world is at enmity with the doctrine of the cross; and why? It brings God too nigh to us; it brings Him to us in such an amazing light of love as overwhelms us; it is too much for the narrow heart of man; it rebukes his selfishness, and he seeks relief from it in the law of works. This is illustrated in the young man in Matt. 19. It was because he was covetous, that he was asking, “What good thing shall I do?” And so the Godhead of Him who now dwells in the church is a truth that in like manner brings God blessedly nigh to us.

I have not here so much spoken of the person of our Lord Jesus, because, as I have observed, this was not so much the subject of our conversation. But I would just observe, that the revelation of the Son, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in the Godhead, is made to us also in the baptismal form; and in that particular (as in the other which I have above considered) all subsequent scripture vindicates that form, assuming the truth therein contained, and showing out

its moral life and power. The work which the Lord has accomplished for the church, and the affections which the scriptures claim for Him from her, bring her before Him as God her Savior. Some speak of a subordinate deity, of God in an inferior order; but the church knows no such mythology, as indeed I cannot refrain from calling it. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and “the Son of God is come to give us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:20, 21).

But the church has also learned the subjection of the Son—that He said, in the volume of the book (in purpose, before the world was), “Lo, I come;” —that, like the voluntary servant in Israel (and how voluntary, if in any sense He had been debtor as an inferior?), He has had his ear bored for perpetual service (Ex. 21; Psa. 40; Isa. 1). Blessed be His name for such unsearchable riches of grace! But all this only verifies His true deity, and verifies the revelation that He stands with the Father and the Holy Ghost in that name which is God, unto which, to know, love, and worship Him, we have been baptized.

I do not desire, dear sir, to multiply thoughts needlessly on this subject, though (I confess to you) it is not grievous; for it is sweet occupation to go over and over again those ever blessed revelations of Him who is ours in purpose and everlasting love, who has displayed His full name to us. But my direct purpose now is to show you the grounds why I assuredly judge that the church of God must, in order to her fellowship, require a confession to the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This is God, because this is the revelation; for without revelation of Himself He is not to be known. No thought of ours will do anything more than (at their best) leave us refined idolaters. God must witness Himself to us; and that He has done in His actings for His saints in the work of their everlasting salvation; which actings have brought out to them that blessed One with Whom they have to do, in Whose name they have been baptized, with Whose blessing they are blest—Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

I would add here what I have omitted (for I have followed my thoughts very much, as I was led, without order), that the Holy Ghost is not personally put before us in the way that “the Father” and our Lord Jesus are in the New Testament generally. For the Holy Ghost is now in the church, the life of her worship, and the strength of her service; by His indwelling, He is making known to us the glory of the ascended Son (or His Lordship), and the Fatherly character and love of our God. Hence all the Epistles open somewhat in this way,” To the church... Grace, &c., from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” But in the Apocalypse, where the revelation was conveyed by the ministry of an angel, the salutation runs thus— “Grace be unto you, and peace from Him which is, and which was, and which is to some; and from the seven spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ the faithful Witness, the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.”

But I will not go farther, dear sir. I had thought to have sent you this on ——, but I have been unexpectedly interrupted. You will, I trust, believe that I have but the kindest thoughts towards you. You may judge me, after reading this, to be narrow-minded and bigoted, insisting on that which I have learned by tradition from my fathers. But I do pray that this may not be your last thought upon it, but that you may stand in the confession of the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with those who have, in every age of the Church since Jesus ascended and sent down the Holy Ghost,

approved themselves as the saints of God, and witnessed and lived for their Lord in this evil world, and who have gathered all their joy and strength for present service, and all their confidence and ground of hope for future rest and glory, from the blessed and gracious God who has thus revealed His full name to them, and given Himself to them and for them. Yours, very truly (in the remembrance that Jesus is my Lord),

J. G. B.

(Concluded from p. 255.)

Chapter 134

Philadelphia and Laodicea: Part 1

My task now is to show that the Lord Jesus had something much more definite in His mind than the ordinary profit that one may and ought to derive from the word of God, which is written for every believer. For instance, what was written in the Epistle of James, or in those of Peter, or in the Epistle to the Hebrews, or in any other of the Epistles of the New Testament, is all of God. I need not say that the Christian believes that every part of them is divine; that every word of them is profitable, and so intrinsically for all days, if we have not all the elements that men possessed by the church at the time they were written. At that time there were outward powers manifested; there were persons in the highest position of authority for rule as well as in revelation of the truth; which thing we do not possess at the present time. And one presumes that all persons of sobriety would acknowledge this. There may be shades of difference, and some may claim more as perpetuated at the present time; but, among sober Christians who may differ as to other things except that which is fundamental, there is no question that the apostolic church did possess not a little that does not exist at present. But all that is needful for the edifying of Christ's body—for God's service and worship—we have assured here in scripture itself, with the certainty that it abides till we all come to the unity of the faith.

Now, I claim for the scripture which has been read something more precise; for the Lord was here contemplating such a scene as is unrolled before the eye at the present time. There is no doubt that the churches existed when the Lord told John to write to the angel of each; there is no doubt that instructions were given at that time for each church, as well as the whole book which connected them with a great deal that followed the Epistles. But the contents of these Epistles in themselves, and very particularly the character of the book, show that the Lord had a larger view than any ordinary thing that was realized in the day of the apostle John; for it is entirely unusual to present Epistles as here in prophecy. If the Lord was pleased to give certain Epistles as a preface to the great prophetic book of the New Testament, there was clearly a distinct object in it, and I believe that object was twofold: first, to meet existing wants in John's day (and no doubt, in that point of view Epistles were sent to each of them, according to the instructions given to the apostle); and, secondly, to make those Epistles to be a vehicle of the widest instruction for days that had yet to come to pass. But now they are come. And the Lord has brought out the light of them, when we read the closing scene of these seven churches. They were all there when He originally gave them messages; but now they have come into being in the prophetic point of view. There is, however, a division to be made among them, which is of much consequence to lay hold of; and this is, that the first three were not permanent states. They wore passing ones. This is marked even outwardly by the fact that the call to hear changes its place at the fourth church.

But one need not go into this to demonstrate the character of the Epistles. All prove the same thing. For instance, mark the feature of the Epistle to the church at Ephesus. Of old it was a question of first love. This could only apply prophetically to the state of things which followed in the day of John, There never was a time when it could so aptly apply as then. They had the full grace and truth of the Lord brought out for them, and it they had abandoned, or were beginning to

abandon. They were letting in waves of vain thoughts—doctrines soon after—which altogether weakened their sense of Christ's love, and therefore of their own love to Him. They were relaxing from their first love. Evidently, this could not apply in the same precise manner afterward as then, and for the simple reason, that far more serious evils came up before the mind of the Lord.

Take again the second—Smyrna. It is plain that the heathen persecution is referred to. We know that this followed, that prison and death were used as engines against the church a little after the early days.

In the Epistle to Pergamos too we have the church of God establishing itself in a public manner in the Roman Empire; that is dwelling, as it is said, where Satan's throne was. Now, this could only apply then, and once, while other things of a much more serious import would afterward call for the notice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do these admit of repetition? In fact, there was no such thing of the same character of persecution. There is a persecution of Babylon; but that is brought before us a much later part of the Book of Revelation. The old heathen persecution assuredly could not be repeated after there ceased to be heathens within the bosom of Christendom. So, again, the church getting established in the world was not a question after it was established. We find her acquiring a place, a settling down, on earth. Afterward much greater abominations were seen.

It is exactly at this point that the Lord makes a most strikingly new feature enter into these churches; and what makes it to be of so solemn an import for us is, that it is His account of the permanent conditions that follow. Thyatira is the first one; and the only or chief reason for entering into this now is to give a greater, definiteness to what one has to say about Philadelphia and Laodicea: I want to show it is not the mere application of these letters, or that they illustrate truth by the past. There is much more than that. In fact they apply chiefly to what I am going to spread before you for our own spiritual judgment. At least; such is my conviction. But the word must be mixed with faith if it be really the mind of God to profit souls. It would not become me to speak so plainly and distinctly if I had not the firmest conviction, of the truth.

Thyatira is the first, then, in which there is the marked outward change referred. to. But there is a more remarkable characteristic than the call to hear. It is here, for the first time, that we have the Lord distinctly bringing in His coming again. That is, the Lord intimates to these that the state goes on till He comes again. It is not so with the first three. With Ephesus, the only, coming described is a providential coming, "or, else, I will come to thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place" and so with Pergamos, fighting with the sword of his mouth, but not His coming to receive the saints, nor yet to introduce His kingdom. Here it is in Thyatira for the first time; and, what is more, He introduces it in the body of the Epistle before the promise. See that which we have in the twenty-fifth verse of the second chapter: "That which ye have already hold fast till I come." The plain intimation is, that what He describes here goes on until He comes.

Now, this is evidently very much to be weighed, in order to have a sound judgment of these Epistles. When we look into that to Thyatira, it becomes still more manifest. Here we have that portentous personage Jezebel, the false prophetess. I do not mean that Thyatira is embodied in Jezebel; far from it. We shall find, on looking into it, there is a remarkable conjunction of opposites. In Thyatira both good and evil are brought together. But still here we have Jezebel. It is a, most apt

figure of that Popery which, I have no doubt, is also brought before us in the symbol of Babylon given much later. Here she is presented as a false prophetess. We know how thoroughly this represents the character of Popery: that is, her pretension to continuous inspiration, a claim to pronounce the voice of God on whatever point may come before her, is really setting herself above the written word of God, as if she alone had His living voice. We know that such a procedure always does set aside what is written.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 135

Philadelphia and Laodicea: Part 2

It is not altogether a peculiarity of Rome to indulge in a self-assertion which enfeebles scripture; but in Rome it takes its most determined and most pronounced form. Here then, first of all, we have Jezebel: “Thou sufferest that woman, Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants.” It is a striking fact that the Lord Jesus intimates that, in Thyatira, there were persons whom He characterized in the face of all drawbacks as “My servants.” And so it has always been. Not a few, there is every reason to believe, who were God-fearing had a conscience about the word of God, with a love for the Savior, that never really left Romanism; while, at the same time, there was still plainer the fact that they were stupefied by the acceptance of fleshly unity, and by the doings of Jezebel. There was thus a most painful issue, the alliance of those that were the Lord's with a system which, in itself, was the most cruel enemy of those that He loved.

This, then, is the first thing here called to your notice. It is a picture of the Middle Ages. We find that, if the Lord had His servants there, Jezebel had children not only then but later. There is a perpetuation of the evil race—a continuance of the same character of persons. Then, thirdly, and this may go along with the rest, there is another distinct feature, only found in connection with Thyatira, namely, a remnant; that which must neither be confounded with Jezebel's children on the one hand—nor with His servants on the other. Surely this, is a very remarkable state of things. And what demands all your attention is, that it was found here only for the first time, while it continues up to the present, day. That is, you have what may be called the Romanizing or Ultramontane school, the Papistical party, thoroughly determined in carrying out the system to the uttermost—Jezebel and her children; next, those whom the Lord called “My servants,” in the Middle Ages, such as St. Bernard, or, in later times, Pascal and Fenolon, if I may mention the names of such, down to M. Boos—saints who really had a moral abhorrence of what was enforced by Jezebel. Yet there they are, at the same time, all mixed up together.

But mark, contemporaneously, another party; which had its spring in those early times before Protestantism—the remnant or “the rest,” mentioned in Thyatira, as it is said, “As many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak.” Who are they? They are such, in my judgment, as the Waldenses, that is, a body of Christians who feared the Lord, though in ignorance, who lived before the days of the Reformation, yeti quite refused the wickedness of Rome, and who were, therefore, distinct from “My servants” found in and seduced by Rome. These rejected the overtures of the harlot, but, at the same time, they were more known for their practical godliness than for any clearness in the truth of God. They were exceedingly unintelligent, as we should call it. They but imperfectly understood even justification. Compared with the measure of the Reformation, they were far behind; and it is remarkable that they have remained ranch in the same state. They seem to have paid little attention to light from without, which is common in these days, of ours. Substantially they only retain their old attitude. They were, no doubt, undermined, abused, attacked by everything that either the power or wiles of Rome could do to destroy them. But there they abode in their secluded valleys, and there they are still, and I believe there they will remain till the Lord comes—not merging into Rome on the one hand,

nor Protestantism, nor fuller light on the other. They retain the peculiar place, which they had even before the Reformation. Here, then, is the picture; and I ask, Is it not striking that from the first the Lord should have so sketched it out? There is nothing like it previously; and nothing like it in what follows. It began at that time and no other; and let us always remember that this state of things goes on till the Lord comes.

Then in the next Epistle, we have a wholly different character. There is the absence of all the revolting features that were found in Thyatira, or even in Pergamos. Pergamos was what we may call the Catholic system; Thyatira brought in, the Romanist. The first was the exaltation of the church in the world; it was what far and wide prevailed before the Pope set forth his aspiring and worst pretensions. The empire had become Christian in name long before. Thyatira, as we have seen, gives us the Roman system, but with these remarkable features which we have just endeavored to indicate as predicted by our Lord.

But here, in Sardis, we know nothing of the persecuting or idolatrous queen. There is rather what we may call outwardly a respectable orthodoxy. One can understand how this came to pass when energy failed: a name to live, while ready to die. Sardis indicates what came after the Reformation. The Spirit of God does not describe that wonderful work as far as it went, the power which, in various lands separated souls from Rome. He gives us here the cold condition into which they settled down after form superseded the preaching of those stirring days: “These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that were ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.” And one understands readily why it was that death is so marked. It was the universal doctrine of all the Protestant bodies that, when souls are justified, they are put under the law as the rule to live by. Now, the necessary effect of this is the ministry of death, a most effective way to deal with a sinner to convince him of death. But the apostle, in the third chapter of 2 Corinthians sets forth a distinct contrast of the ministration of the Spirit, which is God's will about His people now, with the ministration of death under the law—that which was written and engraven on stones. As no man can deny this to be the law written by Moses, so he contrasts the two, and insists on it that the ministry, of the law has, its effect, death and condemnation.

Now the Lord here contemplates the result. It was indeed the inevitable effect of not going on, in the possession of life and acceptance of God, to walk in the Spirit as they lived in the Spirit. They attempted to embrace what was utterly incompatible; to put those born of God, and set free by His glace, on a common ground with the mass of men in all Protestant lands—that is, to bring in the whole population. Now the natural way in which this could be done was by the law; and the consequence was that, while the Lord might use the law in particular cases for the conviction of sin, the saints of God suffered irreparably. For the law provokes and condemns evil; it neither quickens, nor strengthens, nor justifies. Souls never enjoy settled peace; and the walk is as feeble as is the hold on God's grace. So He says: “I have not found thy works perfect.” There was an incompleteness about them. The savor of Christ was not there, life in Him being little known any more than full redemption. In fact the law displaced the Holy Ghost. “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” So the Lord threatens, because the Protestant bodies fell back on the power of the world. Every one of them

sought the patronage of the great. There were not any of them above thinking there was a mighty influence for good where there was an acquisition of worldly authority. And hence, therefore, it is that they were threatened by the Lord with the judgment which is to fall by-and-by on the world. The Lord, in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, brings it before the saints that He will come as a thief in the night, but not on the saints of God—they are distinguished: Christians have a different position from the world. In 1 Thess. 5 He threatens the thief-like coming; and this is the very thing that is repeated here. I scarce know a more solemn thought than that Sardis, having accepted the world to govern itself in the things of God, has the Lord speaking of His coming as He threatens it on the world itself. If men choose the world's power how can they escape the world's judgment? Such a choice is the less excusable if they boast an open Bible; and this is the prospect of Protestantism. The bright hope of the church is wholly wanting.

(Continued from p. 276)

Chapter 136

Philadelphia and Laodicea: Part 3

But now we come to another thing. And if it has been shown that Thyatira affords us a prophetic picture of what would be in the Middle Ages, and Sardis of what followed the Reformation, let me ask you to weigh before God, beloved friends, what the Lord means by the new and most singular testimony that is implied in the message to the church at Philadelphia. It is entirely different, not only from Romanism, and from everything that is found connected with Romanism, but not less distinct from the picture of Protestantism. What does the Lord mean? What in fact does He characterize by it?

The first notable feature is Himself—His own person—and His own person judging according to the truth; His own self so revealed as to act practically, to insist on genuineness, to allow no longer a mere acknowledgment of truth that was not carried out. He will have moral reality. This is what I think the Lord intimates in saying: “These things saith He that is holy, He that is true; He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.” He looks after all.

And when did the Lord distinctly thus work in Christendom? When did He make His own feel how useless it is to acknowledge truth that we do not live? When did He thus recall His saints back to His word, and to own the power of the Holy Ghost in making that word living? Where is this found We all know that there are those in Christendom that have set up for the Spirit of God without the word; and we are not ignorant of others who have set up for the word without the Spirit; and in both cases with results the most disastrous and withering. But where is it that the Lord has recalled His own to His word, insisting also on that sovereign place and liberty which is due to the Holy Ghost

It is freely granted that there is another thing calculated to cause distrust in connection with this, among the children of God—namely, mere assertion of the rights of the Holy Ghost. And for this reason, that the Holy Ghost is here to glorify Christ; and, therefore, if it were but the revival of long lost privileges of the church, there is only partial recovery here. If it were people seeking to set up the church again on its own foundation, we ought to hesitate, not as if it were not a right desire; but it is hardly a becoming aim in the present state of things. Ought we not also to feel its sin and ruin?

Supposing a man were to receive, for instance, the truth of the church of God in all its fullness of privilege and power, do you think, blessed as this is, that this alone—where the recognition of the church of God filled his soul—would make him an adequate witness of God at this moment? Very far from it indeed; not because the thing itself is not trite, but because alone it would be accompanied by high thoughts and hard measures. It would inflate the soul, and be no better than an utterly impracticable theory, too, as far as that goes.

Beloved friends, there are two things necessary—real faith in what the church of God is, as God, made it; and, along with this, the sense of the utter ruin that has come in. For such is the state of soul that suits the man who feels he is part of the ruin as well as of the church. And how are these conditions produced? Not by looking at the church only, but at Christ. And this is the very thing that

the Lord brings in here. It is the re-awakening of the heart to the place of Christ—to Christ as the Holy and the True. The effect then would be judgment of the present by the past—ah! how changed. Nothing is more needed than judgment of what man has made of it, by what God Himself set up in His own incomparable grace. There will then be no pretension to recover; no thought of setting up what once was, or rather no attempt, on a little scale, at what once was in all its fullness. This would be a denial of the rain of the church.

No; there is a true path for faith; but it is a lowly one. There is a path that uses what God has given, what is imperishable and unchangeable—what God always makes to be the portion of faith. But then, it is in the sense of deep dishonor done to Him, and the going out of the heart to every member of that body, with the patient waiting for Christ's coming.

Now, the only way in which this is wrought in the soul is by looking not at the church or the Holy Ghost either, but at Christ. Hence you will observe here that He brings in no powers of the Spirit of God; it is “He that is holy, He that is true.” I am sure there is a power deeper than miracles; but then it is a power that works morally. It is a power that effects self-judgment in the Christian, even as repentance is to the soul under conviction when being brought to God. “These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.” One may perfectly confide in His resources; He has got all under His hand. He opens; who shuts? He shuts: who opens? But the way in which He uses His power is to set before them the open door; and surely the man must be blind who does not own that it is precisely in this way that grace has been at work. Nor can one doubt that concurrently God has been working providentially in this way; for how often, while the Lord may exercise faith by difficulties, He also shows His own power by surmounting them all in a thousand different ways!

Thus there is nothing more ordinary in the way of God, than that He works in His own power providentially at the same time that the Holy Ghost; works morally. And so it is at this present time. There is the greatest possible indifferentism growing up, breaking down the barriers on all sides; and though man misuses grace for his own licentiousness, the Lord, in every sense of the word, sets before His saints an open door. It is not a question of preaching the gospel (one can understand the importance of it for the service of God); but the church does not preach any more than teach. We must not think of narrowing it to evangelization. In that respect there may be an open and an effectual door; but here it is an open door simply, by which one understands that the Lord makes clear the path in the midst of all obstacles—opening a way for what is for His own glory in the doing of His own will. Will any one maintain there ever was a moment since the church fell into disorder, when the Lord has made the “open door” a characteristic of His working so much as at the present moment? “I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut, it.” All mankind cannot open it; nor can all the power of Satan shut it. It is but for a little while. The Lord has opened the door to His people, and they are using it. They see the way clear before them, and they act on His grace. And the reason, too, is remarkable: “Thou hast a little strength.” He does not say so to Sardis or Thyatira. They might boast outwardly. Not so Philadelphia. And anything that takes us out of our weakness, anything strong, is incompatible with the mind of the Lord at the present time. Whatever is a seeking of greatness in any one way does not suit the testimony of the Lord or the church's state. “Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.”

I should like to put it to the conscience of any Christian person here, who doubts the soundness of what has been said, to answer me—Where do you find the word of Christ kept in any remarkable way? where do you find it treasured and carried out One might ask even the enemies of the Bible, whoever they may be, where that word is heard and prized in a way comparatively unexampled? Would any one say—without wishing to utter a word in disrespect of the Wesleyan—would any one say that it stamps that society? I do not care to be personal, and shall not go round the compass of the different Protestant bodies; but we ask any person who has a conscience, and who knows the facts of what God has been working, where they find Christ's word really kept. You may tell me of the extension of missions, and of the conversion of souls; and I do not deny it. Would to God there were far more zeal in spreading the gospel in foreign parts, and seeking the conversion of souls at home! But one asks, Where is it that you find the characteristic so marked, that, the Lord Who weighs all could say of them, “Thou hast kept My word?” Where is the reproach of bibliolatry cast most, if we may put it in another form? Where in Edinburgh, or in any place whatever you home around you, is this stigma to be seen?

Remark, that our Lord is not here speaking of the old bodies of the Middle Ages—that is to say, of Thyatira. We must leave them behind: it is not among such; nor, again, in the Protestantism of Sardis. It is a new nation of God, distinct from both. Where will you find, then, those that love the Lord—disclaiming any kind of kindred in an ecclesiastical way, with Romanism and Protestantism—who are content with Christ in His moral glory, and characterized by keeping His word here below.

But there is another thing. They are described as not denying the power of that name—His name as a center. That name is one that must not be slighted. It is the resource for all difficulties from forgiving sin to the dealing with every kind of need. It is the only name of holy power; and, for this very reason, a name of unfailing avail in dealing with what is contrary to God in the way of false doctrine or unholiness. Where is it that there are children of God who love to confide in it, to gather round it, knowing what it is to trust it? Where then must we look for those to whom the Lord says distinctively— “Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name?” It is not for me to say where they are. It is for you to find them out. And may the Lord give you to prayerfully search before you settle the question! For you ought to know well that no one here wishes to urge anything that does not commend itself to the conscience of the children of God. Christ's word and name concern them most nearly; and He assuredly speaks of those who cleave to both.

I should not, on any consideration, be here to speak of a party interest, or some object of man upon earth. Such aims must be always low and unworthy of those that, having Christ for their life and righteousness, are looking for Him to come, and know He is coming quickly. But here is His intimation of a peculiar blessedness. Let it be yours and mine not to let slip this grace! Is this presumption? It is rather faith, which unbelief counts presumption. How much there is on the contrary to judge us in the words the Lord has addressed to us! I wish to show that these words concern you and every one of us here; and I cannot but say, that these words are either true of us as Christians, or they are not. If they are not, it is serious for us, for we are not in the current of what the Lord values most at this moment; if they are, blessed are we. Blessed are those that do the truth—wretched such as know and do it not.

But let us follow what He says: “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” Now it is remarkable that, at the very time when the Lord is making this special testimony, Satan has been forming counter testimonies. Take, for instances, the outbursts of Tractarianism, Irvingism, Mormonism, Christadelphianism, and I know not what—those enormous and frightful evils growing up so rank and luxuriant at this present time. What are they? Devices in order to bring discredit on the action of the Spirit of God according to the word. When the Lord is thus calling out and forming for Himself according to His own glory, the enemy would distract by novelties, or keep fast in the darkness of antiquity. But even the stoutest of them shall be compelled to acknowledge— “I have loved thee.” He will at length vindicate His own grace.

But turn we to the words, that follow: “Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come on all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth.”

Now, I ask, how could such a promise affect a person looking for the progress of Christendom and the improvement of society, who was looking for all things to advance gradually, and improve on the whole? who thinks that the heathen are to be converted, and the present evils that afflict Christendom to be all expelled? Why, it would have no force at all. But take now the other side. To those who know that the hour is approaching—that hour of deceit as well as tribulation, who know that Satan is to be allowed a special power for a little season, who know that we are on the eve of what, when restraint is gone, will work both in a seductive and in a destructive way, how blessed to have His own voice saying, “Because thou hast kept the word of My patience!” Christ's patience is sweet and good for the people that are despised and scorned. As He waits to come, so they wait for His coming. They have communion with Him about it.

Let me ask again, Where are those found that are, as a whole, waiting for the coming of the Lord? Wishing not to be invidious, I put it to the conscience of any intelligent person, even of those who are opponents, where are the Christians that, as a whole, ever look for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? That such are meant here, can scarce be denied. Do not imagine that great things are said of a particular position. It is a sorrowful fact, that those enjoying the most blessed privileges, if they prove unfaithful or turn aside, become the bitterest enemies. None will be keener to oppose. So it must be with a bad conscience, which has turned such away from what was once the deepest enjoyment. They affect to despise and deny what they once appreciated. It is the enemy which produces this fearful change. None become such restless antagonists of what the Lord is doing. No! it is somewhat to make good in faith, nothing to boast of. And the Lord says, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience” (remember it may be given up if not kept), “I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come on all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth.” Thus, those who keep the word of His patience are a people not settled down on the earth, but who, unknown by the world as Christ was, desire to walk by faith and in grace, as becomes persons united to Him Who is heavenly. They are heavenly, and wait to bear His image shortly, purifying themselves as He is pure, But who would value this promise, except those keeping the word of His patience?

Mark the further words, “I come quickly.” Blessed, indeed, is this for those that are waiting, for those that watch, for those that with joy welcome Him. Mark this also; it is only now, for the first time, so brought before any of these churches. Surely there is something significant in this fact: we have perhaps looked over these messages vaguely, and might have imagined it elsewhere. But here only it is thus. The Lord did give promises that referred to His coming, as for instance to Thyatira, and a solemn warning again to the church-world of Sardis. Here is quite another thing occurring, before the promise comes. And why so? Because it is a part of their spiritual life, and spring of their constant heavenly hope. The Lord, therefore, refers to it graciously as a thing that occupies their heart. He could not have given a word of sweeter comfort to those who enter into His patience. He says, (not, Behold) “I come quickly.”

But there is another word: “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” How little others understand your weakness and mine? Some are perhaps reputed so firm in convictions and ways, that it is useless to say a word to them. Oh! how little people believe that none require such sustenance of grace as those who are exposed to the difficulties we know every day. I should say, that if there are any apt to be swayed to and fro, and peculiarly open to be assailed by the enemy, if any exposed to danger in every shape, it is those who, abjuring forms, need the direct power of the Spirit of God to keep—in obedience and hope. Hence you can understand how needed is the admonition in the Lord's message, “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

(Continued from p. 287.)

Chapter 137

Philadelphia and Laodicea: Part 4

Let me tell those, if there are any here, that know what it is to be separate to Christ in every-day walk, who, without setting up to be, we Philadelphians in the reality of faith, who really and humbly are standing on that ground, not merely in name and desire but in truth before God—let me say this to them: Trifle not with it, suppose not that you have got a lease in perpetuity, or that you have any such insurance as would preserve you against the wiles Satan is seeking to ensnare you by. I grant that the grace of the Lord has not called you out for nothing, and that He means to have a testimony kept alive till He comes. We believe there is now such a thing as Philadelphia, to go on till the Lord comes. If proud, you will be swept away; and if cherishing what is of flesh—what belongs to the objects of men, and not of Christ—you will learn, that, far from having prospered in such license, on the contrary this very thing will bring the judgment of the Lord on you. “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” The crown will be there, the crown is sure; but it does not follow that the same soul will have it. The men may change, but the crown will be conferred. For the Lord will set aside the haughty, and exalt the humble; and He can gather those who might seem far off—the very persons who will be found faithful when He comes to receive us to Himself

I therefore desire to submit my own conscience and heart to this test. I also press on you, believing it a most serious thing to flatter ourselves as to any position, simply because we are here, and happily so, as we have been mercifully kept hitherto. Let us remember that faith dries up when it ceases to be dependent on the Lord, and becomes an outward creedism. On the contrary, it is then a source of the most imminent danger. Let us rejoice, but go on in dependence on that grace which, having called us out, alone can keep us: “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” The Lord could easily set aside those who pique themselves on their knowledge, and form from the stones, to take their place, truer children of Abraham. Let us beware, lest in any way we presume on position instead of depending on Himself.

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out.” This seems contra-distinguished from the open door. It is supposed that there is a going out of heart now: assuredly a person whose heart does not go out in love is unworthy of the Lord, and does not understand what He is calling him out for. For beyond question, one of its most distinctive qualities is this very thing, this open-door exercise of heart. It is not merely the entertaining and making use of what the Lord gives for yourselves; but as witnesses of His grace and truth, the heart going out towards all that are His, as well as towards those, who know Him not. It does not matter what their state of ignorance or need may be. Nay, to tell the truth, why should one mind persons who speak hardly of those they misapprehend? It is small on our part to think too much of it. The path of faith must be unintelligible to those who are outside it. How could such a. place as this seriously interest the men of Sardis or Thyatira, or those of whom I have to speak in closing—Laodicea?

Holding in mind what I have said of those things, and of the forms in which the testimony, more or less according to God's mind, has been found in Christendom, beginning, one after the other, but continuing from Thyatira to the end, we see that it is an extremely serious thing for Laodicea. Do not suppose that Philadelphia turns into Laodicea. This is a false thought altogether. That there are persons who once in Philadelphia, become active in Laodicea, one can well believe. It must always be that the corruption of the best things is the worst. No doubt there is a moral link in that fearful collapse. The Lord takes Laodicea as compared with Philadelphia. There is a thorough contrast, and this in all points. But then it is not true that the one falls into the other. After Laodicea begins, they co-exist. It is to lose sight of what has been remarked, that they begin, like the rest, successively; but they are also contemporaneous states that go on till the Lord comes. So with Philadelphia and Laodicea.

But we, for a little, would look at Laodicea; and here we have what is more offensive than in Sardis, or even in Thyatira. There may not be that which looks so gross; and there is that which is truly doomed to destruction in Thyatira-Jezebel and her children for instance. This may not be so with Laodicea. But still there is a most repulsive character in Laodicea. With what exceeding disgust does not Christ mention it? I am anxious to show that this is the danger, the special danger, of the present moment. Christians in general do not go back to Sardis or Thyatira; but who will warrant against Laodicea? This is what we have to beware of. Laodicea is growing up rapidly. If Philadelphia is characterized as making the object in everything, here self-complacency and indifference to His glory govern. There is plenty of knowledge if not of truth; for there is a great difference between the two. They are rich, and increased with, goods. Where did they get them? They were never given in the grace of God, but borrowed or stolen. They were truths that others had got fresh from God's word. Here they are used for man's exaltation, and hence quite apart from conscience, and so without Christ. They, therefore, minister to self-complacency, and soon produce painful results, yet a certain appearance which satisfies the mind. There is nothing new you can tell them: they know it already. Truth has no power, because Christ is not the object first of all, and knowledge is not used for His glory afterward.

And this is the reason why I think it is a destructive principle—the bringing of mere intelligence, as it is called, into the fore-ground, in the base of a soul that comes before us. In sober truth persons who make each a point of intelligence about souls do much to damage them. But more, can those who do so be really intelligent themselves? It is then unfortunate on both sides. For the truth of it is, that you cannot get true intelligence apart from obedience; and, if you could get it apparently, is it worth having? The only thing that seems to be desirable, or of the Spirit of God, is a little light acted upon leading on to more; and this, beloved friends, found in the place that is according to God. And, therefore, it is sorrowful indeed when undue moment is given to knowledge. Suppose a person is not in fellowship, and wants to understand all about the nature of the church before he comes, and it is thought he will not make a good brother unless he be first intelligent ecclesiastically, the whole principle seems false from beginning to end, a mere substitution of knowledge for Christ.

For according to my observation the best men who have grown up into the truth of God are those who, many of us can remember, were unintelligent enough when they came in; and the men who complain, are they intelligent now?

Supposing the case of Christians seeking fellowship; some may object to a sort of back bench for catechumens, whereas you want them to understand about the church and the Spirit before they are received: how are they to get this? What are they about and where, while it is to go on? Perhaps they feel a certain need of remembering the Lord, and they are accustomed to do so. But they must not yet be received! they are not intelligent enough, it appears. Are they meanwhile to drift into churches and chapels in order to get intelligence? Is not the whole notion in every way wrong, and, what is worst, contrary to the word of God. For it is plain that, for the most part, persons will not leave denominations unless they have a substantial ground of attraction in the Lord. For more you can hardly look at first. But there is enough in them to discern what is according to God; and far better act on Christ's title than keep them out shivering in the cold. Receive them and welcome them as members of the body, of Christ. Of course, there may be a question whether they are His, and there can scarce be too much care here; but it is in the true place, according to God, that truth is divinely learned. There may be value for Christ before, just enough to attract them; yet do not look for knowledge first, but fidelity to Christ. Be sure they know the Father.

Have you not known persons in fellowship, who talked exceeding strongly of their ecclesiastical principle, yet let all principle go to the winds when something crossed their will? I have known tried and feeble souls who came in, attracted by the savor of Christ they found as nowhere else, and these grew up in the truth, and stood firm and true, whilst your intelligent persons fell away to nothing. Have no confidence in anything but the name of Christ. And when it is really Christ Himself, the grace and truth found in Him, it is found strongest, and ministers grace to the soul when acted on obediently.

Thus, it is a real evil to souls and far from Christ, when an undue place is given to intelligence. This is the material to build up Laodicea and not Philadelphia. “Rich and increased with goods,” is exactly what results, and it is repulsive to the Lord, Who says, “I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see.” Is not this solemn? Where is now the place given to mere knowledge—not Christ, nor truth, but knowledge? These riches in the way of goods were acquired. There was a total absence of living truth, even as to the fundamentals of Christianity, so much so that people constantly apply this to unconverted men; and it looks like it. Gold, that is, divine righteousness, white raiment or practical righteousness, and eyesalve, the power of divine discernment, are the very things that ought to characterize simple Christian men from their start; but there is a total absence of the needful, and the Lord counsels them to buy.

There is more too. After mentioning His rebuke and chastening of those He loves, He calls them to be zealous and to repent, saying, “Behold I stand at the door.” It is not now the open door but the shut one. “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.” For the same reason, it is a text applied or misapplied rather in the preaching of the gospel. But this shows the widespread latitudinarianism which grows up through the misuse of Philadelphian testimony. It is, the state of things for people

who are not satisfied with any Protestant body, nor perhaps with anything of the Catholic kind, but have not got the faith to go forth without the camp to Christ only, to keep His word, and not deny His name. They think they can get the truth without the cost, hate exclusivism, decry brethrenism, love nothingarianism, and keep a place of respectability in the world. Laodicea is the consequence, and the moral state that ensues on this is a total enfeebling—I will not say of the church, nor yet understanding of the heavenly glory of Christ but even—of God's gospel. Oh! is it not solemn? “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” So the very elements of what a sinful man wants for his soul is what these Laodiceans inflated with the idea of knowledge and privilege, need at the last; the Lord brings before them this humbling testimony. Such is the result of man's self-complacent misuse of the truth God gave in His grace.

Let us mark the closing scene: we are on the verge of it. Let us, therefore, look to the Lord, for I am persuaded there is very imminent and increasing danger. No doubt there is the blessed hope that He is coming, and coming quickly. There is the grace that keeps us, if we look to Christ as the object of our souls: there is no other which does not lead astray. And I would press this on you, that the very fact of our indulging in any confidence in position will be found, not only a total failure, but a delusion and a snare. The result will surely be that these things will not stand the day of trial—the fatal leap will be taken. Laodicea is the new title of neutrality or indifferentism growing up rapidly around us at this moment. There is on one side what is of man, on the other what is of God; and the Lord introduces all that and more in this most affecting picture of the end of Christendom. Oh! may there be grace and power to deliver, and set souls in perfect freedom to worship and serve Him. May the Lord give us, cleaving to Him, first and last in fellowship with His Son, also to be found simple and earnest in our desires to make known His name. If there are those who leave Philadelphia for Laodicea, there may be others gathered to Christ out of that which is most offensive and nauseous.

Chapter 138

Philemon: Part 1

There are two ways in which truth is presented to us, didactically, and in the living exhibition of it. There may indeed be a certain admiration of the character in which truth is embodied, without perceiving that it is the truth which molds the character. But for the most part we are much readier at learning truth didactically, than as presented to us livingly. In the one case it is often the mere exercise of the mind; in the other the affections are almost necessarily engaged. It is not however my intention to institute any comparison between the relative value of these two ways. God has been pleased to use them both; and it is generally found that where there has been the setting aside of doctrinal truth (because it has been systematically held by some, and severed from the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the great doctrine of God), there has been instability.

But it is exceedingly delightful to witness the progress of one who, having received the truth doctrinally, is led to connect it with Jesus in his own soul. The purpose of God, and all that flows from it, still have their proper place in his soul. He does not deny, but most fully avows, all the truth contained in the most rigid doctrinal statement. The electing love of God, His effectual calling, His predestination to sonship, the indefectibility of grace and perseverance of the saints, are no longer to him so many abstract truths, but become embodied in his own soul by the known character of God in redemption. It is thus the soul is delivered from questioning and debating about such points; it assumes them because it knows God; and it is this acquaintance with God which gives real peace. I believe that even the recognition of one's own personal election fails in giving peace, apart from the character of God revealed as love. There are jealousies and suspicions in the soul, as to God, even where the truth is most distinctly apprehended doctrinally, until God's perfect love as revealed in Jesus casts out all fear. There is no real boldness (doctrine never gives it) until we know that God's love has made us, even in this world, as Jesus is before Him in heaven. This is the result of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, to every one that believeth.

And such a knowledge of God as this is being eternal life, we find the soul unconsciously acting on, and out, those very doctrines which it had previously acknowledged as truth. But now they have become, as it were, its life and existence, and therefore without being mentioned are continually being confessed. It is surprising how much is necessarily assumed, when once God is known by the soul in the relationship of Father. Many a babe who has been brought to know Him as such through faith in Jesus, although he might be for a moment stumbled at a systematic presentation of the doctrines of grace, will be found to have the elements of them all in his own soul. As born of God, he really lives and moves and has his being in Him, and instead of questioning about God is happily living in Him. When this is the case, there is a beautiful ease in Christianity—it is not effort, it is life. And the true grace of God is as much traced in a precept as in a promise, because the precept assumes redemption and a new relation to God. The precept could only suit one placed in a particular relation. For example, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,” assumes the knowledge of complete redemption: the soul is set completely at rest about itself, before it can possibly seek to carry out the precept; and

in carrying it out is only learning more of the length and breadth and depth of the love of God. And thus we become practically acquainted with the grace of God, every step we are seeking to take in obedience to His will.

Now I believe that many parts of Scripture are neglected or slighted, because they do not appear to bear on doctrinal truth, while they are the exhibition of that very truth in living power. One such part of scripture is the Epistle to Philemon. It does not contain a single doctrinal statement, and yet could only have been written by one whose very soul had embraced the whole doctrine of Christ, so that his life and thoughts were all expressive of it. It ought to be matter of great thankfulness on our part to our gracious God, that He has chosen such engaging ways to bring His blessed truth to bear on our souls. And I would earnestly desire, whilst seeking to trace the mind of Christ in the apostle Paul writing to Philemon, that we might have fellowship with him in it.

In the Lord Jesus personally, we see the whole truth embodied and livingly presented: He is the truth. In the apostle we see the blessed result of communion with the truth, and the presentation of the mind of Christ. This is our portion. “We have the mind of Christ.” It is this which makes us know how we ought to walk so as to please God. The rule of Christian conduct is not “I say unto my servant Go, and he goeth,” without knowing the reason of the command; but it is the ability to recognize the propriety of the command itself as suitable to the condition in which we are placed, and therefore the obedience of the Christian is intelligent obedience. He is led of the Spirit, and this too in those very things which are most opposed to all that is natural. God, with all the power to command, treats us as friends; He informs us and shows us what would be well-pleasing unto Him, and thus we have fellowship with Him in carrying out His will into obedience, which we could not have had if He dealt with us as servants. But I would now turn for illustration of these things to Paul's Epistle to Philemon.

The salutation or address, brief as it is, contains in it the substance of the Epistle. It is all so pertinent to the subject on the mind of the apostle, that one might be led to think there was studied art in it. But I believe that no artificial arrangement can ever come up to the simple expression of the mind of Christ. And all the beauties of the sacred writers have not arisen from any studied composition, but are the necessary result of inspiration—the Spirit expressing by them the subject which He fully knew, and was therefore fully competent to teach. But to return to the address of the Epistle. We have Paul a prisoner of Jesus Christ; Timothy, a brother; Philemon, one dearly beloved, and a fellow-laborer with the apostle; Apphia, the beloved: and Archippus, Paul's fellow-soldier. Now the mention of all these names is expressive of fellowship: those who had no natural fellowship one with the other, nothing in common one with the other, strangers in country, in habit, in language, had now by union with Christ, common relationship, common affections, common service, common warfare. Here is the wondrous power of the cross it not only brings the soul into peace with God, as Seeing His love to a sinner therein expressed, even in the judgment of that sin which would hinder fellowship with Him, but it brings men of the most opposite character, and most different condition in this life, into oneness also. How fully must the soul of the apostle in writing this address, have known nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified! He saw in the cross an end of all those distinctions which separate man from man; and a new union with a new head in a new creation in the resurrection. This true doctrine of the cross we need to know—this Paul would have Philemon to know. That the very same power which had slain the enmity between Paul a Jew, and Philemon a Gentile, “making them one new man, making peace,”

the very same power by which they were engaged in the same work, would be sufficient to make peace between Philemon and his slave Onesimus, to give them a oneness of interest, affection, and service, which they had never had before. I need hardly state that this is the true doctrine of Christ as expressed in Eph. 2:13-22. There indeed it is stated in its largest principle, that God had introduced a power by which even the partition wall, which He Himself had placed between Jew and Gentile, was broken down, and they, so contrary the one to the other, brought into amity, not by the Jew becoming a Gentile, nor the Gentile a Jew, but by the twain becoming a new man in Christ Jesus.

I would not omit here to notice the mention of “the church in thy house,” as in strict keeping with the Whole subject. The church is the household of God; and how very blessed to have a small household here conformed to God's great household. Now Philemon and Archippus, who once had been far off from God, had now by the blood of Christ been brought nigh, and standing before God in Him, had become of the household of God. There was no difference before God on account Of their relative conditions here, in Christ Jesus theta is neither bond nor free. With what propriety therefore is the church in the house mentioned here, as that which would lead Philemon immediately to see the blessedness of receiving Onesimus in brotherly love, and regarding him of the household of God, and therefore of the church in his house. But if we enter a little more into detail, I think we shall be able to trace more of the living grace which is in Christ Jesus, for us, as well as the apostle Paul. “Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus” — “a prisoner!” why not an apostle? Surely he was one, and could not give up the title and office, however grace might lead him to do that which his Master had done, that he might bring sinners to God, and lead on saints into obedience by love. His authority he most clearly asserts— “Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which was convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” Paul dared not give up his authority as an apostle—he was responsible for its exercise to Him Whose servant He was. When the occasion came, he could use sharpness. But though the relation in which Paul stood in the church to Philemon was most distinct, yet his soul was resting much more on that which he had in common with Philemon than on that which distinguished them.

It was thus too, he would teach Philemon by his own example, how he should act towards Onesimus: their relation was that of master and slave, and the gospel did not the least alter it. Philemon was responsible as a master to his Master in heaven; but yet there was open to Philemon the she wing forth of the grace of the apostle, or rather of the Lord Himself, who never could altar by any humiliation that which He essentially was; but was enabled by it to bring to bear on the soul, that which otherwise He never could have done—His own gracious example. “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for So I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.” For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” It is the joy of the heart of the Lord Jesus Himself to place Himself in that posture in which He can bring us in to share His own blessings with Himself. As Lord of all, He stands alone, and above us all; and this He cannot give up, for it would be the denial of Himself. But when He has all authority to command as Lord (and this is speedily to be revealed), He has, as humbled, been pleased to give us an example that we should follow His steps. He delights to come down to our level, in order to exalt us to His own glory. This is the way of grace. It would have been no grace in the Lord Jesus, had He not been an equal with God, to

have made Himself of no reputation, and taken on Him the form of a servant, became the highest created intelligence is but a servant. But grace is God's Ability of preserving His own character, when He is not demanding of us His own rights; although He can never waive those rights. And the wonder of redemption is, that without any demand on the part of God on us, it shows us all His claims most amply satisfied— “a just God and a Savior.” Paul therefore could hot widen his apostleship, but it was open to him to act in grace, and to take his stand on that which he had in common with Philemon and the whole church—brotherhood in Christ Jesus. And here instead of authoritative command, he could “beseech.” And then with the full recognition of the relation in which Philemon stood to Onesimus, which Paul had no power to dissolve, although he might have enjoined what was “convenient,” he leaves Philemon in the place of exercising grace, and of taking his stand with Onesimus in the common brotherhood, valuing this new relationship above the old one, although that still continued. It is important to remark how our gracious Lord constantly affords us opportunities of showing grace. It is rarely that He addresses us in the tone of authoritative command, saying, “Go,” “Do this;” but it is, “here is my mind,” go and carry it out as far as you can—and every one that is perfect shall be as His Master.

Nothing more destructive of the gospel, than to assert a common brotherhood, apart from that grace of God which has given it, and that living grace in which it is to be carried out. It has not pleased God in giving to us a new and eternal, relationship, to alter our relative conditions whilst we are in the world. He allows the world to go on as it is, and does not interfere with its regulations now for the sake even of His own dear children. Paul continues high in the church as an apostle, Philemon continues a master, and Onesimus a slave, though God had made them one in Christ Jesus, Who by His blood had washed them from their sins, and made Onesimus as well as Paul, a king and a priest unto God and his Father. It would not have been grace in Onesimus, because he was a brother and an heir of God and joint-heir of Christ, to say he was no longer a slave. Neither would it have been grace in Philemon, because he was his master, to refuse to acknowledge Onesimus as a brother. It was the Lord Who had made him such, and it should have been the joy of the heart of Philemon to receive him as such. But it was left to Philemon to show how far his soul estimated his standing in Christ above any circumstantial difference of condition here. And therefore says the apostle, “that you might receive him forever, not now as a slave, but above a slave, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee both in the flesh and in the Lord.” Now I fully believe that any attempt to exhibit Christian brotherhood, apart from individual and personal grace, as that which alone can sustain it, must be most mischievous, and in the end lead to confusion and disorder if not to practical atheism. Men see by their natural understandings that there is a common brotherhood recognized in the New Testament; they assert it as if it were of nature, not of grace, and use it to the subversion even of the authority of God Himself. It is the very essence of lawlessness, to make that which is the blessed result of the riches of God's grace to be the natural right of man. It is this use of the blessed gospel itself which produces the worst form of evil—such as we see characterized by the apostles Jude and Peter.

God has not placed His children here to assert their rights. He has saved them according to His own mercy and grace, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; and He leaves them here to learn obedience to Him in all things. It is in our several relations one to the other, that obedience to God is manifested, and the grace of which we have been partakers shown forth. If Onesimus had demanded as a matter of right, to be received as a brother, there would not

have been given to Philemon an opportunity of skewing grace to him, and loving obedience to God. How beautifully does grace keep everything in its right place—surely it must do so, for it maintains the character of God. It is in us alway self-denial, never self-exaltation and it is equally shown in Onesimus, yielding all willing service, as in Philemon, not exacting it.

But still to return to the salutation— “Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” In this he showed Philemon two things: first, that he was a sufferer, and not one who had maintained his place in the world by his confession of Christ; secondly, that all the irksomeness of his prison was removed, by his ability to see that men were only the hand of the Lord, so that he was content to be there, for he was the Lord's prisoner. And when he comes to the special point of his writing to Philemon, he then presents himself “such a one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.”

And what had Paul the aged been learning in his long course? The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; and his claim on Philemon is not the authority he might have used, but his experience of the blessedness of the ways of grace in his own soul, and his present suffering for preaching the gospel of that grace to Philemon and other Gentiles (compare Eph. 3:1). But just as he was content to be in bonds, because he was the Lord's prisoner, so was he delighted to recognize those bonds in which Philemon was eternally one with him. Speaking of Onesimus, he says, “whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel.” Here is the very mind of Christ. He (Jesus) was content to suffer alone, and for us; He called none in to share all that He had to do in atonement: none could have stood with Him in that. But what was the end of it, but that we might be united to Him in eternal bonds? And the present end of this union is ministry to Him, in the person of His saints, and confession of Him in the world which has shut Him out. Paul stood forth as the elect vessel to bear the name of Jesus. He speaks it to the credit of one, he “was not ashamed of my chain” (2 Tim. 1:16).

Here then was the opportunity for Philemon to show that, notwithstanding the degradation of Paul 3n the eyes of men—a prisoner, yet he reckoned him as the choicest servant of the Lord, and his present condition would only render his obedience more prompt. But how deeply must his soul have tasted of the spirit of Christ, whose obedience was always both willing and intelligent, when he says, “but without thy mind I would do nothing, that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly!” “The Lord loveth a cheerful giver.” He delights that our obedience should be intelligent and willing. How gracious is this—how unlike the hard master and austere man that our foolish and wicked hearts are ever disposed to believe Him to be! He shows us His own gracious ways; He informs our understandings and makes us to see the fitness of that which He desires, so that walking in the Spirit is going along with the Lord in the path which He points out. And although it must really be constant death to the flesh, and therefore constant suffering, yet in the intelligence of the new man we can say, “His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace.” “Not of necessity,” —how often do our poor hearts ask, Is it necessary? must it be done? He does not address us in that way, though He cannot deny His Lordship, but He shows us what is convenient, and we have the renewed mind to discern it; and He tells us what is pleasing to Him, that He may engage our affections, and then, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.”

How deeply must that soul have known of fellowship with Christ, which could thus say, “not of necessity;” and how little do our souls know of His grace when we are putting our obedience on the principle of duty, instead of seeing it as the development of the life within us! It was the life in

union with Christ, which Paul knew to be in Philemon, which he sought to actuate; and then obedience would be willing, natural, and easy. There is always, if I may use the expression, an awkwardness in Christian conduct when it proceeds from necessity—it is like being turned out of one's way, instead of walking in the Spirit. How needful then for deep personal intercourse with the Lord Himself, that we may know His thoughts, and learn His ways! And then obedience, though learned in suffering, will be willing obedience.

But there is a little point further to notice, and it is just where discipleship turns: there may be things, and there are many, which Jesus as Lord does not command, but yet which as Master He teaches. I believe the greater part of inconsistencies are justified on the principle that they are not forbidden, or that a particular line of conduct is not systematically laid down in the word. The apostle says; “that thy benefit (thy good thing, verse 6) might not be of necessity.” Now I believe that a great many of the good works, by which the gospel is adorned, are not pressed on us by positive commandment, but are learned in the school of Christ; for He is our one Master, and we are His disciples. The Lord and servant are correlatives, and so are Master and disciple: every one that is perfect shall be as his Master.

Chapter 139

Philemon: Part 2

There is one thing more to notice in “Paul a prisoner of Jesus Christ,” and that is, how his soul was led out into practical fellowship with others in like circumstances.

There is nothing more blessed than the thought that Jesus is able to throw Himself into our individual circumstances: He was in prison with Paul. He could as easily have delivered him out of prison as He had Peter. But He had rather have fellowship with him in prison, and there make him the depository of His deepest thoughts. It was the prison, not the active journeying, to which (instrumentally) we are indebted for the deep revelations of the mind of God in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. And so it was in a lower degree with Paul and Epaphras—the prison deepened their fellowship one with the other. “There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus.” And may we not justly conclude that it was such fellowship, both with the Lord Himself and His devoted servant, that led Epaphras into that blessed service for the Church of Colosse; which is mentioned in the Epistle? “Epaphras who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” If there were deeper fellowship with the Father and the Son, and more real fellowship of the saints, surely there would now be more of the effectual labor of Epaphras; and when did the church ever stand more in need of such laborers?

The next part of the salutation is “Timothy our brother.” Philemon had not fellowship with Paul as a prisoner; but here comes in the link, “our brother” connects him both with Paul and Timothy; and if the Lord of all is not ashamed to call us brethren, how will it delight the soul of His servant to put Himself on this standing, wherein He was one with every saint! That word “fellowship” —what a blessed word it is? All that is common to us one with the other, as one with Him. God delights to communicate, and to share with us that which He communicates; and grace would do the same. But man would always stand on that which is peculiar. It seems to me that the way in which the apostle brings as it were the soul of Philemon into the realizing this fellowship with himself, is exquisitely beautiful.— “For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.” And again, “Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.” The soul of the apostle delighted in this relationship—which knit him to Timothy, and Timothy and himself to Philemon. It stood upon far higher ground than any natural relationship, for they were only brethren one to the other, because each them was the brother of Jesus. And Jesus had received Onesimus also; and He desired Philemon to own the relationship, even as the apostle so gladly owned it with him—that he would receive him, “not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved.” It seems to me that the soul of the apostle ever sought its repose in this fellowship of brethren, and not in that which distinguished him from them. And is not this the mind of Christ? He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Lord He is, and Master He is; but in those His titles there is no fellowship. But it was the first expression of joy that came from Him after the travail of His soul, when He said, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend onto My Father and your Father, and to My God, and your God.” Here was fellowship: the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ was the God and Father of others. But the soul of the

apostle, so deeply taught in fellowship with the Father and the Son, delighted in all he had in common with others, and desired its communication onward through Philemon. Is Philemon his beloved? He would have him receive Onesimus as a brother beloved. The soul of the apostle expanded at the thought of fellowship. Philemon was his fellow-laborer, so were Marcus, Aristarchus, Demos, Lucas (verse 24). How blessedly does grace make us bound over the littleness of our own minds! It owns everything in others that it possibly can. Paul stood in the place of conscious authority, and therefore he does not desire to assert it. But what enlargement of soul is there, in his thus noticing his fellow-prisoner, fellow-laborers, fellow-soldier! After this how fitly is he able to press on Philemon that practical fellowship, which he was thus manifesting—that communicativeness of blessing to others, because God Himself was known as communicating all blessing!

Verses 4, 5, 6. The love and faith of a single saint called forth thanksgiving from the apostle to God. His soul had often other exercises—deep humiliation before God on account of the walk of some; but here it was that which glorified God. That love, and that faith, the apostle ardently desired. to see enlarged; but he had spread this desire before God, before he made mention of it to Philemon, and he so makes mention of it as to bring the soul of Philemon immediately before God. He would have Philemon know the joy that his own soul knew in communicating— “That the communication of thy faith.” It was the faith of Philemon which was to be carried out into exercise; every natural feeling and habit would be opposed to that which would be convenient in the present case. It must be faith working by love, which alone could cause Philemon to receive Onesimus cordially as a brother. And where would faith put Philemon? Surely before God as a lost and ruined sinner, saved solely by His sovereign grace; and if he put Onesimus beside him there, where was the difference? He could only see one equally ruined in himself, and him saved by the same grace. But what depth of truth is conveyed in what follows! “That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.” The faith of Paul reckoned largely on the good thing which was in Philemon in Christ, bemuse he knew that all the fullness of Christ was the property, so to speak of the weakest saint. And he would stir up the faith of Philemon to the acknowledging of the good thing (the same word in the Greek as that translated benefit, ver. 14). Surely Philemon would have acknowledged that in him, that is in his flesh, no good thing dwelt; but Paul addressed him as one in union with Christ, in whom every good thing dwelt, and thus called on him to exhibit “the good thing which was in him in Christ Jesus.” This is our Christian responsibility. We are responsible for exercising the grace which is in Christ Jesus, because we are in union with Him, not for security only, but for fruit-bearing also. The great blessedness of that union will only be fully known in glory; but now our Father is looking for a result from it: “Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” Paul would have Philemon thus practically live the life of faith on the Son of God; and whop he felt all natural repugnance to receiving Onesimus back, he would look to Jesus and his oneness with Him to see what the grace of Christ would do in such circumstances, and then draw out of His fullness grace answering to grace. How wisely does the apostle put Philemon upon the sure basis of security, while he is thus loading him on into that act which would require a great exercise of faith! Paul could have no confidence in Philemon as a man—he might sullenly have done the thing requested out of deference to his authority; or Paul, might have asked it as a debt of gratitude to himself (see ver. 19). But he knew how to touch a string which would draw forth willing acquiescence (ver. 14); and in doing this he puts Philemon in remembrance of all his own

blessedness as one with Christ. How little do we poor degraded saints reckon on anything more by our being in Christ, than mere sufficiency for salvation! We are afraid to look for any good thing, and what is worse, often use the knowledge we have of the evil, that dwells in us, as a reason for not hooking for any good thing, as though it contradicted the other truth. But in union with Christ we are called upon to acknowledge every good thing in us unto Him, and faith would call it out on the fitting occasion. Such an occasion was now offered to Philemon; and when acted out, the apostle would have praised God, not Philemon, for its exercise. Lord, increase our faith, increase our faith!

What unselfish joy did the soul of the apostle possess! “We have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.” Surely this is the joy of the Lord. It was His joy personally to minister to the saints while here; it is the same joy now to Him to minister to them in heaven, and to supply those gifts by which His nourishing and cherishing love to the church shall be continued. It was the refreshment “of the bowels of the saints” —their inmost affections were engaged to Philemon by witnessing the faith, love, and grace in him. And Paul too was seeking the same refreshment from Philemon for himself; he would draw it forth on the occasion of sending back Onesimus, and, whilst drawing it forth, would at the same time impart all his own heart's affection to Philemon— “thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels.” And is not this the exhibition of, the way of our gracious God? Is there nothing now that refreshes Him in this world which has rejected Him, by casting out His Son, His well-beloved and only Son? Surely it is the bowels of His mercy (Luke 1:78. marg.) which has refreshed us; and it is the answer to this from us, which refreshes Him. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies.” It is receiving a little one in the name of Christ, which is the receiving of Himself; and when one such little one is received by us in the nourishing and cherishing love of Christ, then we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ. How constantly do our hearts disallow that God has any fellowship with His saints in their joy! If an apostle could say, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth,” he says it as an expression of the mind of Christ. Oh that the joy of the Lord might ever be the joy of our hearts!

What has God wrought? Well may we say this, when we see the Lord God Almighty, the High and Holy One, so presenting Himself to us as to beseech. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech by us.” This is the grace of God exhibited in the ministry of His own Son first, and now in the ministry of reconciliation on the sure foundation of complete atonement. And this is the grace Paul would witness unto: he could have commanded, and yet for love's sake he rather besought. He besought for his son Onesimus whom he had begotten in his bonds. Had Philemon listened to the ministry of reconciliation, and received the Son of God into his soul! Now let him, as one reconciled to God Himself, exercise it towards Onesimus. Paul, as the instrument, would say, whom I have begotten in my bonds. But there was something much deeper than that; for every one born of God had been begotten out of the grave of Jesus, the First-begotten from the dead. How must every plea for Onesimus have led the soul of Philemon before God, and made it go over afresh all the detail of God's grace to himself! What a blessed way to teach obedience by bringing all God's love to ourselves before the soul! “Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me;” and what had Philemon been in time past to God? Foolish, disobedient, serving divers lasts and pleasures; but the knowledge of the love of God in his own soul had now made him a useful servant of the Lord and His saints. Surely the leadings of his own

soul must have directed Philemon to see what was convenient, and his benefit would be willingly conferred, not of necessity. How blessed the intelligent and willing obedience of the saint, since it springs from the recognition of all the fullness of God's love! God exacts of us nothing, but sets, before us His own ways; and those who are led of the Spirit follow them. There must be a much deeper knowledge of the grace of God, in order to more fruit-bearing unto God. The apostle speaks of the gospel to the Colossians thus, “and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.” This is what is needed by the saints now, the knowledge of the grace of God in truth.

Verse 15. No one knew better than the apostle, that where sin had abounded, grace had superabounded. But yet there seems a holy caution in the Spirit, whilst speaking of these things, lest we should think or speak of sin lightly. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and delighting as He does, to magnify the grace of God in Christ, He always vindicates God's holy detestation of sin. Alas, how often do we find that familiarity with the doctrines of grace, where there is no deep work in the soul, leads to light thoughts of sin! What holy caution is there in the words, “For perhaps he therefore departed from thee for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever.”

Onesimus, it is hinted, had wronged Philemon, had robbed or purloined, and then ran away from his master. Could God justify dishonesty and fraud? No; for no unrighteous person shall inherit the kingdom of God. The dishonesty of Onesimus led him to Rome, led him to Paul, led him to hear the gospel; but that did not alter its character the least. It might have brought Onesimus to self-acquaintance; and doubtless it did, to honest confession of what he had done, and thus to real humility; still it would always have stood by Onesimus, so as to prevent his glorying in anything save in the grace of God abounding over all his sin. And thus, whilst most secure in the knowledge of God's love, he would be most humble in himself. The very freeness of God's grace, and the completeness of the purging of the blood of the Lamb, would give the sinner when justified the deepest hatred of sin. But no one whose soul was not habituated to the tracing the ways of God in redemption, would have ventured on such a thought as is here expressed. In the largest view we see man, fallen from God as a creature, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, received back to God forever. We see the prodigal departing from his Father's house for a season, after tasting of the bitterness of his own ways, through the love of the Father, received back forever. Man, as a creature, might depart, and did depart from his standing in blessedness in relation to the Creator. Man, as a servant, was bound by no inseparable tie to God. But he that is born of God is inseparably brought to God, he is received by Him forever. This is the joy of the Father's heart— “thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.” What a place of blessing for Philemon to be put in, to share the joy of heaven over a repenting sinner, in receiving back Onesimus as a brother! Their relation one to the other, as master and slave, would speedily be dissolved— “the servant abideth not in the house forever;” but brotherhood in Christ is forever. Had not the truth been that in which the soul of the apostle lived, it could never have expressed itself so. His soul dwelt in God, and therefore expressed the ways and the thoughts of God.

But the apostle would have Philemon share with him in his divine fellowship— “have fellowship with us, for truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.” The Lord had made Paul the partner of His deepest thoughts. Philemon knew that he had much in common with Paul, like precious faith and the common salvation and all the fullness of Christ. “If you count me

therefore a partner, receive him as myself.” He would have Philemon share with him in his joy over Onesimus, even as he shared with him so much in common besides. It is thus the Lord Jesus has fellowship with us, and we with Him, in the person of every saint, and makes each newly converted sinner to be a link of connection to bind Himself and us. If we receive them in His name we receive Him, and we partake of mutual joy. He would have us count Him a partner, and then share His joy with Him. This is practical fellowship. But surely Philemon in the wisdom of the Spirit would have known, whilst his heart was bounding with gratitude to Paul, how to transfer the language of the apostle as to himself, to the Lord Jesus, as true alone in the highest sense of. Him. No one not living in the fullest power of communion with God could so confidently have written as the apostle here. He knew what that meant— “He laid down His life for us we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” He bore all for us; so the servant, treading in the steps of his Master, would put himself under any responsibility that he could.— “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on mime account.” Is not this the very, language of Christ? Has our brother wronged us, let us look to Christ. He has borne the wrong; how many a heart-burning, how much strife would thus be avoided. God has received him, by setting down the wrong to Christ's account: what blessing would it be to our souls, to see the very wrong done to ourselves, borne by Christ! “I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.” Oh, the riches of the grace of our Lord!

The servant dare not undertake more than the Lord has done and surely it was in the knowledge of the ways of his Lord, that he used each language as this. If anything is due to us from a brother, let us not exact it. He has written it with His own hand, He will repay. “Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather be defrauded?” No one is a Loser by foregoing anything for the Lord's sake; although we owe ourselves to Him, and all that we have, yet He is so gracious as to undertake to repay any loss we put up with for His name's sake. What a double obligation of grace was Philemon thus laid under a debtor to the grace of the Lord—a debtor to the grace of the servant: surely this must have constrained him to cheerful acquiescence. How assuredly must Paul have reckoned on Philemon having the mind of Christ! And his desire was to call it into practical exercise. We too ought to reckon more, on this mind in one another, and thus “to consider one another” to call it out. Onesimus was not his own, he was his master's; Philemon was not his own, he was Paul's, he was Christ's. But the Lord, and His servant who knew His ways, would not exact compliance on that principle: what a lesson was thus taught to Philemon. It is the Lord's joy, when He might claim everything, for “we are not our own,” so to give us to stand in grace, as to do that which is well-pleasing to Him. Paul had now put Philemon on his standing in grace, and then he adds, “Yea, brother, let me have joy at thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.” How joy in the Lord, unless the Lord was a sharer of the joy? He delights to see the fruit of His own grace, and therefore exacts nothing. Paul too would have his most inward affections refreshed, even as the bowels of the saints had been refreshed by the faith and love of Philemon. Well would it be for us, if we thought more of the inmost affections of Jesus; and then we should easily learn that which would he refreshing unto Him. It is wonderful indeed, that anything should refresh Him; but even from this polluted world, there is in the love of the saints an odor of a sweet smell—a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God (Phil. 4:18).

God knows what is in man; and He knows what that new nature is which He has imparted, it is His own nature. God can and does reckon largely on it, although He can put no confidence at all in the

flesh: yea, He has set it aside, He has judged it. God expects obedience in the Spirit: it can and will obey God, and so judged the apostle. “Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.” The God of all grace has done more for us than ever we could have asked; and He puts us in the place of showing grace, when He might have required all as Lord. The obedience of the saint cannot be circumscribed by literal enactment as that of a slave, for who would set bonds to love? who would say to a child, this is all my heart expects from you? We are “accepted in the beloved” — “sanctified unto obedience;” but grace would lead beyond mere satisfying the actual demand made upon us in any given circumstances. The apostle told Philemon what was convenient, but then leaves his soul to be exercised before the Lord, so as to carry his obedience beyond that which might satisfy the actual call made on it, into the exhibition of the true grace of the Lord. This is the way of the Lord: He does not deal with us as servants, but leaves room for the exercise of grace. There would be no refreshment to Him, in seeing an unwilling obedience being rendered to a positive command; but He does delight to see the fruit of union with Himself manifested whilst we are here. Every day affords the occasion for thus manifesting this grace. And what is the church, but the school where it is learned? And what our miserable daily failures, but that we instead of seeking to exhibit the mind of Christ, are standing each one upon the ground of some right we have, which we will not allow to be interfered with? There can be no ground more wrongly assumed, than that the church is a voluntary association, dependent on man's will. Every believer is of and in the church, and it is disobedience on his part, if he fails to show this.

But it is a great mistake to suppose that church fellowship is a relief from individual responsibility, or a substitute for personal fellowship with the Lord Himself; it is the sphere where the grace learned in personal fellowship with the Lord Jesus is to be brought into exercise. The grace of the Lord Jesus Himself is learned in its manifold exercise in His own wayward family. The grace which Paul learned, by the transforming power of fellowship with Christ, was carried out in his care for all the churches. And when he saw his son in the faith, sinking under the pressure of much evil in the church, he says to him, “Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” What we need is not so much knowledge, as the transforming power of fellowship with Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). Nothing can be put in the place of this. God will allow no flesh to glory in His presence; but he that glorieth shall glory only in the Lord. And the training and discipline of the soul now is to know this practically, learning, painfully learning, the absence of all that is good in ourselves, and happily learning the fullness of Christ, which is needed by every one of us. And God, in His wisdom, brings each one of us into those circumstances wherein the fullness which He knows to be in us in Christ shall be called forth. Surely His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts. Blessed school indeed, though we are the most inapt of scholars, to be brought as Moses inside the very glory to learn His ways, whilst those who are outside can see no farther than His acts! “But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

(Concluded from page 126.)

Chapter 140

The Power of Evangelising

Preaching the gospel is either a weak, strange; and contemptible thing, or the divinely given and honored means of salvation to man, unto God's glory. To preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified might appear an occupation well worthy of ridicule, were not Christ both “the power of God” and “the wisdom of God.” In men's eyes foolish, it nevertheless achieves success where man's profoundest wisdom utterly fails: for, paradoxical as it may seem, the word of God declares, “After that in the wisdom of God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

However, blessed as it undoubtedly is, to consider the dignified position of an evangelist as an ambassador of Christ, it is at present beside my purpose. Rather let us ask what is the power of an evangelist? For if the servant of God is not divinely intelligent as to this, a survey of the opposing forces will surely be discouraging; and probably unscriptural alliances will soon be sought to meet the supposed need. Is not the natural man in direct enmity with the truth of God? It is not only foolishness to him, but it stirs up his ungodly passions, as it did notably against our Lord Jesus Christ—the Truth—who was first envied, hated, despised, and then crucified. But, further, the unbeliever in his associations with the world finds there everything that ministers to his carnal appetites, and tends to make him settled down in his alienation from God. Again, Satan the god of this world is actively opposed to the Lord Jesus, using his consummate subtlety to hinder the work of the gospel and to drag souls to hell. And what power has the evangelist to overcome the man's indwelling antagonism to his theme, added to which are the withering influences of the world and Satan? Verily, in himself none; he is powerless; still, in the grace and wisdom of God, he does not go a warfare at his own charges. The Lord Jesus, before His departure in bodily presence from His own who were to be His witnesses in the world, promised to send the Spirit of God who should be in the saints, and work through His chosen vessels. To what end? When He shall come, He will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8). “Not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power” (1 Cor. 2:4).

Accordingly at Pentecost a Galilean fisherman, filled with the Holy Ghost, charges the Jews with crucifying Jesus of Nazareth, the approved One of God. The result of that testimony was the conversion of three thousand stiff-necked and hardhearted Jews. Commencing thus, the testimony of Jesus in the mouth of the simple and unlettered is owned as the power of God unto salvation by Jewish priests and Roman courtiers, Ethiopian eunuchs and run-away slaves, imperial deputies and common gaolers. What was the secret? Simply, that men spake by the Holy Ghost given unto them (Acts 5:32).

But there is another consideration. While the Holy Spirit is the. great personal witness and the power of testimony for Christ in the world (John 14:26), the written word is the revelation of God to man, which shall judge him at the last day (John 14:48). Coming as it does from God, it is fraught with divine authority and power. And to despise its unique characteristics is as calamitous for the preacher as it is for the hearer. “The word of God” says the Holy Spirit of God, “is alive and

powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Nor is this power lost in the day in which we live. Rather, in contrast to the ephemeral things around us, the "word of the Lord endureth forever." And "this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:25). Let then the servant of God take heed lest he too lightly esteem that which is the Spirit's sword (Eph. 6:17), and which alone can effectually work in those that believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

Thus it is evident that the power of testimony for Christ in the gospel must be the Holy Ghost operating through the word of God. Truly. "we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:7). By prayer the servant of Christ confesses this and finds his sufficiency to be of God. See a remarkable summary of these elements in an honored testimony for God. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost: and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

This fundamental principle of evangelization—that its power is ever of and from God, and never of or from man—can never be too frequently before our minds. For to supplement this power by any human-device, modeled either from the elements of the world, or from the wit or taste of man, is to impugn the sufficiency of that power and to ignore the solemn warning in 2 Cor. 6 against the mixture of light and darkness. That the great apostle of the Gentiles acted in entire dependence on the power of God is unmistakable from 1 Corinthians. When Paul visited Corinth, he knew he had to do with people who were easily persuaded by gracefully worded sentences or impassioned orations, entirely apart from the truth or untruth of what was uttered. And if some mazy speculation or subtle abstraction of "thought" were presented in a philosophical manner, attentive and admiring hearers would quickly be gained. Here then were the means both to attract the Corinthians to his preaching and to make the gospel palatable and popular. How did the servant of God proceed? Let him speak himself: "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing (persuasive) words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:1-5). Paul knew that if they were drawn to Christ simply by his eloquence or reasoning, that is, by the world's "wisdom," they would be building on a foundation of sand. There must be a divine work to produce a divine faith; and therefore the apostle carefully abstained from the use of anything that might become under Satan a false basis for their souls.

Has this principle no application to-day? Are the evangelists to adopt pleasant things of man, novelties of the age, or ought else to make the gospel of God, attractive to the world? The gospel is indeed said to be powerful—the power of God unto Salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom. 1:16); but is it ever to be made "attractive"? The heart of man that rejected, not only the words and the works of Christ, but moral goodness and divine glory in His Person, is not one whit more disposed today to accept the grace and truth of God is the story of His love and shame on the tree. Men still lurk in darkness and hate the light. How then shall the truth be made "attractive" to them without perverting its character? Shall the preacher cleave to the truth of God in its holy power and

simplicity to awaken man's conscience? or is he, in this nineteenth century of ours, to use means by which the carnal man shall be attracted, gratified, mollified, argued, and talked into an acceptance of the gospel? Surely, thus to compromise the truth of God is rather seeking to please men than fidelity to Christ and the gospel How dare one so to trade with the testimony as to soften it down to suit the prejudices of the unconverted (2 Cor. 2:17)? It is not even dealing honestly with the men to whom we speak, much less before the God whom we serve.

But while this false principle underlies “attractive preaching,” it equally leavens what may be termed the “attractive accessories” of the gospel. Music and singing have indisputably no small influence on very many people. Good, however, as they may be in their places, the greater the need of scripture warrant for their use. The Cainites, when driven from the presence of God, made themselves contented in the land of Nod with the harp and pipe, (if not “organ") (Gen. 4:21). See also Job 21:12. It may be urged that in the history of Israel, musical instruments played a by no means unimportant part religiously. This however was during the period when man in the flesh was invited to devote his best as man to God; therefore a beautiful house, beautiful decorations, beautiful music, and beautiful singing had their places. But have not these things, as before God, passed away? Are they not among the beggarly elements of the world, being but types and shadows of that Antitype, which has long since come and alone abides with us? Worship now is in Spirit and truth, not in the flesh or form. Melody is not in wind or stringed instruments, but in the heart, “Singing and making melody (ψ■λλοντες) in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19).

Whether believers sing in the assembly, or at gospel meetings, are not their hymns the expression of their hearts to God? If saints do not sing to God, to whom do they sing? Is it really meant that they should sing to attract the unconverted? What is it to debase the praises of God as a bait to entice natural men to halls or meeting-rooms? Is it reverence and godly fear? Or shall we endeavor to combine the praise of God with the attraction of men in the same, action? To state each a mixture of motives is really to condemn it; yet is it, or is it not, the fact? Is it to imitate the apostles and his companions? or are preachers wiser now-a-days? No! the principle of singing is, and must be, that it be to God. What room then for instruments and choral effects, or even solos? Leave them to such as preach little or no truth. It is a sin and a shame to bring into preaching the elements of the world and of Judaism, from which have been delivered by the death of Christ (Col. 2). I distrust the utilitarian argument, that is, of success in divine things, when our prime call is to obey God alone. But if music and cultured singing work powerfully on the feelings and imaginations of many, how often do they not supplant Christ in the soul! There were some in a bygone day, who conics to the Lord out of mere nature in, mind or sentiment. The word concerning them is solemn— “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man", (John 2:23).

Some may set up the plea that, their object being the glory of God in the salvation of souls, the manner or the means becomes an indifferent thing. Is not this too like the petulant excuse of the sinner in Rom. 3? “If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory, why am I also judged a sinner?” Is this ground for mortal man to take? It is indeed the old fallacy of Satan, “Let us do evil that good may come.”

Let then the servants of God beware lest they underrate the power of the Spirit and the word. And sorely none will deny that there is much in this day that tends to lower the character of God's truth, so that we slight and forget the power of God in the gospel. Appealing in various ways to man's carnal nature makes the testimony of the great apostle of the Gentiles unheeded. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the falling down of strongholds): casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

W. J. H.

Chapter 141

The Priesthood and the Law Changed

Among the various aspects in which the Lord Jesus is presented to us, it is well oftentimes to distinguish between that which He is properly in His own person, and that which He is as constituted of God.

It is most legitimate to trace Him, from the manger of Bethlehem, to His coming in the clouds of heaven in fully manifested glory. The Holy Spirit delights in this theme—in treeing the lowly rod of the stem of Jesse, growing up before the Lord as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground, to the stately BRANCH in manifested beauty (Isa. 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; Luke 1:78). So, again, it is now the special office of the Holy Ghost to glorify Jesus by testifying to us what He is, and is owned to be, in heaven, whilst He is rejected on earth. In the reception of this testimony is found the great strength of the church in its militant state in the world.

But there something before all this. There is the tracing Him down from heaven to earth, as well as tracing Him up from earth to heavens to return thence in manifested glory. It is this character of testimony to Jesus which the Holy Ghost presents to us in the commencement of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is true that the prominent subject is the official dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle, Captain and High Priest of our profession—elevated far beyond Moses, or Aaron or Joshua. But His elevation, whilst true of Him officially, is far more true by reason of the essential dignity of His own Person. God hath in these last days spoken to us by the SON. This is not an official title, it is His own real, proper, native standing—belonging to Him in a sense in which it belongs to no other.

And herein is the grand characteristic difference between the Lord Jesus and all others. Many indeed are those of old upon whom the Lord had put honor, who would have been nothing but for the honor thus put upon them. They were constituted and appointed to various offices, and not to own them in those offices would be to reject God. So also God has made Jesus both Christ and Lord. But who is He who is thus constituted, or made, of God? He is the SON. These constituted dignities cannot excel His own real glory, that which He had with the Father before the world was. His offices, dignified though they be, cannot in this sense exalt Him. But He can give, and does give, the power and character of His own divine Person unto every office which He sustains, unto every work which He has done. If He could be stripped of all His official glories, His own personal excellency and glory must remain untouched and undiminished. It is this which makes Him alone the fit one “to bear the glory” which God may put upon Him. When God put various glories on others, as on Moses, or Aaron, or David, or Solomon, their failure to sustain the glory was marked in them all. And why? They were but men, having no power in themselves to stand at all. But Jesus is the SON, and “in Him was LIFE.” And let it be remembered, in passing, that the only security for the saints bearing the glory which grace has made theirs, is, that they are in union with Him who is thus in His own Person above all glory. “He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.”

To have office conferred by God is indeed a solemn responsibility, both as it respects him who is so honored, and as it respects others to acknowledge the honor conferred of God. It is thus our responsibility to acknowledge office in magistrates, and not to speak evil of dignities. To resist the power is to resist God. Those who bear the dignity may be nothing, the vilest of men, but the honor as put on them of God, is to be acknowledged by us. If this be so, how fearful in the sight of God must it be to refuse to acknowledge any of the offices, styles, dignities, which God has conferred on His own Son! How fearful in any wise to trench on them by arrogating them to ourselves! This is the last form of manifested evil under the present dispensation, and that which will bring down the terrible judgment of God. It is the denial of “Jesus Christ, the only Lord God, and our Lord” (Jude); that is, the denial of Him both in His own essential glory, and in His conferred mediatorial glory. Let us then beware of anything which derogates from the honor due to Jesus, the Son of God. For how infinitely elevated is He above all others on whom official dignity has been conferred by God. God will strip men of all the glories He has conferred on them, and then what are they? Nothing. Man being in honor is like the beasts that perish. But when man is thus abased, in that day the Lord Jesus alone shall be exalted (Isaiah 2).

I desire because of the importance of the subject to refer to the 82nd Psalm for illustration of the truth, that any honor conferred by God on men brings them out of obscurity, taken away it sinks them into their own proper nothingness. On the other hand, honor conferred on the Son adds nothing really to Him—if it be taken from Him or disowned by man, it only leads to His exaltation by God to every office in which man has failed, “that in all things He might have the pre-eminence,” “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: He judgeth among the gods. How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked?..... I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you children of the Most High: but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O GOD, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.”

The reference of the Lord Jesus to this Psalm, in the tenth, chapter of John, is very remarkable. He had assorted in the most unequivocal manner His own proper divinity, “I and my Father are one” (ver. 30). This they said was making Himself God (ver. 33). Afterward, in ver. 38, Jesus again asserts this, and again they sought to take Him (ver 39). But He had previously (ver. 34, 35) referred to this Psalm, to prove that they ought at least to have owned Him in His official authority and power. His works testified of Him that He was the Sent One of the Father. Not one “unto whom the word of God came,” merely, but Him Whom the Father had sanctified and sent into the world. He could say “I am the Son of God.” They should have believed Him for His works' sake, for He did the works of His Father, and He and the Father were one. To others the word of God has only come, “I have said, Ye are gods.” They had no dignity at all in themselves, they were of the earth, earthly, raised in official dignity by God. But He was the SON; He had been “sanctified and sent into the world;” He was “the Lord from heaven.” How infinitely contrasted, then, is Jesus the Son of God with all those of whom God has said, “Ye are gods.” The moment their conferred dignity was taken from them, they would die like the common herd of men. They had no essential, inherent power or dignity. But He was one with the Father, He was in the beginning with God; nothing therefore could really touch His dignity, for it was intrinsically divine. It was not the word coming to Him which made Him what He was, though He had indeed been sanctified and sent into the world; it was what He ever was in Himself, which enabled Him to be so sent, and to sustain and give efficiency to all that was laid upon Him. Hence, though in His humiliation His judgment was taken

away, yet God would divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong. This shall to manifestly true, when all official and delegated power shall be taken out of the hands to which God has entrusted it, and actually assumed by Jesus—then shall that word be proved true of Him, “Arise, O God, judge the earth, for Thou shalt inherit all nations.”

The connection between the personal and the official glories of the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the prominent subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the first chapter the Son is presented to us as both in person and office far above angels. And it is the Son who is also the Apostle of our profession. In the second chapter He is presented to us as our High Priest; and then we are exhorted, in the third chapter, to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ Jesus.” Moses indeed was great: God had magnified him before Pharaoh, yet he was but a servant—one to whom the word of God had come, although God humbled Miriam and Aaron before him. But mark; Jesus was not only officially greater than Moses, but it was His personal greatness which gives Him the infinite superiority. He was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He that hath builded the house hath more honor than the house; and every house is blinded by some man, but He that hath built all things is God. Moses was faithful as a servant in another's house, but Christ as a Son over His own house. So again as concerning the high priesthood. Aaron was the high priest, but Jesus is the Great High Priest—higher thus indeed than Aaron, even officially. But this is not all; it is “Jesus, the Son of God,” infinitely higher personally than He is officially. “Seeing then that we have a Great High Priest, that is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God” (Heb. 4.).

With this general opening let us meditate on the contrasts presented to us in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; that we may be able to draw the character of the worship from the order of the priesthood.

Most prominently do we here find the Person of the Priest set before us, “the Son of God” (Heb. 7:3), in contrast with every office-bearing person. This might have been enough; but there are contrasts immediately resulting from the Person of the Priest which must also be noticed. After the order of Aaron they were men that die; but after the order of Melchizedec, it is He that liveth—liveth because He is the Son; because He has life in Himself. True, He has laid it down and taken it again, that He might enter on His priesthood, having first by Himself purged our sins.

Again. The order of Aaron was continued by succession. It was necessarily so. Aaron was a man in the flesh, and provision was made in case of his death for his son that should minister in his stead; as it is written, “And the priest whom he shall anoint and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments” (Lev. 16:32). This was the “carnal commandment” by which the priesthood of the Aaronic order was to be perpetuated. Succession is the only mode which man knows of perpetuating anything—this is necessarily human order. The king cannot die, we are told—why? Because his last breath is the placing his successor on the throne, so that functions of royalty may never for a moment be suspended. Succession is necessarily after the law of a carnal commandment. We need not wonder therefore that men should have turned back to this order, as being that which is most natural and human. But God has made other provision for His church: His church knows no successional priesthood. The Son is made Priest, not after a law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless, life. It is still what He is in Himself

that gives the character of His Priesthood. And that which is characteristic of this priesthood is equally so of the whole order of priesthood for the saints—it is unsuccessional. The church's position in this dispensation is in life and in power. There is no room for a carnal commandment in the matter of priesthood or worship either, because Christ's Priesthood in heaven is perpetuated in Himself. No one succeeds to Him there: He is “a High Priest forever “; and none is needed to succeed the Holy Ghost in the °hatch on earth: “He shall abide with you forever.” If man were to succeed man as the head of authority in the church, a carnal commandment is necessitated: the order cannot be maintained without it. And this is what man has introduced into the church; thus putting the church under human headship and carnally appointed authority. But how awful is this, when God's order for. His church is the presence of the Holy Ghost dispensing gifts according to His will. Where, under this divine order, is there room for a carnal commandment?

But to pursue the contrast. The priests after the order of Aaron were called indeed of God; but Jesus was constituted by an oath: “The Lord swore and will not repent, Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedec.” The priesthood in Israel under the law, like all with which it was connected, stood on the ground of the competence of the priests to maintain their place in faithfulness to God. It was based upon a carnal commandment; it was conditional. The word of the Lord to Eli was, “Is said indeed that thy house and the house of thy father should walk before me forever; but now the Lord said, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” And the oath to Eli was an oath of irreversible judgment on his house. (1 Sam. 3:14.) And this setting aside of the house of Eli was to raise up a faithful Priest (1 Sam. 2:35; Heb 2:17), to do according to all that is in the heart and mind of God, even the Priest who is made with an oath.

And how blessedly in keeping is the New Covenant, with this order of priesthood. It is a covenant of promise—of promise made sure by God's having engaged His own power to render it effectual—and therefore to show the immutability of His counsel, He has confirmed it with an oath (Heb. 6:17). The new covenant therefore belongs to the Melchizedek priesthood—and both are with an oath. And it is here written, “And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant.”

Once more; although it has, been somewhat anticipated. Under the order of Aaron they were “many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.”

The high priesthood passed from one to another—there was succession. God in judgment has indeed set aside one family of Aaron and brought in another; still there was a succession of men through whom the high priesthood descended. “But Jesus, because He continueth ever, hath a priesthood that passeth not from one to another. Wherefore He is able also to save to the uttermost (i.e. from the beginning of their career unto the end) those who come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” This necessarily, and most simply, perpetuates the perfectness of high priesthood after the order of Melchizedek—One divinely perfect is for evermore consecrated thereunto.

How marked is it, that in everything which came under the law of a carnal commandment there wanted perpetuity! It was so whether we look at the person, the sacrifice, or the intercession. But now that there is perpetuity in the person, the like character attaches to the priesthood, the sacrifice, and the intercession.

Surely the priesthood being changed, there must of necessity be a change in the whole law and order of worship. To go back to the old pattern now, what is it but virtually to deny the personal glory of the SON, as giving efficacy to His work and office? It is, as has been before noticed, to tread under foot the Son of God! It must necessarily transfer the thought from His order of priesthood to another order. It must introduce human copies of patterns and shadows once given by God, claiming for such things the value due only to the heavenly things themselves. It must sink the place of worship from heaven to earth. It musts consecrate that which God has left out as profane. It must establish form, instead of leaving room for power producing uniformity, to which the flesh can bend, but to the utter denial of unity in the Spirit, of which flesh must be ignorant.

Let us then most seriously consider what Christian worship really is. Whether we look at our own standing, or at the change which has taken place in priesthood, there is necessitated an entire change in the order of worship. We have seen Aaron's priesthood adapted to the law, and Christ's to the new covenant. Aaron's priesthood was intercessional, so also is. Christ's. The church is alone sustained by the constant intercession of Christ. It is what our necessities require, beautifully and graciously adapted to them. But whilst this is most blessedly true, is there not another and very different sense in which it is said “such a High Priest became us”? The intercession of the Great High Priest for us, is only for us whilst the church needs it—it has, so far as the church is in question, a termination; and it may well be said to be an Aaronic service carried on after the Melchizedek order. But if we take, a larger thought of the priesthood of Jesus, comprehending His Person and the whole Melchizedek order, do we not find His priesthood adapted to us, not only because of our infirmities and necessities, but likewise because of that high standing which we by His grace have received—that we might hold fast our profession?

Surely when the church needs not a priesthood of intercession, as it will not in glory, it will enjoy all the peculiar privileges proper to the Melchizedek order—a constant reciprocation of blessing and praise. But our standing is really as high now as then— “now are we the sons of God” —and the saints are now to know the High Priest suitable to their greatness. We are “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,” —to such Aaron's priesthood is not suitable: “for such an High Priest became us.” What is it that has constituted us holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling? Surely these two things—that the Son has by Himself purged our sins, and that “He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” If there is not the same life in them as in Himself, He could not call them brethren. “Because I live,” says He, “ye shall live also.” Is He anointed with the Holy Ghost? they too, in virtue of having been cleansed by His blood, and united with Him as risen, are anointed with the same. He indeed above His fellows, but they with the same blessed Spirit—for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Now the High Priest suitable to such a standing as this must not only be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, but also “made higher than the heavens.”

The old order would necessarily keep the holy brethren out of the holy place, making those who are partakers of the heavenly calling mere earthly worshippers. And is not this present fact? Worship should so elevate the soul of the worshipper that nothing should be known between him and God, save the Great High Priest; but instead of this, the ritual, to which many saints are subjected, causes them to bow the head like, a bulrush.

But to proceed. Such a High Priest became us “who needed not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself. For the law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath which was since the law—the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.”

How unlike Aaron is Jesus our Great High Priest! All His present priestly ministration is based upon the accomplished sacrifice of Himself. This entirely affects the order of worship, and changes it; for; our worship is just as truly based upon the already accomplished sacrifice as is His Priesthood. It is our starting-point as worshippers. We are only is the profane place, if we approach not God on the ground of our sins having been forever purged by Jesus; we cannot avail ourselves of His priesthood until this be acknowledged. The Great Priesthood is alone suitable for those who have come to God through Him. Into what an elevated place then has that one sacrifice brought us! No place under heaven is suitable for His ministry or worship. Both are properly heavenly. Worship therefore should ever lift us up to where Jesus is—the Great High Priest who is passed into the heavens. Aaron was called of God to his priesthood in the tabernacle made with hands, but Jesus has been called of God to His priesthood in the heavens, the true tabernacle, and we are made partakers of the heavenly calling. The dignity of His person, the ground-work of His priestly ministry, and the place of its exercise, all alike proclaim the necessity of a change in the law and order of worship. The law with its ritual and worship all hang consistently together, but it made nothing perfect—it bore on its front plain marks of its infirmity. There is great strength of contrast in the last verse; it is not merely men contrasted with the Son, but men having infirmity. And so the word of the oath. has its priesthood and order in beautiful harmony; but to attempt to blend the two, as the church has done and is doing, is to introduce the worst confusion. Jesus has not His honor, and the saints have not their privilege.

Let us remember that under the Levitical priesthood there was no provision made for any, either priest or people, to follow Aaron within the veil. Aaron in this respect had no fellows. Now the Son also takes this place of Aaron's, He carries in the blood alone. He has no fellows in any of His sacrificial work, or in offering the incense. But He has fellows within the place of His ministry. Under the Levitical priesthood there was no fellowship even as to place between the people and the priests, they worshipped in distinct places: but now all is changed; for that order is now introduced of which it is said, “He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” We have the same life, and therefore one position with Christ Jesus. He can say in heaven itself, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” There was indeed the great principle of representation in the Levitical priesthood—Aaron bore the name of the tribes of Israel on his shoulders and on his heart; but there was not the truth of union. There could not be; or even on the supposition that there could have been, what would it have availed—union with a man having infirmity? But now that we have such an High Priest, as the Son, in the power of an endless life; and that He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; to have such an One not only as our representative but as the One with whom we are united, what an entire change must this effect as to the whole order of worship!

Can we find language so suitable to describe the danger of returning to ordinances, or the setting up again a priesthood on the earth between the Great High Priest and His fellows, as that found in the sixth and tenth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews? May not these passages well make the ear that hears them, in these our days, to tingle? And can we find any occupation so blessed

whilst journeying through the wilderness—any so fitted to raise our souls out of the dust, and make us tread in spirit the heavenly courts—as to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ Jesus?

Holy brethren, does it appear to you that this paper is not strictly on the subject of worship? You will find it only so in appearance, for our power of real acceptable worship is in allowing nothing to come in between our souls and our Great High Priest. It is what He is, not what we are, that we have to consider. And are we ever so truly exalted as when magnifying Him? Is it not most practically true in this sense also, that he which humbleth himself shall be exalted?

Chapter 142

Promises Made to Israel and the Manner of Their Accomplishment

Some passages of scripture upon the destiny of the Jews, which at our last meeting there was not time to quote, will terminate our sketch of historical prophecy in the history which God has given us of the future I would again remind you of that important fact, that Jewish history is especially the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah. To ask, In what does this history concern us? is to say, Of what use is it that I should know what my Father is about to do for my brethren and the manifestation of His character in His acts? It is evident, from the place which the subject occupies in His word, that their affairs are very dear to our God and Father, if they be not to us. It is in this people by the ways of God revealed to them, that the character of Jehovah is fully revealed, that the nations will know Jehovah, and that we may ourselves learn to know Him.

The same person may be king of a country, and father of a family; and this is the difference between God's actings towards us and the Jews. Towards the church, it is the character of Father; towards the Jews, it is the character of Jehovah, the King. His faithfulness, unchangeableness, His almighty power, His government of the whole earth. All this is revealed in His relationship towards Israel; and thus it is that the history of this people lets us into the character of Jehovah.

Psa. 126." When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." See, on the same subject, Ezek. 39:6, 7: "And I will send a fire on Magog, on them that dwell carelessly in the isles; and they shall know that I am the Lord [Jehovah]. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord [Jehovah], the Holy One in Israel." Verse 28: "Then shall they know that I am the Lord [Jehovah] their God, which ceased them to be led into captivity among the heathen; but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there." The way in which the Father reveals Himself to our souls is by the gospel, by the Spirit of adoption; but Jehovah makes Himself known by His judgments—by the exercise of His power on the earth. I have said, that the Father reveals Himself by the gospel, because the gospel is a system of pure grace—a system which teaches us to act towards other's on the principle of pure grace, as we have been acted on by the Father. It is not "eye for eye, tooth for tooth;" it is not what justice requires, the law of retaliation, or equity; but a principle according to which I ought to "be perfect, as my Father is perfect." But it will not be mere grace, that is, suffering evil and doing good, in the government of Jehovah. Jehovah, without doubt, will bless the nations; but the character of His kingdom is, that "judgment shall return unto righteousness" (Psa. 94:15). At the first coming of Jesus Christ, judgment was with Pilate, and righteousness with Jesus; but when Jesus shall return, judgment shall be united to righteousness. The people of Christ now, the children of God, ought to follow the example of the Savior (that is, not expect or wish that judgment should be in the rigor of righteousness; but they should be gentle and humble in the midst of all the wrongs which they suffer on the part of man). United to Christ, they are indemnified for all their wrongs in the strength of His intimate love, which comforts them by the consolations of the presence of His Spirit; and, more than this, by the hopes of the heavenly glory. On the other hand, Jehovah will console His people by the direct acting of His righteousness

in their favor (see Psa. 65:5), and by reestablishing them in earthly glory.

The Jews, then, are the people by whom, and in whom, God sustains His name of Jehovah, and His character of judgment and righteousness. The church are the people in whom, as in His family, the Father reveals His character of goodness and love.

We have already touched upon the events which will happen to the Jews in the last time, by the quotations from Jeremiah, chapters 30 to 33. I will now cite a few other passages to the same effect, following the order of the prophets.

Dan. 12:1.....It is the presence of him who will act for the people of Daniel, that is, for the Jewish people. There are a few remarkable traits in this prophecy. First, God in His power, by the ministry of Michael, is to stand up for the children of Daniel's people; and it is to be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation. In this we have a clue to Matt. 24 and Mark 13:19.

The resurrection (Dan. 12:2) applies to Israel. “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” You find the same expression in Isa. 26: “Thy dead shall live.....;” and in Ezek. 37:12. It is a figurative resurrection of the people, buried as a nation among the Gentiles. In this revival it is said of those who rise, “Some to shame and everlasting contempt. This is what will happen to the Jews. Of those brought out from among the nations, some shall enjoy eternal life, but some shall be subject to shame and everlasting contempt (Isa. 66:24). At the time of the accomplishment of this prophecy all of Daniel's people are not brought up from among the nations. In a word, on the one hand, God is standing tip for His people in a time of distress; and, on the other, a remnant is delivered: such is a summary of Dan. 12.

In Hos. 2:13 unto the end, we see that the Lord will receive Israel, will bring her into the land, after having humbled her, but, having spoken to her also after His own heart, He will make her such as she was in the days of her youth; that Jehovah will make a covenant with her, and bless her in every kind of way on this earth, and will betroth her unto Himself forever. There is an interrupted chain of blessings from Jehovah Himself down to the earthly blessings poured out in abundance upon Israel, who are the seed of God (for this is the force of the word Jezreel). On this account there is added (ver. 23), “I will sow her unto Me in the earth.” For Israel will become the instrument of blessing to the earth, as life from amongst the dead. At this time all is hindered by sin; spiritual wickedness is now “in heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12); and every description of misery abounds, accompanied though it be with many blessings (for God makes “all things work together for good to them that love Him"); but at that time there will be a fullness of earthly blessings.

Hos. 3:4, 5. “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.” They shall have neither the true God nor a false god (so it is with them now); but after that they shall seek Jehovah and David—the Well-beloved or Christ.

Joel 3:1, 20, 21, 16-18. After having spoken of the nations at the time of the return of His people from captivity (ver. 1-15), and the judgments exercised upon the Gentiles, God speaks in the latter verses of the Jews. Jerusalem is to be holy; Jehovah will dwell in Zion; He will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. This will be their case when the judgment of God

shall fall upon the nations.

Amos 9:14, 15. “And I will bring again the captivity of my people...and I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up.” This is not yet accomplished. v. 11, 12, are quoted in Acts 15, not for the purpose of showing that the prophecy had then come to pass; but to prove that God had all along determined upon having a people from out of the Gentiles; and that, therefore, the language of the prophets agreed with that which Simon Peter had been relating of what God had done in his days. It is not the accomplishment of the prophecy, but the establishing of a principle by the mouth of the prophets, as well as by the word of the Spirit through Peter.

Mic. 4:1-8. Nor is this yet brought to pass. It is, so to speak, a topographical description of Jerusalem, when her first dominion is restored. In chapter 5: 4, 7, 8, the name of Christ is respected and great to the ends of the earth; Israel everywhere the dew of divine blessing, and coming off victorious against all who oppose them.

With regard to Micah, you will remark (as we observed in a former lecture) how, in chapter vii. 19, 20, the Spirit adverts to the promises made to the fathers without condition.

Zeph. 3:12, to the end. What language is this? God is said to be “silent [see margin] in His love;” He is so moved that He is “silent.” On whom does He lavish all this? Read verse 13: “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.” Jehovah is in the midst of them, and nothing can disturb them.

Zech. 1:15, 17-21. Mention is here made of the four monarchies that scattered Israel, as themselves scattered by the force of the judgments of God.

Chapter 9: 9 to the end. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee “This, you will assert, is already accomplished. No; only in part. The Holy Spirit in the New Testament (John 12:15) cites this passage, but with the omission of the words “He is just, and having salvation” (saving Himself, margin). Jesus, in fact, cared not for Himself. When they said to Him, mocking Him, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross,” He took no notice. He hid not Himself from grief; far from saving Himself, He saved us; He spared not Himself that we might be spared.

Chapter 10: 6 unto the end. When was it that Israel had been as “though the Lord had not cast them off?” Never yet.

Let us now turn to some passages which will show that, though the people of Israel will be restored in their land, there will only be a remnant saved.

Chapter 12: 2 mentions a time of war, even of all the peoples round about, the peoples of the earth, against Jerusalem: but God will defend the city and its inhabitants in a miraculous manner, and the nations will be destroyed (ver. 9). The Spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured out upon the remnant of Israel— “all the families that remain;” and “they shall look upon Him Whom they have pierced, and mourn.”

Isa. 18 Whatever critical difficulties exist in this chapter, its great object is too evident to be obscured by any rendering whatever. The rivers of Cush are the Nile and Euphrates. The enemies

of Israel, in the Biblical part of their history, were situated on these two rivers.

There is, in this prophecy, a call made to a country which is beyond them, to a distant laud which had never, at the time of the prophecy, come into association with Israel. The prophet had then in his view some country which would come later upon the scene.

Verse 3. God bids all the inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, to take cognizance.

The nations are to have their eyes upon Israel; they are summoned by God to pay attention to what was taking place as to Jerusalem; they are all interested in her fate. The world is invited to watch the judgments about to take place. In the meanwhile (ver. 4) God takes His rest, and lets the nations act of themselves. Israel will have returned into their land (5, 6).

It is a description of Israel returning to Judea by the help of some nation at a distance from the scene itself, which is neither Babylon nor Egypt, nor other nations which meddled in their affairs of old. We say not that it is France, or Russia, or England. The Israelites return to their land, but God takes no notice of them. Israel is abandoned to the nations; and when everything would indicate as if they were going to bear fruit anew (verse 5), behold the sprigs and branches cut down, and left to the fowls of the air to summer on, and to the beasts of the field to winter on (which terms are designations of the Gentiles). Nevertheless, at that time a present of this people shall be brought to Jehovah of hosts, and from this people “to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion.”

Psa. 126:4. “Turn again our captivity, O Lord.” Zion and Judah will be first brought back. The captives of Zion were already brought back when this prayer was presented to God (verse 1); they are but the earnest of what God will do in the restoration of all Israel.

But here it is fitting to touch on the manner of God's dealing with the houses of Judah and Israel in their judgment and dispersion. The first to be gathered are those who rejected. Jesus, those who are guilty of His death. The ten tribes, as such, were not guilty of this crime; they had been already dispersed before the introduction of the four monarchies or world-empires into the rule of the earth. It was the Assyrians who led captive the ten tribes, before Babylon had existence as an empire. A circumstance relating to a Jewish, family or tribe (Jer. 35:1-10), found living in the midst of the Arabs, is related by Dr. Wolff, who visited it of late years. These Jews say of themselves, that they are descended from some who refused to return to Judea with Ezra, because they knew that those who returned with Ezra would put the Messiah to death; and for this reason they remained where they were. Even though this be false, the existence of such a tradition is not a little wonderful. One thing is evident too: those who rejected the Christ will be subjected to the Antichrist; they will make “a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell” (Isa. 28:15). But their covenant will destroy all their hopes. Having united themselves to Antichrist, they will undergo the consequence of this alliance, and at last will be destroyed. Two thirds of the inhabitants will be cut off in the country of Judea itself after their return (Zech. 13:8, 9).

But with the ten tribes the occurrences are different, as we know from Ezek. 20:32-39. Instead of two parts cut off in the land, the rebels—that is, the disobedient and rebellious ones among Israel—will not enter at all into Canaan. God does with them, as He did with Israel upon their rebellion after coming out from Egypt; He destroys them without their even seeing it.

Thus there are two classes, so to speak, of Israel in their return. First, the Jewish nation, properly speaking—namely, Judah, and those allied with them in the rejection of the true Christ; they will be in connection with the Antichrist, and of them two-thirds will be cat off in the land. Secondly, those of the ten tribes coming up, of whom some will be cut off in the wilderness on their way into the land.

Matt. 23:37-39. This prediction, delivered by Jesus Himself, gives us the assurance of the coming of Jesus to restore Israel, and to reign in their midst: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets,.....your house is left unto you desolate.....till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Israel will see Jesus, but it will be when this word of Psa. 118:26 shall go out of their mouth. The psalm itself gives a happy picture of their joy at this time; and out of it the Savior drew the announcement of the judgment which He pronounced against the Jewish rulers upon their rejection of Him: “The stone, which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner.” Out of this psalm, also, is drawn the joyful salutation with which the little children welcomed Him in the temple with Hosannahs—fit precursors of those who, in happier times yet to come, will receive the hearts of little children, and will confess that Savior formerly rejected by their fathers! It is this psalm which celebrates the exaltation and blessing of Israel—the blessing due to the faithfulness of Jehovah alone; whilst it points out the sin of the nation in rejecting “the Stone” which was to become the foundation of God in Zion; but which was also, by the unbelief of the nation, the “Stone of stumbling” and of judgment.

Besides these two classes of Israelites, who will return by providential agency, but still of their own free accord, the Lord after His appearance will gather together from among the Gentiles the elect of the Jewish nation, who will be yet among the nations; and this return will be accompanied with great blessing. (See Matt. 24:31; compare Isa. 27:12, 13, and 11: 10, 12.)

We subjoin two principles, very simple and clear, which distinguish all preceding blessings (as, for instance, the return from Babylon) from the accomplishment of the prophecies of which we have been speaking. These two principles are—first, that the blessings flow from the presence of Christ, the Son of David; secondly, that they are a consequence of the new covenant. Neither the one nor the other of these conditions was fulfilled at the return from Babylon, nor have they been since. The gospel does not occupy itself with the earthly blessings of the Jews, which is the subject matter of these prophecies.

Chapter 143

Reflections on the Prophetic Inquiry .1

The existing circumstances of the church of God seem to call upon those who earnestly desire its welfare, not to hold back from expressing that which may, in any way, tend to the strengthening of faith and healing those divisions which, while they destroy charity and the fellowship one with another that is proper to walking in the light, weaken the testimony, which is held out to the unconverted or to the inquirer, of the everlasting truth of God. It appears to me that, on the subject of prophecy (divisions on which now shame godliness), both those who hold and those who strenuously oppose views, wind, for convenience's sake we may call Millennarian, are deeply culpable. Many have written on one side and the other ignorant of each other's views, and precipitate and unwarranted in their inferences from them; and, while those who hold the views of prophecy, which have occasioned the controversy, have indulged in language utterly inconsistent with the spirit of their Master, those who are unconvinced by them, though charging this exclusively on the Millennarians, are themselves, it appears to me, in no way free from blame. Superciliousness, distrust, and animosity (not perhaps so distinctly expressed, because new views are generally the most active and forward, but quite as evil in their character and spirit) have marked their conduct and language; while those who sought instruction, and to whom the others were debtors for it, have been hindered, perplexed, and repelled in their inquiries by the selfish precipitancy of the one and presuming ignorance of many connected with them, and the uncandid uninquiring rejection and denouncement of the other. There is no one at all observant of what is now existing, and interested in the strengthening of humble souls, bet must feel the culpable responsibility in which many leaders of the professing church are involved.

There are some observations I would make on these subjects, being convinced of the extreme precipitancy in which many have written upon them; and I think that in such a time (though I am persuaded the purposes of God will eventually result and His glory be manifested in our weakness), there should be a disposition to try more maturely the soundness of our views and statements alleged to be from scripture, before truth and the value of the sacred scriptures themselves are brought into question, perplexity, and disgrace, by the presumptuous and hasty pursuit, not of scriptural truth, but of our own untried thoughts, given out to a greedy public, glad of novelty, which has no requisition of sanctification attached to it, and ready to neglect their own souls for unfounded and idle speculations.

On the other hand, it is equally certain that the scriptures of God have not been written to no purpose; that as His provision for His saints, the prophetic like all other parts of them have a sanctifying, strengthening and directing influence. What God thought it worth while to order and arrange, as ministering to the ends of His glory and man's participation in it, and to reveal (that is, to communicate) to man, as that in which he is concerned, must be surely worth while for man to inquire into and be informed of; and they seem guilty of presumption who would arraign the value and importance of what God thought fit to reveal. The fact of God's revelation to one who knows what God is (in a word, to a believer) is demonstrative evidence of its vast importance and his interest in it; and when it comes from God to man, is man to say it is not of importance?

These truly are the themes which have called forth most the admiration and praise of those who have seen God in them; nor can any one believe rightly in His saving love, who is not deeply interested in the manner by which its results are accomplished. The argument that prophecy is only available as an evidence of revelation after its fulfillment, not to reason upon general grounds, seems to have little weight. All the prophecies testify of facts which require a certain line of conduct at or previous to their fulfillment; and though they are evidence of themselves as a revelation, and of the value of the prophesied fact, there are few instances of this being of importance after their fulfillment. Besides, many of them unequivocally relate to the closing period of the world; and it would be hard to say of what avail these could be for the purpose stated. And further, almost all which are considered as fulfilled prophecies by those who use this argument, were expressly delivered as testimonies to the consciences of men immediately concerned in them, previously to their fulfillments. Will any one say, that the direction of our Lord to His disciples were of no interest, and not important to be understood previous to the destruction of Jerusalem, and merely that this destruction might accredit His testimony? Were. Jeremiah's urgent remonstrances and warnings not to be inquired into before the Chaldeans took the city? And shall it be said that the solemn testimony to Israel put them under no responsibility, but were useless declamations, till the kings of Assyria had been the means of burying them in yet unveiled oblivion? There seems to be something of infidelity in all this. Or do they argue that God is less concerned in the church now, or that the Lord now will not do good, neither will He do evil? Besides, they leave, arguing in the present time, a large scope of prophecy unfulfilled, which manifestly cannot be of any direct avail subsequent to its fulfillment; and yet they would afford us no assignable cause why it has been revealed at all.

Chapter 144

Reflections on the Prophetic Inquiry .2

Now they say it does not tend to sanctification. But man is not a judge of this; he would still be sanctifying the church in his own way. I am persuaded that God never revealed anything without a sanctifying purpose for His nature is holy, His purpose holiness; and I believe the sober and holy study of the word of God, as such, in His fear, will concentrate the affections upon Him, separate from the world, and give enlarged views Of His kingdom, wisdom, and glory, peculiarly calculated to sink in our estimation this world—its glory, its strength; and to fix our minds on the Lamb's glory. There is in fact in these objections a tendency to depreciate the purposes of God in scripture, to preserve the importance of man's little sphere of views.

On the other hand, the extreme precipitancy with which the subject has been taken up has led—which has given occasion to this part of the charge—to unjust estimate of the use, and value, and seasonable application of those truths. Men have sought to please themselves, instead of edifying themselves or their neighbors. Let men either inquire humbly, using God's word to God's purposes, or else refrain from seeking to affect the minds of others. Loquacity or forwardness on religious subjects is a great hindrance to real edification. “If any man speak; let him speak as the oracles of God,” as those who have something to say on God's behalf, or else use the modesty which becomes those who only seek for truth. One other complaint is to be made against those who oppose these views, and it is a serious one. Instead of weighing what has been advanced by others in the spirit of serious inquiry, separating the chaff from the wheat, and willing to see the use which God might make of their brethren's testimony; jealous of the tone which they assumed, and hurt by their charges against them, they irritably throw the whole of their views overboard, without inquiring what the scripture itself says upon the subject; and then, to justify themselves, endeavored all they could to show, in the darkest colors, every part of the system, and bring up reasons against the whole. But if there be any truth in these things, they are defrauding themselves; and it is a poor compensation to prove their brethren wrong.

In many things alas! we are divided enough—enough exposed to the enemy not to be opposed to one another in our very hopes. Surely they should give some just sense, if they think those to whom they are opposed in the wrong. For my own part, if I were bound to receive all that has been said by the Millennarians, I should reject the whole system; but their views and statements weigh with me not one feather. But this does not hinder me from, inquiring by the teaching of the same Spirit (which in measure, I believe, directed them) what God has with infinite graciousness revealed to me concerning His dealings with the church.

I confess the modern Writers on prophecy justly chargeable with following their own thoughts hastily, and far too much removed from the control of scripture. They have got some general view, perhaps sound, of God's purpose. They take some text or prophecy as a starting-point, pursue the suggestions of their own minds in connection with their general views previously adopted, but leave the results almost entirely untried by the direct testimony of the word, affording us theories, often enlarging when by a writer much imbued with scripture, often of general soundness of view

though replete with false statements: but, when not by such a writer, diverging into absurdities calculated to awaken the impatience of many and bring the truth of all into dishonor. In the meanwhile the church is distracted. There is not a single writer whose writings I have seen (unless it be the author of one short inquiry) who is not chargeable with this fault. Some of the most confident really call for much reprobation. But good, I am persuaded, will grow out of it; and the very difficulties will call, under God's Spirit, the attention of the faithful servant of God. And while the precipitancy of the others will be repressed by the distinct manifestation of the error into which it has led thorn and the calm statement of truth, those who have hitherto rejected even inquiry will yield themselves to much they have scorned, and be humbled both to the acknowledgment of a common truth and of the spiritual sincerity of many against whom they have been bitter, because they could not convince them, when in truth it was their own fault. I would call upon the servants of God to pray that He would guide and direct His church by His Spirit in these things in sober and subdued meekness, and it will surely be led into all truth. I shall take notice (with this feeling) of some things which seem to me illustrative of the unguarded, unscriptural statements, many of which, I think, have dishonored scripture, and been spoken ignorantly; and, I shall, secondly, propose some grounds of inquiry, to those who have hitherto repudiated these views.

These views trench upon many habits in which religions teachers have for the most part been formed—many views in which they have long had their boast. No man likes to give up these: their relative consequence is lost; it is distinguishing to oppose them. “No man, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith, The old is better:” Many of the subjects mentioned in the foregoing pages are of themselves of deep interest, much as the use of prophecy generally, and materially affecting the present views of men on the subject; but it has not been attempted to dwell upon them at length here: other occasions, or a better instrument, perhaps, may draw them out into more useful and instructive relief. My object is unpretending and simple, and I pursue it at once: it has been some time on my mind, though withheld hitherto.

The observations on the ■ν■στασις ■κ τ■ν νεκρπων, published in the Christian Examiner (sound in criticism, and temperate in spirit, and calculated to be useful), point out an instance of the extreme carelessness with which bold statements are made by writers on these subjects: but having been there discussed, I omit it here.

There is an error of another kind, small in importance, perhaps, because of obvious correction, but illustrative of the way in which men inconsiderately make statements, when they fall in with their system, in the face of the simplest testimony of scripture itself. In the third and fourth sermons on Daniel's vision of the four beasts and of the Son of man by Mr. Irving, Zephaniah is stated to have prophesied before the carrying away of Israel captive; and it is assumed that they carried the book of that prophet to Nineveh, whereby Nineveh would know of its threatened judgments. The prophet addressed Judah alone, and expressly states that he prophesied in the reign of Josiah (that is, about one hundred years after the carrying away Israel captive). The reason of the statement is to show that God gave testimony to Nineveh and her king, before He judged them He certainly had done so previously by Jonah. The idea is a very laudable one: but, running away with it, we have the following passage in page 92: “Yet God suffered not such a city to perish without witnesses, but raised certain of the captivity to the highest offices in the kingdom.” &c. “There can be no doubt, also, that the prophecies of Nahum and of Zephaniah, which almost solely concern the judgment upon Nineveh, and which was given before the captivity of Israel, were carried with the

captives into Nineveh, and there more or less circulated amongst the Ninevites, and especially brought to the knowledge of the king himself; for God is very merciful," &c. They say much of taking scripture as it presents itself. Who would suppose that all that concerned Nineveh in the prophecy of Zephaniah was three verses, bringing it amongst the many other countries which were to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar—the whole book being concerning him, Jerusalem, its present evil, and future hopes; and this, as we have said, a century after Israel was carried into captivity! We take it as showing the extreme neglect of scripture and even prophecy itself, the hurried pursuit of an object in the mind, something brought in at random to illustrate it, without any reference or mature weighing as to whether it is borne out by scripture.

I think the interpretation of Isaiah in the same page erroneous, and the occasion of the error the same: but as this might seem to involve interpretation, I do not say anything of it, though I think the case perfectly clear, and that the simple reading of the prophecy will evince the total inapplicability of the alleged meaning. Another instance, upon which it is not proposed to dwell, but mentioned as occurring in the same book, is in a long dissertation to show that the Greek empire was set up in order to give prevalence to the Greek language. This, though a collateral result, is; I think, a very confined view, and in itself exhibits the absorption of mind into its present idea, which I complain of as so injurious, and, in the case of scripture, so very culpable. But it is there stated, that our Lord and His apostles always quote from the Septuagint. This is not the fact, as has been fully shown.

Again, in the translator's preliminary discourse to Ben-Ezra, we have (p. Iv.), "And to this effect I understand Rom. 8:1, 'There is no condemnation' (κρ■σις, i. e. judgment)," &c. The word is κατ■κριμα without a single various reading in Wetstein or Griesbach. Doubtless he had in mind John 5:24, where it is κρ■σις. If this were an isolated act of inadvertency, it might well be passed over; but it is evidence, and accumulated evidence, of great carelessness. And it is adduced on this account, that it is introduced by the author as determining the sense of an important passage, to which, at the time of stating it, it is evident, he could not have referred; not merely from the mistake itself, but because the whole passage (and this is the point I would urge) bears in, a long train of argument upon subjects totally unconnected with the one he is arguing, and in which κρ■σις, in his view of it, would have no place or object. That which we advert to is not the casual mistake, but the drawing in a whole passage into a purpose beside its object, through absorption of mind into one particular view.

And in this place we cannot pass over, though it cannot be treated as a mistake, passages in this preface highly injurious to the work and honor of Christ, and in it the just, holy, and influencing comfort of believing saints. It is alike indicative of the same hasty pursuit of a single idea. I shall quote one concentrating sentence; but the observations will apply to the whole spirit shown from pp. 55-65 of this preface. The haste, the very culpable haste (for the promises and hopes of God's people are not thus to be trifled with), is shown in this. In evincing (the truth of which we do not now inquire into) that the resurrection at Christ's coming is the substantive hope of the church, he attempts this by throwing every cloud upon the hope of the dying Christian. "Death," his words are, "is a parting, not a meeting; it is a sorrowful parting, notes joyful meeting; it is a parting in feebleness and helplessness to we know not whither—into a being we know not what." This sentence is singularly unfortunate in its statements; and, indeed, scripture and the hope of the gospel are not to be thus made the slave of men's momentary thoughts. "I have a desire," says the apostle, "to depart and be with Christ." Death to the believer is not a parting but a meeting, if our

central and supreme affections are with Christ. I am not questioning here, be it remembered, the hope of Christ's coming, but Mr. Irving's statements respecting death. Death is not a sorrowful parting, but a joyful meeting; for it does not become us to sorrow as those without hope. For why? Those that sleep in Jesus go to Jesus, and God brings them with Him. For indeed “he that liveth and believeth in Jesus shall never die.” If, indeed, he values earthly things more than Christ's presence, then sorrow will accompany his death. But it is the proper distinction of Christianity to have neutralized that power of death which Mr. Irving is preaching; “for the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;” but both are dead to the believer in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ the Savior. It is a parting not in but With feebleness and helplessness, we know whither that is, to Christ. If He be true, we know whither we go, and the way. As to “a being we know not what,” the scripture affirms it really of the state of the risen body, and of that only. “It doth not yet appear,” saith the apostle, “what we shall be,” speaking expressly of that state.

As to the promise, Mr. Irving is writing against his own opinions; for, if he hold that Christ will come again, he believes that He will bring His saints with Him, so that they which are alive and remain have no preference. He is indeed himself witness that Scripture is conclusive as to a paradise for the separated spirit; but he says we know not what it is. Is there nothing, then, in being with Christ the Savior, Who loved us, and gave Himself for us—the hope that brightened the thoughts and quickened the expectations of many a dying and many a martyred saint? Is there nothing in being with Him, to throw holy influence and triumphant character on the relinquishment of this yet evil and Satan-deceived world? Sure I am, there was that in it which made the Apostle Paul prefer death to life; for death was no death to him, but parting from trial to Christ, from perseverance through surrounding evil to that blessed presence, where all doubt, sorrow, and death would have passed away to him forever. He had a desire to depart and be with Christ, he was not comforted only by the building of God not made with hands; for he was always confident, desiring rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.

We must say that this is a most unholy misstatement of scripture, and destructive of that which is the glory and influential power, as well of the resurrection of the saints, as of their present hopes; and that, if the Lord's presence be not a paramount blessing, prevailing over death now, it will never be at the resurrection, or at any other time. It proves the folly of man in his thoughts; for, in attempting to show the importance of his views above another's, the sole thing which is of power in those very views and can alone realize them is undermined and destroyed, and this in the face of the fullest and most anxious statements of scripture, and to the dishonor of Christ and the faith of the saints of God, Satan reigns by death; Christ has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. And to argue from the circumstances of His death is folly; for it was because He so suffered, and (having overcome in full conflict with the very power under which it is here stated we rest) rose again into glory, that we have not that trial, that we are delivered and triumph, and that its power is passed away toward us.

The observations from the Apocalypse are a total misapprehension of its force. This might call for much and varied animadversion; but my object is not to condemn or accuse (God forbid that it should be!) but precisely the contrary. But these are the soft of statements which have awakened the impatience of observant Christians, and occasioned a natural, though indeed an unjust, prejudice against the persons who hold those views they are urged in maintenance of, and a hasty rejection (still more foolish) of the views themselves. For in this they are making themselves

servants to the unguarded precipitancy of others, not judges of it, and masters of the truths which they confound with so many misstatements. In a word, they are allowing Satan to do just what he meant to do by the partial ignorance of inquiring men

But it must be confessed, it is a bold word to utter, that when Christ said to the thief on the cross, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise” —that which made Paul always confident, giving him, upon the common faith of God's people, a desire to depart—that what the Lord comforted and assured the thief with, and the apostle built on, was “a day of death, from sight of which the soul shrinketh, and a void behind it, so vacant and unintelligible, as not to be available for any distinct end of faith, hope, edification, or comfort.” “And this notion of blessedness with Christ, upon our leaving this tabernacle, is a vague notion which Satan hath substituted.” Christ substituted it as something nearer to the dying thief, when he proposed that on which the writer so much insists; and it was because it was a distant hope, and there would have been a vague void without this revelation, that we were given the assurance that that was revealed in great mercy, which is thus now thrown to the dogs. The hope of the individual is being with Christ; the hope of the church is His coming: doubtless the individual is deeply interested in this hope likewise. On the whole, throughout this preface, Christ's present glory is not duly seen, nor its perception by the believer as manifested by Him, as it is not to the world.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 145

Reflections Upon the Prophetic Inquiry .3

But, perhaps, we are passing our subject. I shall therefore next take notice, merely with this view, of a commonly current work, “The Cry from the Desert,” in the hope that it may lead to a more accurate examination of scripture itself, before any of the writings of men on this subject are adopted or rejected. This is what I would press and urge upon every one: to apply themselves, for themselves, to the testimony of scripture, to draw ideas simply and directly from this (and I can assure them, they will ever find them sanctifying ideas), but trust no man's mind, whether millennarian or post-millennarian; to use the scriptural rule— “Prove all things, and hold fast that which is, good;” to adopt nothing unexamined, and to reject nothing unexamined, however weak it may be in positions. if taken in itself, it may distract; if it lead to the examination of scripture, it may prove the indirect source of abundant knowledge and grace.

It is not my object to enter generally upon the character of this tract. I dare say the writer's mind aimed at more fully exhibiting the purposes of God; but, by undue confidence, the result has been to overrun scripture, and exhibit, as it appears to me, only his own weakness. It is this I would deprecate. The energy of new apprehensions, doubtless, is often valuable; but in man's hands it often degenerates into the truthless and unprofitable display of crude conceptions of our own. Let us compare the following passages, after which we will enter into detail.

I can readily conceive, however, that these accompaniments of the divinity, with all the attendant miracles with which the heavenly Jerusalem is surrounded, will never be exposed to the unsanctified gaze of any but the holy nation; and that, as I shall hereafter attempt to show, only of its most holy and privileged orders. I cannot afford you a more simple or expressive illustration of this sacred seclusion of the heavenly city, than was afforded me in reading the very interesting narrative of Captain Hall's visit to the Loo Choo Islands in the Eastern Ocean, about four or five hundred miles south of Japan wherein he states, that although he anchored off their shores for several months, and during the time had, by dint of the most confiding overtures, and the most unwearied perseverance, contrived to establish a friendly intercourse with the natives, yet neither persuasions, entreaties, nor threats, could ever induce them, in their most unguarded moments, to allow him, or any of his company, to make any approaches into the interior of the country, where the king's palace was situated. Nay, all scrupulously jealous were they of Captain Halls inquiries relative to the king, his government, or even his private establishment and family, that they would never enter into conversation upon the subject, and scarcely mention his name. I can, therefore, easily picture to myself that the more immediate residence, the court of the Sing of the whole earth (to use an expression more familiar to our present conceptions), will be most sacredly guarded against, the approach of any but the highly privileged nation; as it is written, “Nothing unholy or uncircumcised shall enter therein.”

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit, to a great and high mountain, and showed me that [great] city, the

holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east, three gates; on the north, three gates; on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz;" the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold; as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations [of them which are saved] shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor unto it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations unto it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Can anything more display or condemn the light spirit in which God's purposes are taken up, than the contrasts of these two passages? How blessed and full of blessings is the latter! how full of sanctifying and exalting truths and images! His friend, however, suggests the difficulty "If this be so, how can, the kings of the earth offer Him their homage?" He replies, "I have anticipated this objection, as I find it written in Ezekiel, that the prince himself shall worship in the temple: that is, worship God the Father. And as I will undertake to prove to you, the temple can only be erected in earthly Jerusalem, I thence infer, that the Prince will likewise there give His audiences, on set days, to the kings of the earth, who shall hold their kingdoms there at His hand, and will there receive their gifts of fealty to their great Head." But this merely proves what, we are here animadverting upon the entire neglect of scriptural statements, and loss of scriptural objects, and their power, in the hasty pursuit of our own thoughts. The writer has framed his system of the two cities over against each other in the holy oblation, and he had to solve the objection, which he does, so as to relieve his own system from it as stated, but proving utter neglect of scripture. For, instead of going there to receive their homage, the scripture states that the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor unto it.

I do not intend to pursue the comparison of the passages, for they are sufficiently obvious to the most unobservant; but I confess I pity the mind which could interpret the statement in the Revelation into a sort of box, in which the Lord was to be shut to prevent anybody seeing Him; like a certain king whom Captain Hall went to visit. This may be immaterial; but I affirm that the scope

of the statement, generally, is directly opposed to the scope and object of the testimony of God in the latter part of the Revelation, and flowing from simple Ignorance of the intention, meaning, and principles of interpretation of the passage and book in which it is found. To make good this, I prefer to invite the minute comparison of others, than to introduce here my own; because my object is not to interpret but to comment on the neglect of scripture with which some pursue their own thoughts.

But beside the strange moral confusion as to the passage in the Revelation, and inconsistency too with the system the author affects (he must forgive me) to have gone so far into, his statement is entirely foreign from the passage in Ezekiel. The passages are these (Ezek. 45:6), “And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy portion; it shall be for the whole house of Israel.” Compare this simple statement with the endless conjectures from the wandering mind of the writer of this tract. Again, (Ezek. 48:15), “and the five thousand that are left in the breadth, over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane place for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof.” The whole division was to be profane for the city, &c. In a word, the east side was for the priests, the middle for the Levites next in order, the remaining five thousand was profane for the whole house of Israel to have the city generally, its dwelling and suburbs. And this profane place (it is a simple misstatement to say, that it was what was outside the city, within this portion that was profane)—this profane place which was the part farthest from the sanctuary for the whole house of Israel is, we are told, the heavenly Jerusalem It would be alike impossible and unprofitable to follow all the absurdities and direct contradictions to the text, which arise out of such statements. But there is great evil in them; they catch many that are unstable and unlearned, and lead the mind of any one who attends to them from following undistracted the purposes of scripture itself. But it is painful, really, to dwell upon it. Let no man, however, think that he will be excused from looking daily for the Lord's coming, because other men thus pursue their own errors. The scripture is sent to them and to all.

It appears to me, that much of the crudeness of this pamphlet flows from ignorance of the true nature of the Gentile and Jewish dispensations. The throne of David and the throne of His glory are different things, doubtless; but let us see how this subject is pursued by the writer. “There must be,” says he, “two comings in judgment; one before, one after the millennium: one to sit on the throne of David, the other on the throne of His glory.” But His sitting on the throne of David is not His coming in judgment at all, but the consequence of His judgment of the Gentile nations. But, as proof of the distinction, he refers to the attendants of the Lord “one,” says he, “with His own glory and His saints, the other with the holy angels and His Father's glory.” The passage of scripture in which this is spoken of furnishes no such distinction. He says, coming with His saints in His own glory is the first coming—coming with the angels in His Father's, the second; the first applying to judgment of antemillenarians (see Mark 8:38). I find, “Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” Here, this so-called latter coming is expressly applied to those who have not owned Him during His humiliation; and the same observation may apply to Matt. 16:27. If it be alleged that this is at the raising of the rest of the dead, what shall we say to Luke 9:26? “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the angels.”

And on the other hand, what shall we say, if we compare Jude, where He is said to come with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment on similar offenders? And not only does the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God minister to the raising of the dead in Christ at what this statement would call His first coming, but we are expressly told, in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, that, when He comes, according to their views (on which we say nothing), antemillennially, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe, giving rest to those that have suffered with Him in His humiliation, the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels. It appears to me, that this also flows from ignorance of the plan and scope of scripture, i.e., of the counsels of God in Christ our common Lord. But it proves neglect of scripture. On the whole, a greater confusion of scriptures, and substitution of human conjectures and supposition, can hardly be supposed, than the latter part of the tract.

But our only endeavor must be to obtain tangible portions of it for the purpose of which I write this. The writer proves, from Isa. 65:25, that the curse continues in the land of Israel, because the judgment, it is said, shall rest on the serpent— “dust shall be the serpent's meat.” And as John had said, that there should be no more curse, not speaking of the land of Judea, nor of any place (unless it comprehend all places), but abstractedly and absolutely, but that the throne of God and the Lamb should be in it, in applying this “no more curse” to the city (I do not say erroneously), he says it must apply to the portion of land which is outside the city, and not in it at all, i.e., that part which was for the Prince. For he perceives no impropriety in extending it out of the city. For this “no more curse” means only that there shall be curse still all over the world, except a little portion of land in Judea, which, however, is not within the city, where the curse is not to be. We may remark, too, if Revelation of John be thus applied, the tract contradicts itself; for the throne of God and the Lamb has come upon earth before the third judgment of which he speaks, and the city had the glory of God. And the throne of David and the throne of God are on the earth together; and the whole house of Israel have access to it.

Again, the writer states, “that the Gentiles, which are to have their lot in the land of Israel, are those who are expecting the Lord's personal coming,” &c.; and that he does apply their being changed to giving a long life during the millennium. But he does not apply the coming, on which they are to receive that change, to the first coming—; (i.e. before the millennium, or at least, when they are to be caught up into the air.) That is, in order to satisfy his view of the Gentiles who are to live, in the land of Israel, he thinks that he and his friends are to be the favored persons, but as the Apostle Paul says, that “we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord” are to be caught up; and, as he wishes not to be then ever with the Lord, but to live in Judea or the land of Israel, he settles that this means two comings, and the catching up must belong to the latter, and the change does not mean from corruption to incorruption, but merely from a short life to a long one. “For,” says he, “if not, where else are we to get people to bring the Jews home? Wicked Gentiles would not do it.” In the first place, it appears that the Jews are brought home before the appearing of the Lord; in the next, why not?

Cannot the Lord make any nation minister to the deliverance of His favored people, whatever their own objects and state may be? And such seems to be the very tenor of prophecy—that it shall be an imposed service; and the writer and his friends must leave it to those whom God chooses.

But let us compare Paul's statements. There are two prominent ones—one in 1 Cor. 15, the other in 1 Thess. 4 “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” —(How refreshing is it to turn to Scripture!) The force of this is, I think, too evident to need comment.

We shall all be changed though we all do not sleep—π■ντες ■λλαγησ■μεθα, and we, i.e. who are not asleep, shall be changed. There is a necessary common result to be produced on all, in order to their entrance into the kingdom of God; we shall be changed alike and equally, though we shall not all sleep. We who do not sleep shall yet be changed: δε■ γ■ρ κ. τ. λ.

Not to enter further here on this deeply interesting passage, I turn to 1 Thess. 4:13-18— “But I, would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” We, says the apostle, are not to account ourselves better off than those that sleep, as if we and not they should see and meet the Lord.

(Continued from p. 160.)

Chapter 146

Reflections Upon the Prophetic Inquiry .4

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord,” &c.; that is, that when Christ shall, come, the dead in Christ shall rise first, i.e. ο■ νεκρο■, first, before we are caught up, and then ■με■ς ο■ ζπωντες ο■ περιλειπ■μενοι ■μα σ■ν α■το■ς ■ρπαγησ■μεθα. In the English there might, perhaps, be an argument on the force of the word “together;” as placed in the Greek as given here, there can be none. The catching up the saints is not spoken of in connection with the destruction of death, as the writer states. The substance of 1 Cor. 15 applies to believers only. There is, therefore, no ground of difficulty from the existence of death during the millennium, as to the application of the above cited passage. And it is remarkable that in the next page, the language of it is put into the mouths of the risen saints, as spoken on the day of the first resurrection, to which in this page the writer says it is wholly inapplicable, because death remains. In fact, it appears to me a confusion of the Jewish and Gentile dispensations—the hinge upon which the subject and the understanding of scripture turns. Here I complain not of error, but of a neglect of the substantive force of the direct testimonies of the word of God, to meet the views drawn from elsewhere and pursued in the mind beyond the testimony of the place itself; and of consequences being adduced as necessary, according to man's mind, other scripture being made subservient to these, instead of stopping at the direct testimony, till other passages gave additional light, or, at least, connecting deductions by these passages admitted hi their own force. This is alone a great hindrance to knowledge, and practically setting up men's thoughts (ignorant foolish man!) above the word of God.

This book is, indeed, a sample of the evil likely to attend upon what is valuable in these inquiries, from crude thoughts untried by scripture, attached to opinions urged as man, to the credit of the writer, which are now familiar to every body, without any new development of the mind of God in the scriptures, and assuming a title pretending to speak from God, while it speaks only from man, and that crudely, and does not apply the great facts of these revelations to the correction and improvement of men; but instead of that, uses the notions of them to exalt the holders into the only favorites of heaven—thinking every body is scorning them, whereas, in fact, they are becoming worldly through their popularity and self-complacency. It is not the inquiry into these subjects I deprecate; but men's imposing upon others conclusions not drawn, but distracting others, from the scriptural statements of the same truths. I am free to confess that I find the records of God full of consolation, enlarging instruction, holy and sanctifying exhortation, and warning. What God has revealed to man must be the saint's delight to know and must sanctify them more wholly, because it reveals more of the character of God. His revealing it is itself witness of its purpose and (blessed forever be His name!) so has He in the Lord Jesus identified Himself with man, that there is nothing of His acts that He does not reveal by His servants the prophets. Yea, all the things that He does in the Lord He makes a common subject with His people for His sake. Nay, all that He has is now largely opened; even the store-house of His eternal wisdom, and glory, and purpose in the Son is now opened and declared by the revelation of the Spirit, as the scripture, in many places, testifies to our joy and comfort. Who shall shut it up?—Who dares to do it? Rather let us

open our mouth wide that. He may fill it. But let no man mix or dissolve the streams of life by strange introductions of human mixture. Truth is the instrument of holiness; and error and weakness, to say no more, of moral conduct will ever be found to attend each other. I say, seek the truth: I say, let not men crudely impose unsound thoughts and distract the church.

One subject yet remains on which I shall shortly touch. In a deeply interesting and, I think, profitable and timely sermon of Mr. Irving's I found the following passage on false accusers. After stating that it meant the spirit of accusation generally, he says, in the “Last Days,” p. 204, “It may therefore be laid down as a general principle of doctrine, that as the law of Christian life is love, so the law of Christian life when love is rejected or maltreated is forbearance, forgiveness, blessing, and intercession with God. As the office of the Christian church on earth, is to preach, and to minister the grace of God unto all men; so also is it her office to make continual intercession before God for those who reject His offered grace, and trample under foot the blood of His covenant. And, of these two functions, the ministry of free grace, and the ministry of intercession for free grace rejected, if I were asked which is the more important, I would answer they are equally important to the integrity of love and the demonstration of divine grace; but of the two, that which is the highest and noblest exercise of love is surely intercession for him who hath spurned our love.”

What shall we say, after this, when we consider their own writings? They have come forward to the bar of public opinion (see “False Accuser,” pp. 208-10), and avowedly descended to fight their accusers on their own ground by public accusation. I feel unwilling entirely to detail here the language and statements of the article on the theology of the periodical Journals. I think Mr. Malan right, and I think Mr. Erskine (though in many respects useful, and that extensively) is entirely wrong, if judged properly by scripture, and wrong for pursuing his own thoughts without just subjection to scripture, conceiving them new, when many, very many, have held them faithfully without mistake. I am not an advocate of the religious world; but neither can I attach myself to those who, in fact becoming an isolated corner of the religions world, and setting up for the best and soundest part of it, fall into at least the same faults which they reprobate in no very courteous terms. They charge the editors of some journal with ignorance of their trade (no very courteous expression: but, while doing this, they should not have misstated the expressions of Erskine, In a way, too, which show them either falsifiers, or else ignorant of the great principles on which their trade (if they will have it so) turned. Mr. Erskine, they say, wishes to state this highly important fact, namely, that by the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity, the whole creation (i.e., limiting the word creation to this planet and the beings who inhabit it) is become beneficially interested in the work of Christ. This is certainly a very obscure and unintelligible proposition, and not Erskine's, nor representing his views. This fact, they say, he expressed by saying, “that the world is pardoned by the incarnation of Christ.” But the proposition attributed to Mr. Erskine, whencesoever drawn, is not so expressed by him. He says that “all are pardoned—believers are a little flock.” If he had said the world was pardoned (though I should have thought it an error), properly understood, I could have made an allowance for obscurity of expression: but he says all, i.e., all men, are pardoned; and on this the whole argument of the “Morning Watch” depends. The Reviewer was occupied with his own views, but there is not the slightest ground in Mr. Erskine's book for the position he takes. Righteousness is a scriptural as well as conventical term: I do not recollect that Mr. Erskine ever touches upon this, or uses the word. Scripture does; and this

renders his whole view defective, however excellent as an individual.

But the “Morning Watch,” prepossessed with its own views, and willing to have Mr. Erskine as a client or ally, has wholly passed by the whole question raised on his book, and not stated his assertions truly but as partisans, and stands itself on a level with the worse conduct of those it accuses. They themselves shall be witnesses. “The editors,” they say, i.e., of journals opposed to their views, “having refused to debate the subjects like scholars, like gentlemen, or Christians, have chosen their own ground, namely, that of personal claim to public confidence; and into that arena of their own selecting, we must descend after them.” And so indeed they have, and I sorrow for it, for I doubt not that they would much edify the church; but they have to learn that Satan can use their weakness, as well as that of their offending brethren. “And what shall we say then, if the church, forgetful of Christ's office of intercessor, and of her own high vocation to continue the same in the midst of an offending world, should take upon herself the office of accuser, and retaliate the injuries which she receiveth, instead of meekly bearing and being willing to forgive them? What if the church forget, even among themselves, the offices of mutual forbearance and forgiveness, and rage towards one another with even more bitterness and cruelty than those who care for none, of those things? What if the writings the most religious should be the most vindictive, and the society the most religious should be the society most full of judgment and accusation? Then were it not a proof that God's ordinances were changed, that His light was hidden under a bushel, that the salt path lost its savor, and that the name of God was blasphemed amongst the heathen because of His people, and that the last days were come, and that destruction was about to begin at His own house.”

But having closed this part (painfully imposed) of my subject, I turn to the more grateful part—proposing home questions, and making some observations, in the hope that it may lead some to consider topics, which, when calmly and spiritually considered, I am persuaded lead to sanctification and the edification of those that are gathered. All truth must be so: the simple question is—is this God's revealed truth or not? If it be, it is worse than idle to say it is not calculated to sanctify. In fact, I do not understand the meaning of this. It is a charge against God, the revealer; and comes ill from those who have been combating justly upon opposite grounds the abominable fraud the Roman Catholic priests had perpetrated in keeping away the scripture, the words of God generally. Is it that they are to be the judges of what, and how much, instead of the others?

We would ask them, first, why did God reveal all these things, if they are not fully inquired into? This I admit, that the statements of the same general truths are of different use and application, and the eagerness of those especially interested in prophecy, and the hasty taking up of the subject by many going beyond their measure, has introduced a very unseasonable misuse of prophetic subjects. But I must add the indiscriminate opposition of others has given great occasion to it. Thus the fact that there will be a separation of judgment, between the just and the unjust, is one which concerns man as man, and may be addressed to every soul, and especially to those wholly ignorant of divine things, and the unconverted; while the manner in which the Lord will do it, His peculiar favor and timely interposition for His people—all these, as shown in His dealings, belong to those from whom, as His suffering people, le will not hide the thing that He will do, who share in it by faith as friends of God, strangers with Him, and whose support it is.

(Continued from p. 100.)

Reflections Upon the Prophetic Inquiry .5

(Rev. 22:1.8, 1.9.)

But the question has been raised as to the facts revealed; nor have all, perhaps, judged rightly as to the use to be made of them. But their general debate has been forced by the non-reception of them by many who have a name in the church under the low state in which we all stand. This was, perhaps, to be looked for; and the testimony of the manner even of judgment calculated to awaken many out of sleep.

Next, I would ask, if the spread of Bibles and missionary exertions is to produce per se the millennium, what is the meaning of unclean spirits like frogs gathering to battle all the kings of the world to be destroyed, and that then Satan is to be bound, and the thousand years to commence? Again, they will admit, that these operations are effectual through the agency of the Spirit of God as a substitute for Christ. What distinction does the scripture mean by Christ's reigning upon the earth (His kingdom of this world), and the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of His glory? If we suffer with Him (as we do, while we are actuated by the Spirit of God in the midst of a carnal world) we shall also reign with Him. This, evidently, is a state of things essentially distinct from His reigning, as they conceive now; for it is a time of suffering. It cannot mean in heaven, or after the end of all, for then the Son will have delivered up the kingdom. And if they say it is by the prevalence of righteousness in the millennium, though that would be hard to show, how would that affect us according to their view who before then are dead?

Besides, are all the wicked to be converted? Is temptation to be removed? No outpouring of the Spirit does this. Are all to be regenerate? For, according to their views, the operation of the Spirit is still the only instrument. How is the Spirit now only an earnest till the redemption of the purchased possession, if He be then the only operating agent? But it will, perhaps, be said to be heaven. We have seen its characteristics are inconsistent with that. Is Christ, in a word, to have any other share in the triumph of the church than He has now, when the Spirit is His substitute? And let me here ask as to one point on which many. feel so strung difficulties—Is there anything inconsistent, if there be a period when the church shall be triumphant, and the saints partaking of the full joy appropriate to the prevalence of their principles by a complete change in the state of the world? For this must be admitted (or there could not be the change from suffering to triumph) that those who have been long suffering for the same principles, who have borne tribulation and sorrow, while that was the portion of those who loved Christ, should also share with their Lord in the hour when what they had so ardently suffered for should be accomplished? Such is my idea of the first resurrection.

I believe that Christ also (Who unquestionably has a distinct kingdom from the Father, though, of course, it is God's kingdom) will put forth His power for the removal of evil; that Satan will be hindered from deceiving the world; that it will cease to be a season of tribulation and sorrow and trial, and that instead of the thorn shall come up the myrtle, and that there shall be a complete enjoyment of blessings which are the church's inheritance; that this will be upon earth (the Jews

being restored, the temporal promises being ever theirs, not the Gentiles'; but that these shall enjoy the common blessing with them, as companions in this universal joy). When Christ's kingdom shall have by His power prevailed over evil, those of the Gentile, dispensation who have been faithful in the time of trial shall (the dead being raised, and the living, changed) be partakers (reigning with Christ) of the common blessing. Death, whose power in their bodies they had to suffer in their day, being perfectly overcome as to them, they will be as the angels of God in heaven, being counted worthy to obtain that age. There will necessarily be no separation between those who are thus partakers of the blessings, and those who are God's on earth. During this period there will be therefore no trial: before they are admitted into the heavenly state, Satan is loosed again, and the trial proceeds by temptation. In a word, the millennium may be considered as a restoration of Paradise under the second Adam, the restoration of communion between earth and heaven so long interrupted (Christ having destroyed them that destroy the earth).

I would suggest, too, that the instrument by which the work is to be accomplished cannot mean the dispersion of scriptural truth. It is not the sword of the Spirit, but one proceeding out of the mouth of Christ, sitting on a triumphal horse, wherewith He should smite the nations. It is treading the vintage of God's wrath. It is a destruction which will give seven years' flying from the weapons east away. It is an invitation for all the fowls of the sit to feast upon the sacrifice which God Almighty was about to make a taking to Him His judgments power and reigning; a time when, God's judgments being in the earth, the inhabitants of the world would learn righteousness; and it was by these judgments that the heathen were to be converted. We take the broadest points, because the others may be said to involve interpretation, though to us they are equally plain and perhaps more deeply interesting.

Again, if we consider the stone which became a mountain an filled the whole earth, it was upon smiting the image, and making it become as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, so that the wind carried them away, and no place was found for them. This is evidently by destructive and dissolving judgments, analogous to the character of its objects (to wit, the Gentile dispensation, and power); and it was by no ordinary providential instrumentality, for it was a stone cut out as without hands. Further, it was not by the progressive growth of anything, that other obstructing principles passed away; but some extrinsic power, not of or in the image yet analogous in the nature of its operation, and yet turning out to be the fullness of the Lord's power, suddenly appearing to destroy the image at the end of its time; and after the image was totally dissolved, it then became a mountain and filled the whole earth. “In the days of these kings,” saith the Spirit, “the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

Let not an anxiety for missionary objects hinder the acceptance of the truth. For no so strong motive for missionary exertion exists with the postmillennarians, as with those who believe God's judgments are presently coming; for that belief urges them to special labor for the gathering in of God's elect to the knowledge of the refuge, before the scourge sweeps the earth, to preserve them that have believed. If the reading of Griesbach be right, the distinction of the earthly kingdom is put beyond controversy; at any rate the testimony of a reign of Christ's power (distinct from the operation of the Spirit alone) is surely too prominent an object in the scripture to be overlooked.

One remark I would make; and it is one which struck my own mind long before the millennial views opened themselves to it. There is not an Epistle in the New Testament in which the coming of the Lord Jesus is not made the prominent object of the faith and hope of believers, for which they were to wait; and; observe, which characterizes distinctively those who should partake of His salvation [now the expectation of it is put out of view and depreciated really as much as possible], so much so that the Thessalonians seemed to have considered those who died before it came to have failed in obtaining it. It was to be a time of rest by the appearing of Jesus Christ removing the persecutors and ungodly; and now it is thrown aside, because it is connected with that which is confessedly the rest of the church. It is also that of which Peter speaks: he says there is sensible evidence directing the church so to look for it. “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we have declared unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, Until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” And this could be revealed as a day-star in their hearts.

I would remark here that the students of unfulfilled prophecy are too apt, I think, to overlook the present power of the Lord's resurrection, and thus give a handle to the objections of, I must say, the adversaries to the coming of the Lord Jesus. To the apostles and the saints who judge justly, the apprehension of His glory was the evidence of both; nor can they be separated without injury to the truth or misapprehension of the counsels of God.

This is what is doing too much now, and it is a great evil and greatly opposed to scripture. We ask then, is the church to look to the coming of Christ as the prominent object of faith, or is it not? And why? What do the scriptures teach us in that respect? Do they or do they not teach us that the happiness of the earth is to be brought about by the special intervention of God in judgment? Is His coming one calculated to quicken their faith—to make them zealous and constant for Him in their labor here—to separate them from their attachment to this present evil world—to lead them to be practically holy in this, where Christ is to visit them, instead of making death a sort of practical sanctifier, as some do?

(Continued from p. 206.)

Chapter 148

Reflections Upon the Prophetic Inquiry .6

Another subject is the restoration of the Jews to their own land. The calm and judicious W. Lowth, in a day when nothing but the force of scripture influenced him, could not withhold assent from the directness of the testimonies to this. I shall advert merely to some testimonies respecting this point, scattered through all scripture, as it appears to me, and resting on the whole plan of God's dispensed purposes. Zechariah prophesied after the restoration from Babylon. Let the promises in chapter 10 be weighed, in which He declares that He will bring Judah and Ephraim again to place them, and break down the pride of Assyria, &c. This evidently must refer to some period to come, nor can any figurative interpretation of it be given which the language does not repel.

We may remark, also, the special promises in Hosea to Ephraim or Israel as distinct from Judah—promises never yet fulfilled. But let us hear Amos: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I, will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.” It is manifest that nothing can meet this promise but a restoration not yet fulfilled.

So Zeph. 3:14, “Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. Thee Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear then not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been pat to shame. At that tithe will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you; for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes; saith the Lord.”

Ezek. 34:27, and Isa. 49 are not less strong; but I refrain from commenting on them, as they would lead to general inquiry and interpretation. And my own conviction is, that the return of Judah was but for the accomplishment of the promises relative to our Lord's first coming; and that, in the broad sense, Israel has been in captivity from Babylon until now: this, however, I do not press. Doubt has been started, on this subject, whether Israel was not corporately restored with Judah. The onus probandi evidently rests with those who say it was. But the Lord seems carefully to have secured the negative by the repeated use of Benjamin and Judah, as those specifically who were the restored people. The only ground, which is alleged directly to this point, is Ezra 2:59: “And these were they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they

could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel."

As to Anna the prophetess, and many other passages adverted to, none prove—many go to disprove—the corporate restoration of Israel to their own land. Their individual junction to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin goes as nothing to prove their corporate geographical restoration, but the contrary. If, therefore, there be any promises to this effect, they remain to be fulfilled. In fact, this was nothing more than happened to them in the days of Hezekiah, and related to religions fidelity, not temporal restoration by God; and so throughout. The passages may be found in Prideaux, under the proper date. This, however, is merely a collateral point, though I think a plain one. If there be a direct testimony that Israel shall be planted again in their own land, and never plucked up, it is plain it has never been fulfilled. The more the extended prophecies on this subject are considered, the more it will be found connected with the promises of God in the latter day as regards the blessings of the church, and the circumstances which attend it.

Nor, indeed, is it apparent how the former verses of Deut. 30 can be fulfilled without it, nor without the excision of the Gentiles as a body, which is another inquiry we would make. Is there not a time of the Gentiles which is to be fulfilled, when blindness will depart from Israel? and is there not then in this chapter an explicit promise of their restoration? But is it not expressly stated, as Paul left it in conditional assertion, that the Gentiles would be cut off, when God would plead against all nations? Is not the apostacy of the Gentile profession as plainly stated as possible, and its consequences? Men may say that this applies to Popery; but it is called "the vine of the earth," a figure well known in scripture, as importing the dispensation of the church generally. And the unclean spirits, who are to gather the kings of the earth, do not gather them against the Lamb by the instrumentality of Popery only, but by the love of power and Atheism. Popery is statedly merely one of those principles which are to be the instruments of bringing men to judgment.

"They answered and said unto him Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." If these things be so, there will be a direct manifestation of Christ, of the judicial power of the Lamb, quite distinct from any of the present expectations of those who reject the study of prophecy. When John saw heaven opened and beheld a white horse, and He that sat upon him called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth He judge and make war—when he saw the person and glory of the Word of God, it was the revelation of something wholly different from the secret operations of the Spirit of God; and it was something characteristically different from previous providential judgments. There had been hail, and thunder, and lightning, and earthquakes; but this was a manifestation of Him (who had been long hid behind instruments, Who had governed the world as one that suffered apparently His church to grow up and spring he knew not how) because the harvest of the earth was ripe. The ordained government of the earth and the operation of the Spirit of God Was that by which He has ruled the church hitherto; therefore it was a suffering church. Now He was Himself manifested in His power, and therefore the church became triumphant.

No one can read the Revelation without perceiving the intended contrast, so to call it, nor other prophecies without seeing how the whole system of God's dispensations arrange themselves round this great fact. The Son manifested to tread the winepress of wrath is not the Spirit subduing willing souls by the gospel. The operation, everywhere given, of the gospel, is the gathering out of souls before the wrath come, nor is there a testimony, nor the revelation, of the universal spread of

the knowledge of the Lord, as far as my recollection serves me, which is not directly accompanied by, or rather conversant about, the judgments of an adverse power, or the declaration of the special blessings to the house of Israel, whose receiving shall be as life from the dead. I would here just shortly refer to Psa. 72; 108 and the consecutive psalms from 91-100. To those who may be interested in the inquiry, Mal. 2:3 may also be consulted, and they may recur again to the prophecy of the stone cut out without hands, and Dan. 7.

There are many passages more fully opening the subject, but perhaps not so strongly leading a previously unconvinced mind as these. It would have been my own delight (oh, how much more so!) to have rather followed, in inquiry, the opening of scripture as to the ways and promises of God as our God. O high and holy place! utterly unworthy we to have it, enjoying the confidence, because the mercy, of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. I mean not of myself, but with the brethren in the Lord. But they have forced upon me the necessity of other inquiries.

In the suggestions I have made to them, I have only put the questions in the broadest terms, on which scripture throws a glare of light, which, as far as I can see, cannot be struggled with, if we pursue our common attainments, walking by the same rule, and minding the same thing; if in anything we be differently minded, God will reveal this also unto us. Let, me beseech the brethren to be thus minded. Let me beseech those who yet stand out against these truths to inquire for themselves, to lay them to heart, to submit themselves to the word; not to throw scorn (I pray them to forgive me for thus speaking)—on any part orate testimony of God before they have inquired the purpose of it and their own concern in it. Are they not every way debtors to do this? Let those whose minds are open pursue, with humble desire, inquiry into the Lord's mind. We are surely all interested in knowing that. Let us pursue it as learners in the fear of God, not as speculators; as those who see that God is great in His glory and righteous in His judgments, and one that judgeth the earth and holdeth the waters in the hollow of His hand. The Lord has revealed, much, all that man can comprehend; and it belongs to us and to our children, that we may keep the sayings of His book. There are those, doubtless, who will please themselves, and not seek the church's good; but such shall bear the burden, whoever they be. In many things we all offend. I pray God to give His grace to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. O blessed time, when the church should care one for another, as fellow-sufferers or fellow-heirs, as He did, Who needed none of their sympathy or had but little of it when needed, and Who knew no want, no necessity but the necessity of love. May we be found laboring in this spirit when He shall return! Oh, may His people be perfected in Him, one and all! His grace and the knowledge of His glory be with them in every place. And to Him be praise and dominion and glory according to His Father's will. Amen.

J. N. D.

(Concluded from p. 288.)

Chapter 149

Remarks on a Prophetic Letter

(Published in the “Christian,” Sept. 28th, 1887.)

The title arrests the attention. But on reading the letter we find it is not about prophecy, but about the divergence more than fifty years ago of Mr. A. N. Groves from Mr. Darby.

But the point for us is the subject and the spirit of this letter; and we find, underneath the profession of accepting and honoring all that is good, a real indifference to the great truth that forms the foundation of Christianity. This may not be apparent to a stranger's hasty glance; nevertheless it is painfully distinct to those who are acquainted with the circumstances that led to the Bethesda or O. B. separation. And the causes of the separation and accompanying facts must be known to have an adequate Judgment if not of this letter, certainly of the motive for calling it “prophetic” and of its reproduction.

In it there are not wanting expressions of love, “dear Darby,” &c., and also a few sneers at the friends of Mr. D.: which are genuine? Or did the feelings alternate, while G. was writing the letter?

Its key-note is that not “light” but “life” is the ground of communion. There cannot be communion without life; but life per se is not the ground of communion. The Holy Spirit sent down after redemption acts in those who have the life of Christ and does indeed make all who possess it members one of another, and therefore is the “bond” between all who now believe. The ground of communion, of sitting together at the Lord's Table, is thus much more than the possession of life. Further, godliness of walk, and sound doctrine are assumed in scripture, above all, due honor to Christ—His divine glory, and the absolute parity of His humanity—not only the truth of this fixed in our souls, but complete separation from all who dishonor His Person, or who are indifferent to it. The writer of this letter was, and those who reprint it, are in the position of such. indifference. This resolute stand for Christ is what Mr. G. deplored and witnessed against as an evil thing. In thus witnessing against (what. he thinks) evil, is he not doing the thing he condemns?

On Christ's behalf to resist the devil is the first of Christian duties. But the real cause of separation among those who were together does not appear plainly in his letter it is comparatively out of sight. At the close he speaks of possible reasons for separation, and that, if he witnessed against evil, he would separate from all, on his principles (and they are his, not God's) he would receive all! He never had faith in the holy gathering power of the Spirit to Christ nor have his admirers. He mentions baptism in connection with Mr. D. But different views of baptism never separated Mr. D. from any Christian; for it is well known that many, if not most, of those with whom he was in fellowship, differed from him on that point. What caused the separation of 1848-9 was of infinitely greater importance than any such question. The real cause of separation is ignored by those who can find anything “prophetic” in so fundamentally shallow a letter, to say nothing of its more deplorable features.

Briefly, about forty years ago or more a blasphemous doctrine was taught concerning the person of Christ—that He was born as an outcast from God, i.e. born like others under darkness and

curse, and at a distance from God, but that by holiness as well as by baptism! He had to win and did win His way into the favor of God (though elsewhere it was taught to be only through His own death on the cross!). To attribute to Christ such a relationship before God is rightly styled blasphemy of the worst sort. At that time brethren generally condemned the doctrine, but some would not repudiate connection with those gatherings where this evil doctrine was unjudged, on the misleading plea of receiving saints spite of their being in a sect. They would receive individuals that kept up intercommunion with those who taught or held the blasphemy. Notably Bethesda insisted on receiving a Christian, no matter what his association might be, provided he himself professed personally not to accept the heterodoxy. Thus, such an one could return whence he game, and again come back forgetting the truth that one leprous stone defiles the house, and that the leprosy if not removed entails the destruction of the whole house. The glory of Christ's Person was thus openly made secondary to what was called brotherly love, in defiance of all we held from the beginning, excepting Mr. G., who of course ranged himself among such. Those with whom Mr. D. met abhorred this neutral ground, and refused fellowship with all who in the slightest way stood knowingly connected with it. Is it not striking that the letter is made to cover that monstrous high treason against Christ? It is really “prophetic” of the O. B. party.

All G.'s talk about life and accepting the good he sees in others, and not witnessing against evil, is nothing less than a plea for sin. It was bad enough to make light of ecclesiastical error in the establishment or dissent; it is far worse to justify those who, after dissociating themselves from human system, would form another—and far more evil union, where Christ may be dishonored, and His glory annulled in order to keep up a human idea of brotherhood with bigger numbers, and with more or less sanction of the denominations, or “churches,” as G. regards them. For he never knew what God's church is.

Many expressions of desire for Christian fellowship unshackled by peculiar doctrine, which seem to flow out from a heart enlarged by love to all saints, are found here at the expense of Christ's honor, and the glory of His Person. For the writer's party in the hour of trial failed to give Christ His true place (as indeed is the evil principle of this letter), and would receive in joint-fellowship those who do and those who do not regard it as of paramount importance. Now without it, as a fundamental confession, Christianity is nothing but a delusion. This immense truth—the divine glory and the sinless humanity of Christ's Person—is the sine qua non of God's glory in redemption. To this truth of Christ's Person the admirers of this letter have proved indifferent. It is a solemn thought, that indifference to it opens the floor to that blasphemy which affirms that the Lord Jesus was liable to loathsome disease and death like another! Of late years another of the same school published that the Lord at one period of His life here below was this, if not a leper!

The writer's principle pleads for indifference to those who hold evil, if they are supposed to have life. But if such wickedness is not to be witnessed against, is, it not the vilest affront put on Christ, Who to this end was born, and for this cause came into the world that He should bear witness unto the truth? “And no lie is of the truth.” Now if this be the character of the letter, it must equally apply to him who requested it to re-appear in the “Christian.” One might perhaps say to him and others with him, “Ye did run well: who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” The truth is lost for neutrals. One might surely pass a severer sentence on such.

Let us give a moment to one or two statements, in this letter written by Mr. Groves in 1836, which thought worthy to be again thrust before the eyes of professing Christians in 1887.

“You will be known more by what you witness against than what you witness for.” Does the writer forget that truth is and must be now aggressive? That we have to maintain a spiritual warfare? That the Christian is a soldier of Christ, and is called to put on the whole armor of God, one part of which is the sword of the Spirit? It is offensive, as well as defensive. That sort of Christianity which excludes all antagonism to error, however dishonoring to the Lord, has a sweet ring to some ears, but it is the knell of death. There are cases (and this is one) where not to witness against antichrist is to witness for him. Neutrality begins with being neither cold nor hot: we know its judgment. But we are told that witnessing against evil, is practically witnessing against all but ourselves. God forbid that the character of our testimony should differ from Christ's! Christ is ignored, Who was the True Light, no less than Life. The antagonism is false. The word of God says, “Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” In the evil day (as it is now) we have to “withstand” as well as to “stand.” Neutrality can do neither; it is in itself a fallen thing.

Take the following, “As far as I know what those principles were in which I gloried on first discovering them in the word of God, I now glory in them ten times more, since I have experienced their applicability to Blithe various and perplexing circumstances of the present state of the church; allowing you to give every individual, and collection of individuals, the standing God gives them without identifying yourself with any of their evils.” This is a long sentence, and contains a serious avowal that the truth is not gloried in for its own sake so much as for its principles being applicable to every place of religious profession, and that he can so give not only to individuals, but to companies, the standing that God gives. Is not this to say that the various forms of religions association have a standing from God?

They were “Churches” to Mr. G.; they are not to God's word. He levels God's standard of the church down to the errant will of man. Nor need we wonder; for he can hear the church's Lord blasphemed, and yet not witness against it! Separation from evil is only true witness against it; and what evil is so abhorrent to, the Spirit of God as that which dishonors or makes light of Christ's Person?

I wonder the “endorser” did not omit the following; yet it may be well as showing how some minds are caught by mere sound: “The common life or common blood of the family of God (for the life is in the blood),” What think you of the “common blood” of the family of God? and of the attempt to justify this strangely unscriptural expression by the still stranger quotation,'“ For the life is in the blood,” from Leviticus.

We are prophetically told that the “little bodies” no longer stand forth the witnesses for the glorious and simple truth, so much, as against all we judge error, and that this is to lower us from heaven to earth! Be the bodies little or big, is it lowering the testimony from heaven to earth to contend earnestly for the glory of Christ's Person and to separate from those who do not so contend? it is a natural conclusion that he who requested the insertion of this letter in the “Christian” is as indifferent to it as Mr. G. or the loose principles of his “prophetic letter.”

Again, “dear Darby” is told that some “little flocks” are fast tending to the position where the most narrow-minded and bigoted will rule, and he (J. N. D.) is charged with making light, not life, the

measure of communion. That is, we are now so charged. This is false. But if requiring that all admitted into fellowship from companies that tamper with antichrist should abjure this blasphemy against Christ, if this be the light the writer means; we do make it a test in accordance with 2 John.

Liberty of conscience is demanded—liberty for what? To this end Rom. 14:3 is quoted. ‘Liberty of conscience' as to eating or not eating is at God. But only think of compromising the truth as to Christ's Person (the real motive for reproducing this letter) down to the level of eating or not eating herbs! Is it not a perversion of scripture?

Latitudinarianism, indifference, disobedience, or by whatever other name the various forms of Mr. G.'s evil principle may be known, comes out boldly in printed capitals, “I would INFINITELY RATHER bear with all their evils than SEPARATE from THEIR GOOD.” Bearing with evil and not witnessing against it by separation from it is fellowship with it and simply unholiness. Is this the position of him who by requesting the republication of this letter, makes it his own? The Word says, “'Cease to do evil, learn to do well.” We are not told to bear with such evil, but to be separate in every way, (2 Cor. 6).

It is said we have a “Shibboleth” as well as those from whom we separate. The one who now stands in the place of the writer says he has none. Yet he is mistaken; for the Shibboleth of neutrality is the denial of the divine test of 2 John. He and his are in the position of Israel when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. To this he would reduce the church of God, and call it communion in life. To “light” he does not pretend. He talks, of uniformity and deprecates it, except what he calla “perfect spiritual uniformity” which amounts to this— “You may think as you please about this or that fundamental truth; only let us unite—and this is perfect SPIRITUAL UNIFORMITY!” To me it is the perfect abandonment of spirituality and of true unity in principle.

Unity, if not “uniformity,” is required by God. There is a test given to us of God; and by His grace all among us pronounce it. Underneath it is this principle, that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.

The separation which has existed for nearly forty years unto this present day is that those who are represented by Mr. G. do not honor the. Son even as they honor the Father. They are in ecclesiastical fellowship with evil; the house of which they form part has a leprous stone in its walls. It may have been scraped again and again during the last forty years; still it is leprous. Will the leprous house ever be taken down and cast into an unclean place?

This letter as a whole I regard as an ungodly pleading for the allowance of sin in the assembly. It is a denial of corporate holiness. For in a company where the glory of Christ is touched, or where His dishonor is not absolutely refused, there incorporate unholiness. No doubt when the letter first appeared, it was exposed; but the revival of the letter demands some fresh notice, even if feeble.

R. B.

Oct. 11, 1887.

P.S. It may be added that Mr. G. was known to hold principles “entirely at variance” with Brethren's. What could one expect from a person who failed to see the difference between “the kingdom of heaven” and “the church” He consequently misused the parable of the wheat-and-tare field to oppose the godly separateness of the saints. Like Papists, &c., he applied to the church

what our Lord said of the world. For the field is the world, not the church; and in the world there can be no righteous separation till judgment. Was it intentionally to be so in the church of God?

Chapter 150

Propitiation: Questions on C.E.S.' Doctrine

Q. 1. Dear Mr. Editor,

Referring to the query in the last month's number of the “Bible Treasury” as to a passage in “Recent Utterances,” dealing with propitiation, and your reply thereto, it may interest many of your readers to peruse the following extract, which may be found on pages 562 and 563, vol. vi. (Expository), of the Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, edited by William Kelly. The italics are my own.

“Set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.” Why so? Because if we have nothing more to be done, Christ has nothing more to do. (I speak not of the priestly work, but of bearing away sins). He is resting, having nothing more to do (chap. 10.). The offering has been made and cannot be repeated (chap. 8:2, 3). The whole of the priesthood is carried on in heaven itself. The offering was another thing. The offerer brought the victim, the priest received the blood and carried it in. On the day of atonement there was another thing: the priest had to go through the whole thing by himself—not carrying on the work of intercession, but that of representing the people. Christ took this place. He could say “Mine iniquities,” &c., for He bore our sins. We can never speak of bearing our sins; He the sinless One bore them for us. He was the victim, and at the same time the confessor, owning all the sins. Then, as priestly work, He carries in the blood, having offered Himself without spot to God (the burnt offering in that sense). He was “made sin.” He offered Himself freely up, and the sins were laid on Him: first He takes that dreadful cup, then goes and sprinkles that place. His priesthood is entirely in heaven. The tabernacle was on earth: there was the court of the tabernacle; and inside the court was out of the world, and not inside heaven. He was lifted up (John 12) to draw all men unto Him.

For further instances of the author's views, see same volume, page 537, fifteen lines from the top; page 555, lines 1-21; page 582, line 13; and in vol. vii., page 85, five lines from the bottom, and page 284, ten lines from the bottom.

Now I quote the above not as settling, or even tending to settle, the point in dispute—the word of God will do that for subject minds, but in order to show that at least one “well-taught” man held the views you and others so strongly denounce, and that at least one editor, other than the editor of the party organ to which you allude, sent forth these views without one note of warning.

To me the solemn thing in the present and recent controversies is the prevalence of mere assertion; and absence, or distortion, of the word of God; and I am thankful that you refuse the glaring attempt at this latter, recently perpetrated by Mr. P. But this is all foreseen; for speaking, I doubt not, of this very Epistle to the Hebrews, Peter tells us of those who are unlearned and unstable wresting to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:15, 16.)

May the Lord keep us, in deed and in truth, holding fast His word, and, if not consonant therewith, letting our creeds and views go.

A. Without consenting to open these pages to controversy, I print J. F.'s effort to implicate J. N. D. in the strange doctrine of Mr. C. E. S. on propitiation. It seems the fashion now, on both sides of the Atlantic, to quote the late Mr. D. for errors which he never taught but abhorred. It were better to stick to scripture. Similar blunders (to give them the mildest designation) had been made in his lifetime. Many witnesses must remember this or that brother saying, “But, Mr. D., the Synopsis says so and so,” to which came the prompt reply, “Then the Synopsis is wrong.” The truth is, however, that only these brothers were wrong; for the Synopsis was right, and tallied with the fresh statements of its author.

After examining carefully all the passages we are now referred to, I affirm that Mr. S.'s heterodoxy finds no countenance from the writings, any more than from the oral ministry, of Mr. D. How then account for this confident but baseless reference? The very passage cited at length distinguishes the high-priestly action on the day of atonement from the whole of the priesthood carried on in heaven itself. The propitiation was on the cross of Christ, Whom God set forth a mercy-seat through faith in His blood; and when He set Himself down on the right hand of the majesty on high, it was as having Himself made the purification of sins. It is mere fiction that He had to make propitiation there. It is true that Mr. D., like everybody else, has allowed himself, from the Aaronic type, the figurative language of Christ's “carrying in the blood,” &c. just as he elsewhere speaks of burying the remembrance of our sins in the grave of Christ. Is it possible that any are so “unlearned and unstable” as to take such words in a literal and material way?

In not a vestige of his Collected Writings does Mr. D. teach propitiation after death, in heaven, and in the disembodied state, consequently, before resurrection, as Mr. S. teaches: all which things are false and no truth, but the undermining and supplanting of revealed truth by a really revolting dream from the enemy. Readers who are not leavened will see that Mr. D.'s doctrine was no other than that which has been now, as always, maintained in these pages, if they weigh his Doctrinal iv. 325, where he says, “save the fact of propitiation in Chapter 2 [Heb.] in which the high-priest represented the people (not a proper act of priesthood, though of the high-priest on the day of atonement).” Now the pith of Mr. S.'s theory is the putting together of Heb. 2:17; 9:12, and 8:4, which results in deadly error annulling the cross, and inventing a ghostly priesthood; whereas Mr. D. expressly discriminates Heb. 2:17; and thus maintains the holy balance of the truth, giving the cross its fundamental value, and showing the true distinctive character of priesthood on high. Mr. D. expressly calls the propitiation “an exceptional case.” It was here below and by the blood of the cross, though the right hand of God in heaven alone adequately expresses its moral glory and efficacy.

But if plain scripture is so gravely perverted, we must not wonder at the misunderstanding of a dead saint's words. If he had been alive, they would probably have been lot alone. But it is well, if error be at work, that it should come out plainly, and that we should know who seriously stand for the truth.

Yours faithfully,

J.F.

Q. 2. “Reception at the Lord's table.”

A. The true standard by which to try the question is the claim not of a Christian, but of Christ, as revealed by the written word; and this in spirit, not letter. Compare 1 John 5:2.

Now the question raised of late years among us is one of value for the Christ of God, or of indifference to Big dishonor indirectly if not directly. An ecclesiastical error of episcopacy, Presbyterianism, or independency is quite subordinate. A known saint of proved godliness, being a member of these ostensibly orthodox societies, we receive, if seeking to break breed; but we should require him first to clear himself if false doctrine were taught where he goes. Still more peremptorily should we refuse one who came from a heterodox party, as Campbellites, Irvingites; &c. even if he were said to be ever so pious and possessed personal soundness. Scripture is too plain: he is a partaker of their evil deeds, and we decline to license his lukewarm and leavened state. The assembly can rightly be nothing else than the pillar and support of the truth, without becoming a party to Christ's shame, and, in these last days especially, a trap for unwary souls. The present ruin of the church in no way alters the responsibility, though the sphere be only two or three on that ground; otherwise it is at best a human society, exposed to Satan instead of shielded of the Lord, even were each soul there a saint.

It would be well to say plainly where the many simple Christians are, whose only disqualification seems to, be that others call, them “Open brethren.” If known to be only so called, and not such really they would claim and have help to guard them, from the snare they are exposed to, by teaching them truth more fully. All would welcome a call for care in this way, One such company lately came before us; and God was pleased to clear their way; and they are happily in fellowship, gathered to Christ's name, instead of floating without divine principle or center. Another recently presumed to be such proved to be O. B. A third for which simplicity was vaunted, the O. B. declared to be “a bad meeting,” and too loose for them, though individually admissible. But those of us, who, moving most about have the best means of information, do not know of these undefiled meetings; and we are certainly guiltless of refusing any snob persons. And, if we, believe scripture, we are sure that Christians may be defiled by a lax principle which glosses over evil generally, and particularly in doctrine. It is a deep fall when a Christian sinks below even the law of God—“though he wist it not, yet is he guilty.” Could we any longer, in dealing, with so delicate a case, trust the spiritual judgment of one so dull in hearing God's word? Only he who is firm in truth can safely show grace, Such looseness as this is really to have slipped away from God's principles into a practice never yet sanctioned; and may it never be!

Nor is it ignorant souls that have, given us trouble, but rather people more or less intelligent, anxious for their ease or zealous for their friends, but heartless as to Christ or the responsibility of those gathered to His name corporately. Of this character is the argument from those within guilty of intimacy in private with such as are publicly rejected. How sad, instead of censuring this sort of laxity, to apply it as a reason to throw down the holy barriers, or make it seem a yoke too hard to bear! There is a wide margin, on the one hand, between treating an offender as a heathen man and a publican, and, on the other, receiving him at the Lord's table.

So also the balance is uneven and the weights unjust which put the O. B. companies with Anglicanism and dissent. Both the Church of England and the Nonconformists emerged from darkness into better light; whereas the O. B. began by departing from what was of God in order to screen the partisans of an antichrist, and have never cleared themselves from this plague-spot: to

do so would be to give up their raison d'être. Then, again, the O. B. profess, like ourselves, to be gathered to Christ's name, and deny that they are a sect, as they believe Anglicans and Dissenters to be. In both ways therefore it is untrue and unjust to deal with them alike, according to our conviction and that of the O. B. God judges according to profession; and so should we. The falling back of the O. B. on congregational ground also is to escape from corporate responsibility. But this aggravates their guilt, instead of leaving us, more free to receive individually from them, as from churches or chapels. What then is the worth of the palliation before us?

Indeed it may be doubted if any respectable teacher among the O. B. would go so far as the text and note of this paper to destroy the true force of Matt. 18:18-20. Think of lowering it down to Christian intercourse apart from any ecclesiastical position! Thus to blot out the solemnity of “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven,” and reduce it to ordinary prayer and Christian intercourse, looks like infatuation, as it certainly is a misinterpretation of the first magnitude. And this is the more deplorable because the writer in his last printed “Letter” taught the contrary—taught the truth here we all hold as of the deepest importance practically. Now he denies it to the irreparable loss of himself and all who are influenced thereby, if any should be so weak as to turn away from the very voice of the good Shepherd Himself. Certainly we who profit incalculably by this rich provision of the Savior's grace are not, if wise and, true, the men to condone the guilt of so mischievous a perversion. May the Lord recover by and to His own truth, and save the weak and careless from shipwreck.

Psalm 19

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork.”

It is to be remarked that it is not here said that creation generally declares the glory of God, because this would have included the earth as a part of it; and it would not have been true, for since the fall of Adam, the curse of God rests upon the earth, and it brings forth “thorns and thistles,” which bear witness to man's degradation and ruin rather than to God's glory.

When God laid the foundations of the earth (Job 38:4), “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” There was joy in heaven in sympathy with God concerning this earth. Man was not yet formed, neither had his sin come in to spoil the scene. But soon it came, and the song of joy was hushed, and mourning became more suitable to all in sympathy with God. And so it is to this day, as the Lord has said, (Matt. 5:4.) “Blessed are they that mourn.” What godly soul can fail to mourn over such a scene if in fellowship with Christ? But such “shall be comforted.” In the meantime, we read no more of joy in the hosts of heaven connected with the earth, until the Lord Jesus Christ entered the scene (Luke 2:13, 14). Then there was joy again in fellowship with God, for now He had found on earth an object in a man—the second Man, the last Adam, who knew no sin, and in whom His good pleasure could rest. But alas I such was, the depth of moral ruin in which sin had plunged mankind, that though a multitude of the heavenly hosts came down to praise, and to welcome His advent, man—the race for whose salvation He came—had no eyes to see, nor heart to appreciate, such unspeakable grace. Think of this, and what He suffered at the ungrateful and rebellions hand of His own creatures. Yet it was not only at the unrighteous hands of man that He suffered a cruel and ignominious death, but He bore on the cross the infinite and righteous judgment of God against our sins. “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” (Psa. 22:1). “All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.” (Jonah 2:3, etc.) Could anything more solemnly prove the utter ruin of our race, than the fact, that when the Son of God came in grace to deliver men from that rain, they despised and rejected Him? It would have been bad enough surely, if the Jews had stoned Him, but they handed Him over to the Gentiles, thus giving that which was emphatically holy to the dogs. This was an enormous aggravation of their national guilt, as John 19:11 teaches. And what, on the other hand, could more blessedly shew the love of God, and the infinite value in His sight of the atoning death of the Lord, than the fact, that when the “new song” is sung in heaven, so many that sing shall be of that race that hated Him, spat upon Him, and crucified Him? But through unutterable grace, they will be washed from all guilt in His most precious blood, and “the last shall thus be first.”

Although we have no song of joy over this earth, and no witness to God's glory from it as a part of His creation, the heavens still declare His glory, and their testimony is constant and uninterrupted. “Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.” It is, moreover, universal, for “there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.” “Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” In them (the heavens) He hath set a tabernacle for the sun, “which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth

as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven and his circuit to the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

What right-minded person can fail to admire the works of God as displayed in the heavens, or in the earth? They are surely for man's admiration and enjoyment; but it is a fatal mistake to be satisfied with them, beautiful as they are. They are tokens of God's creative power and goodness; but they leave the soul too surely unconverted. God cannot be savingly known except through the living and abiding word (1 Peter 1:23), which reveals Christ, in Whom the Father Himself is revealed and glorified, and our need met; and not only this, but in Whom we have a worthy object to fill and gratify our hearts forever. We learn from Rom. 1 that the utmost that can be learned by the contemplation of creation alone is God's eternal power and Godhead—His creative power; but this does not meet the sinner's need, nor does it display God's grace. To know His eternal power and Godhead—His Almightiness, if that be all, could only fill the soul with terror, and rightly so. Faith cometh (not by seeing the mighty works of creation but) by hearing and hearing by the word. of God (Rom. 10:17), as it is written (Isa. 4:3), "Incline your ear and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live." And hence what next follows in our Psalm is most important and most precious, directing us to the life-giving word. "The law of Jehovah is perfect, converting the soul." It is not the decalogue that is here spoken of, but rather the then word of God as a whole the scriptures in contrast with the witness of created heavens already referred to. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John 5:11). The law of Moses admirably wrought for a given purpose, we may say, to convict of sin; it did not reveal God's righteousness for sinners to believe, but claimed righteousness from sinners for God, which they were incapable of rendering. The law of Jehovah, i.e. as already stated, His O.T. word, is perfect. Being the direct testimony of God Himself, it "is sure," and may be fully relied upon, and it maketh "wise the simple." To the caviler, i.e. to one who prefers his own reasoning to believing, it is foolishness, because it makes nothing of his pretensions. Instead of calling on men to fulfill righteousness and so flattering him as if he were able, it holds out a present, and perfect, and eternal salvation, as a free gift without money and without price (Isa. 55:1), and not even for the asking, and still less for the deserving, but for the taking. Man does not know his need of such grace, and therefore despises and rejects, it, being ignorant alike of God and of himself.

"The statutes (i.e. the precepts, e.v.) of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart." What could be more grateful to the heart than to be lovingly directed in the way we wish to go? "The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes." How much we learn of His mind by what He enjoins or prohibits! "The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether." Disciplinary judgments are not for the present joyous, but grievous (Heb. 12:11); but in the midst of trial faith owns them to be just and righteous; it never cavils with the ways of God, but as the Lord has said, "wisdom is justified by her children" (Matt. 11:19), knowing the object and end of them to be blessed—that we should be partakers of His holiness, and yielding the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. "More to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, and the dropping of honeycombs. (marg.) Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them (i.e. observing them and subjecting oneself to them, as to His commandments), there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults," i.e. from the sins I do without knowing it myself. "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins." To sin, knowing it, is

indeed presumption.

The last verse is exquisitely beautiful: no mere outward rectitude can satisfy a truly spiritual soul. Its desire and prayer is always that the inner man should be kept right. “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah, my strength, and my Redeemer.”

G.O.

Publishing

AUTHORSHIP OF “REMARKS ON THE PRESENT TIMES.”

This paper, signed J.N.D. in the B.T. for Nov. 1884, though unhesitatingly so understood abroad and vouched for by an old and attached fellow-laborer there, is almost certainly from another's hand.

Publishing

Ecclesiastical English: a series of criticisms showing the O.T. Revisers' violations of the laws of the language, &c. By G. Washington Moon, &c. London: Hatchards, 187, Piccadilly. 1886.

This is the second part of the author's “Revisers' English.” Any intelligent reader has only to read the vol. to be satisfied that the Revisers of the O.T. know the English tongue no better than those of the New. Their inconsistency too is as distressing as their ignorance. No better guide could be recommended than the two vols. of Mr. Moon, as correctives of common errors in English speaking and writing,-errors which really bristle in the Revised Version. Was Dr. Angus overawed by Oxford and Cambridge? He should not have forgotten that learned men often write bad English.

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Chapter 153

Purchase and Redemption

There is nothing that characterizes fallen man more than the love of change. In an unfallen state there was not even a desire for it, had it been possible. And the very reverse will characterize the rest of glory, that rest which “remaineth for the people of God.” But, in the meantime, one sees man trying to find in change a relief from his misery, to drown all serious thoughts by a continual recourse to some new thing, some fresh effort, some novel experiment. This is so true that certain sages of this world define happiness to be change: could they really condemn themselves more? They thereby show that they have no knowledge of God; for, as God Himself is the Unchanging One, so He brings His people to know even now peace with Him; yea, a state of calm settled blessedness, of repose for the spirit, of rest in His love, His peace, that would be utterly ruined by the suspicion of a change. They thus tell their own sad tale, that they are far from God, that they taste a misery which is not in any wise done with, but only concealed by constant fluctuation, if peradventure they might find—I will not say comfort, but—forgetfulness of their sorrow. Such is the estate of man fallen: nothing more dismal; and men are afraid to face it: else they might look out of all these shifts of wretchedness to the Unchanging One, Who can change all things for us, and Who so does through His own Son, to give to us a blessedness which does not change.

Nor is it only men of the world that we see thus ensnared: Christians are apt to be affected by the thoughts of the age, of those around them. Among the Christians of the New Testament none show this more than the saints at Corinth. The reason is plain. They still admired the refined world and its opinions; and they were, therefore, more or less drawn into the feelings and ways of the world. This appears not only elsewhere, but in that which gave occasion for the apostolic teaching in this part of the chapter. We can understand it well. The condition of a slave (and he was writing about slaves) in those days was no doubt distressing. Take a heathen master, where there was the grossest moral degradation, with Christian slaves men or women: these could scarcely escape the sight and sound of most defiling communications, they must ever be exposed to that which was irreconcilably opposed to the purity of new life in Christ. One can understand how natural the desire might be, in the heart of a slave, to be delivered from such a state of things; but to set the heart on a deliverance of this kind is the very thing the apostle here rebukes. He would not have it made an object. Prayer was a different thing, if it might please God to present a door of escape; but the general principle, as laid down by him, points in the contrary direction—to abide as they had been called. And this is said expressly to those who were in the condition of bondage. But it is revealed for their comfort, that God has introduced in the Lord Jesus a principle and a power superior to any and all circumstances in ourselves or around us. Now, our faith is meant to bow to this as God's word for us; and, therefore, the cultivation or allowance of desires for shifting our circumstances is clearly opposed to faith. The duty of a Christian is subjection to God where he is; it is indeed more—confidence in His present interest and affection; in His willingness to direct, and to order all for us. May we not detect in ourselves such restlessness that we really treat. God as if He paid no heed, nor loved us—at least in our actual circumstances and present relationships on earth? What utter unbelief, and this in believers!

But the apostle takes up these questions of the Corinthians, in order to bring out the mind of God, and to give us divine counsel, while passing through such a scene as this. Therefore he lays down in a few brief words the principle— “Art thou called, being a slave (for such was the “servant” here)? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.” The utmost sobriety prevails. There in no such extreme view as speculative minds have imported into the phrase that the Christian had better remain a slave, even if he could be free. Such a dream might commend itself perhaps to the student in his comfortable library, but certainly not if he knew practically what slavery meant, especially in heathen times, and for Christians above all. “Let it not be a care to thee:” he must not treat the Lord as if He did not look upon the one He loved, nor enter into his sorrows and condition; let him believe that it was He who ordered all. It is His to arrange, ours to obey; for does it become the soldier in the field of battle to choose for himself what he shall do? Or is it a great matter that he should understand why one or another is put in any post of danger? To dispose of each rests with the one who commands.

Now there can be no doubt of Christ's love or wisdom, Who brings in what is entirely above all questions, what grace alone could conceive, and what grace now confers. Hence it is of all consequence that we should see the present power of the truth of God; for it is now that we walk by faith, now that we need its comfort and strength. Sorely we shall have the results of the divine purpose forever on high; but it is now above all that we need to walk in the faith of His grace, saying, in the hope of the glory, “The slave called in the Lord is the Lord's freedman; likewise the freeman called is the Lord's slave” (verse 22). Here we have a very blessed pointing out of the relationships of the believer, and this, too, in the true moral order for the soul. It is not first, you observe, that we are Christ's servants; we are the Lord's freemen; indeed, one is a little more, “the Lord's freedman” —he that was a slave, but is a slave no longer. The Lord's “freedman” is a word not used elsewhere, that I recollect, in the New Testament.

“Likewise also the freeman that was called is Christ's slave.” He is speaking now of the man whose position and circumstances seemed outwardly so much fairer. But he is Christ's slave. Now it is well to point out, as far as the Lord enables me, the force and the connection of this twofold place. For it is not merely that one applies to the slave and the other to the Freeman. I shall endeavor to show that both are true of every saint, and to show, too, what they are as connected with the mighty work of our Lord Jesus; for it is of the greatest consequence to see every privilege having its root in the grace of God, and all revealed in the word of God, and all centering in the person and work of Christ.

Now there are confessedly difficulties on the subject, and they have been felt so long and widely that one cannot but desire for God's children generally a clearer view of the truth: especially as growth in divine things depends on a fuller perception of Christ and His work by the Holy Spirits use of the written word. God has always so ordered it, that the soul is led into the truth by the Holy Spirit, Who will not act apart from the glory of the Lord Jesus. He may use means if He please; but every attempt to perpetuate truth in the abstract is vain. Apart from Christ it cannot be truly known. There is something exceedingly gracious of God in it, because in this way He keeps up the freshness of the truth for His saints. He does not permit it to become a science, which is in fact what theology is and boasts to be. But where, when, ever did a soul drink of the living water in those dry beds? Let me then point out the difference between what scripture calls being “bought” or purchased, as distinct from redeemed. It is a familiar fact that the words of the Spirit are not

really the same, though frequently confounded in our justly prized English Bible. The translators seem never to have suspected that there was any substantial distinction; and the mass of expositors and preachers have followed in their wake.

Take for, instance in Rev. 5:9, “redeemed us to God.” Here it is ■γορ■ζω the word not for redemption, but for purchase; and compare chap. 14:3, 4. It is, “Thou hast bought us to God.” In our chapter it is translated aright, as in 1 Cor. 6:20. The word “bought” does not mean redeem; but so thoroughly had these two thoughts been identified in the minds of Christians generally that even the difference was quite ignored by the two parties who stand most opposed to one another as they have been for 1400 years. I refer to the old Pelagian struggle in the fifth century (between those who contended for grace in God to meet the sinner's ruin, and those who held up man's ability to please and serve God if he liked), or, when you come down to later times, to what is commonly called the Arminian and Calvinistic controversy. The remarkable fact is that both agree in taking these two words as equivalent; so that there has been no thought of discriminating, but the habitual confusion of the two ideas “purchase” and “redemption.” The effect of this has been most disastrous; because it hinders, not only the settlement of the question, but all clear and sound discernment of the truths revealed. It is the confounding of the two that makes the chief difficulty. It does not seem to have occurred to any engaged in the ancient or the modern strife to distinguish between the truths conveyed by these words.

What then is the scriptural connection of purchase? The apostle is here looking at Christians, slaves as well as those who had never been other than free. Of all he says, “Ye were bought with a price.” They had become by purchase the property of God; such is the effect of being bought. Right of possession had been acquired by purchase. “Ye were bought with a price:” the effect is to make the one purchased His own. If He buys, those who are bought become His slaves.

But another fact has to be considered. In 2 Peter 2:1 we find the solemn prediction that, as in the ancient people of God there were false prophets, so there should be false teachers among Christians, and how characterized? “Bringing in heresies (i.e. sects) of perdition, denying the Lord that bought them.” Here it would be unwarranted to say “denying the Lord that redeemed them.” “Denying the Lord that bought them” is true, denying the Lord that redeemed them is false. “Bought” is universal, being true of all whether they own it or not.

The Lord bought the world and every soul, in it: all mankind belongs to Him. It is not merely that He has the earth as the One Who created it; He has also bought it. After sin entered and brought in confusion and every evil work, He bought all here below with a price. So, in the parable of the treasure hid in a field (Matt. 13:44), the man who found it goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field—not the treasure but the field. Doubtless it is the treasure which gives him joy, but he buys the field, and not the treasure only. Such is our Lord's testimony.

Just so speaks His apostle as he has already cited. These false teachers deny the Lord that bought them. They refuse to own His title, they treat His blood with contempt or indifference; they gainsay, in short, the sovereign Master, the One to whom they belonged not merely by creation but by purchase. Consequently their guilt was most aggravated. It was wicked to fly, in the face of His creation glory; how much more to deny the Lord that bought them!

The same twofold circle of His belongings is taught elsewhere also. Thus, “As thou hast given Him power over all flesh” (John 17:2)—here it is the Father giving the Son Whom He loved the title over (not merely the chosen nation, or the elect in general but) “all flesh.” Then follows the inner circle of blessing, “that He may give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.” Thus we have concentric circles in the earth, the universal one of “all flesh,” and the special one of all Christians—those that have eternal life in the Son through faith. But Christ was God's gift to the world, not to believers only. Romans 3:22 is still more in point, as bringing in what is due, not to His personal glory only, but to His work: “God's righteousness through faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe.” For I utterly reject the mutilated text, which reads no more than ε■ς π■ντας το■σ πιοτε■οντας, though so given in ■ A. B C P, etc. It is easy to see how ε■ς π., might have been confounded with ■π■ π., for even Dean Alford (who does not go so far as some moderns in sacrificing every consideration to the oldest external evidence, and therefore only brackets κα■ ■π■ π.) will have it that in the theological meaning ■π■ has no real difference from ε■ς, and adds to this error the further one of referring to ver. 30 and Gal. 1:1, which in fact prove an intended distinction. But it is to me incredible that an unprincipled scribe should have seen the grave difference which results from the full reading, amply sustained as it is by ancient and widespread testimony; especially as a similar difference reappears in chap. 5:18, 19, couched in a somewhat altered form, which shows only the more emphatically how well-founded is the distinction. Even Bengel, who rightly accepted the fuller text, understood its value no more than Theodoret and other fathers, who applied ε■ς π. to the Jews, and ■π■ π. to the Gentiles. No wonder people revolted from so unsatisfactory an exposition, and were disposed to doubt the text on which it was based.

It would have been wiser to have weighed the words more fully, and sought their true force. For it ought to have been plain enough that by ε■ς π■ντας the apostle was indicating the direction of God's righteousness to all, Jew or Gentile, without distinction had it been man's righteousness, it could only indeed have been under law, and hence for the Jews alone who had the law; but it is God's righteousness by means of faith in Jesus Christ, and hence “toward all” without distinction, yet for that reason it takes effect only “upon all those who believe,” but on all such, be they Jew or Gentile. It was preached to all, for all were objects of divine compassion, and Christ died for all; but it took effect only on believers in Him, and on all of them. What can be conceived more luminous than the statement, more grave than the distinction, or more consoling than the truth, for those who bow to the gospel and Him whom, it makes known? But the distinction is enfeebled or lost in a weightier witness than Dean Alford or the Greek fathers, even in the authorized version of Rom. 5:18, where as should be rendered “unto” or “toward,” as in 3:22. The apostle is distinguishing the universal tendency or bearing of Christ's act with Adam's in chap. 5:18, from its actual effect in the following verse, which exactly answers to what we have seen in chap. 3:22. How confirmatory of the difference between purchase and redemption need not be insisted on at greater length.

Take again another case in Heb. 2. We do find undoubtedly many sons that are brought to glory, and Christ becomes the Captain of salvation to lead them there; but is this all? Did He not “by the grace of God taste death for every man? “Yea, perhaps a little more,” for everything? “This scripture embraces at least man universally. Is, then, Universalism true? Destructive falsehood; none more dishonoring to God or ruinous to man! It fundamentally undermines both holiness and love, both righteousness and grace; it virtually dissipates on the one hand sin and on the other

judgment, mercy, and salvation. If there is an appearance of goodness, it is a cloak for Satan's lie. When it is said, “that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man,” it is a witness undoubtedly of the rich and wide mercy of God; but does not this very thing immensely aggravate the guilt of those who despise it? Still the two things are plain and distinct—by God's grace the death of Jesus for every one; and His bringing “many sons to glory.” The truth is guarded on every side. There is the testimony of love to every creature; there is also the full security of the delivered.

There too redemption comes in as distinct from purchase. Redemption is a matter of distinct application and delivering power to the persons or things concerned. It is never merely a testimony of grace, or manifestation of the character of God and His goodness, reaching out to the whole scene He has created. Redemption is the intervention of God (and ultimately for the body) that breaks the bond of the enemy, and delivers the one that was captive. It may be by blood for the soul, but finally by power for the body. Thus it is always treated in scripture. Hence you find, “Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so, whom He hath redeemed” &c. (Psa. 107:2). Whom does the Spirit mean? All mankind? Not so, but Israel only.

Doubtless, when we come to the characteristic truth of the New Testament, redemption has another sphere; and where is this found? Unquestionably it is believers, Jew or Gentile, the church of God. Hence, whether you take up the Ephesians or any part of the later scriptures, where redemption is treated of as a present thing, this is the language: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” or offenses (Eph. 1:7). It is not, therefore, merely a manifestation of grace which may be despised and ineffectual; it is an unfailing work, a delivering operation, a blessing that is actually conferred and possessed: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” It is not merely that we have been purchased through the price paid, which may or may not be owned by our souls. That is, there may be persons bought that are unrenewed, and they may turn out rebels against His rights Who bought them (denying, as it is said, the Master that bought them). It is not so with redemption; here it is an actual, known, and enjoyed blessing, if you speak of the soul. It is true, however, that it is not confined to the soul. In the same chapter of the same Epistle to the Ephesians we read of the redemption of the purchased possession. Here it looks at the inheritance, when the body also shall be changed in the day of redemption.

Compare chap. 4:30. As believers in the Lord Jesus now, through His precious blood we have our sins as completely gone as in the day of judgment. It is a mistake to suppose that only then will be the decision of the great question. He that believes on God's Son is not judged; but he that believes not is already judged, because he has not believed on the name of the Only-begotten Son of God. “And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, for their works were evil.” The object of that day will be to manifest all, and to execute judgment on the unbelieving. It is now or never that in Christ we have life and forgiveness. “By Him,” as it is said, “all that believe are justified from all things,” not merely shall be. If you speak of life, it is just the same thing: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” It is a present thing. So redemption, the forgiveness of sins, is an actual state of possessed deliverance through faith in Christ and His work.

Thus then we have, with the absolute certainty of God's word, the answer to that which, however simple and certain in itself, has, proved a difficulty so general among men. Purchase is universal,

but does not necessarily secure that all who come under it now will submit to Him Who bought them. Redemption is not of the same extent as purchase, being not universal but partial. It is effectual and complete, as far as the soul is concerned, even now for those who believe. Consequently it is not at all true that, because purchase is universal, redemption should be. On the contrary, scripture shows that redemption is predicated only of a sphere which is limited, whereas purchase is an unlimited one. The creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth together and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but even we ourselves having the first-fruits of the Spirit groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption, [to wit,] the redemption of our body. God will reconcile all things, never all persons, but all things heavenly and earthly. Meanwhile believers are reconciled. “You hath He reconciled';” while the gospel was proclaimed, and so it is now, in the whole creation under heaven. Here again the testimony is unlimited, for all is purchased; but then those only have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, who believe in the Lord Jesus.

This, then, as a matter of truth, is as sure as it is plain; but next we come to its consequences, for every truth has its answer in practice, and speaks to the affections. How, then, does this truth find its reflection in our hearts? and what answer does it look for in our practical path day by day? “The slave called in the Lord is the Lord's freedman” (ver. 22). What is it that sets the captive free? What is it that brings us into liberty? Is it purchase So far from this is it that purchase, instead of giving me my liberty, rather makes me a bondman. I am His to serve, now and evermore, Who bought me with a price—His own blood. But people do not serve Christ when it is merely a question of being thus bought. There is another blessing necessary to make the claim of purchase felt, even redemption. For the adverse power of Satan has possession of me in my natural state, and he avails himself of my self will and love of the world. This must be broken; but how can it be? It is by redemption, when the believer, finding life in Christ, is won to God. How blessed, then, to have redemption in Him through His blood! Unless I am thus brought to God through Him Who suffered once for sins, Just for unjust, what is there to set me free? A slave of sin—what is to liberate me? There is nothing in the nature of purchase to set one free; there may be, and is, a powerful motive in it when the spell of Satan is broken, and forgiveness is known in the incomparable grace of God, but not before or otherwise.

Hence, therefore, in dealing with the different classes addressed, the apostle distinctly lays down the truth, “The slave called in the Lord [even if he abide a slave] is the Lord's freedman.” As a Christian, he need not therefore be troubled about his condition of bondage; no change of life, no intervention of others, could give him such a freedom as he has already. He was a slave, but, called in the Lord, he is His freedman; he belongs to the One Who has set him free. Being called in the Lord, grace gives him freedom forever; it is not for a little while, as in the institutes of law or relations of flesh. Consequently he is entitled to take comfort without an anxious thought. What could the world give him? what could money do for him? Either might procure an emancipation; but from either does it not perish with the using? Neither in any way makes him the Lord's freedman; but redemption does. Thus the Christian slave was divinely consoled and cheered. Can we fail to see that the scripture abounds in such filling of the heart with comfort from above?

So in the Epistle to Titus we have a similar thing. “The grace of God, which bringeth salvation unto all men, hath appeared,” is an outburst of thankfulness in view especially of slaves visited by the

saving grace of God, which went out to all, “teaching as that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people.” It is not merely purchase here, but redemption. There was the delivering power. It is not therefore merely a price paid, which might as yet have no answer, in those purchased. They had redemption in Christ through His blood. Redemption is a state entered, and not merely a title of Christ asserted. He has bought the world: the heathens, the Jews, are all purchased; whatever their actual feeling or conduct, they are bought, one as truly as another. He has right thereby to every soul. But redemption is our state and not His claim only. No man is redeemed unless there be an effect produced—present deliverance from the enemy and the forgiveness of sins, though it goes beyond. So those that were redeemed of old were not left under Pharaoh; they were brought across the Red Sea, God taking His place with them. In Egypt the blood of the lamb secured Israel, so that judgment did not fall on them; but they were redeemed also, and brought completely out of the house of bondage. Revelation supposes known deliverance, though in the wilderness. Evidently, then, the difference is marked.

But we have to see how the apostle turns to the other side. “Likewise the freeman called is Christ's slave.” He now changes the phrase; he does not say he is the Lord's bondman, but “Christ's.” He might be freeborn, or a master of slaves; but be he what he may, if a Christian, he is Christ's bondman. He is bound forever to Him who shed His blood for him. It is the purchase that is urged now to make the freeman feel that he is Christ's bondman. It is an appeal to his sense of grace, and not merely of authority.

In what, then, consists the difference between purchase to the believer and the unbeliever? It lies in this, that faith acknowledges the purchase, while unbelief despises it and all responsibility founded on it. The believer owns it, and is bound to glorify God in his body, as no longer his own. So we find Israel acknowledging both in the song of Moses, “Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed....the people pass over which Thou hast purchased” (Ex. 15:13-16). Men may abuse the purchase to their destruction.

But the great truth is plain. The believer is redeemed by the mighty arm of the Lord; he is no longer the slave of Satan, though he was; he is forgiven his offenses, and does not stop there, but he passes into liberty; he is on the other side of the Red Sea, and he can now sing for the first time. Israel's song was only when they were clean out of the land of bondage; and so with the believer now. Redemption is the great thought, from Ex. 14 and onward, but the same song owns that then they were bought; and the soul should reflect upon both: “A slave once, I am become the Lord's freedman, for I am redeemed. But I am purchased also, and so became Christ's bondman.” Such is the double truth for the Christian, as the apostle puts it. So it was in the type. Jehovah had interfered as a man of war. It was a fight between Himself and the enemy. Israel never struck a blow, but none the less enjoyed the victory. So with the Christian now. He is the Lord's freedman. He was the slave of sin and Satan, but the Lord has delivered him from all that kept him in bondage; but of what is be reminded—he who had known only human liberty? He is bought with a price, and Christ's servant; he is glad to acknowledge such bonds of love. For “Christ” is the name that speaks of grace, as “the Lord” at once recalls supreme authority. The believer acknowledges himself bondman, not merely as his duty to the Lord, but as that in which his heart is concerned; it

is his boast, his joy, his glory, to be Christ's slave; and this is the more strikingly said of him who never knew other than freedom in the world. Both in truth were the Lord's freedmen, and both Christ's bondmen; but it comes out with the greater emphasis when the distinction is put as the apostle puts it here.

Even in the Revelation, as we have remarked, the thought as here is purchase rather than redemption! In chap. 5:9 it is the worth of the buyer, and consequently the value of the price paid that is celebrated, not the liberated state of the redeemed. Hence in the text ■μ■ς is not found—an omission as hard to account for, unless it be the truth, in A., 44, Aeth., as it is easy to understand its insertion in all the other witnesses. The Lamb is worthy, because he was slain and purchased to God by His blood out of every tribe and tongue, etc., and made them to our God a kingdom and priests; and they shall reign over the earth. Such is the new song of the elders; whereas ■πολ■τρσασις is our state, rather than the costly act which bought us. In chap. xiv. 3, 4, though the connection of course differs, the 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Zion were bought from the earth and from men. From these they were purchased, so that they did not belong to either; but it is not the act or state of deliverance they were in. ■ξαγ. may go a little farther, yet it is not properly “redeem,” but buying up or retrieving, as in Gal. 3:13, 4:5; Eph. 5:16; and Col. 4:5. It is not the state of deliverance we enjoy, though this, be the result for the believer, but that Christ bought out from under the law those once under it to make them His own; or ourselves exhorted to make the fitting time or opportunity our own. Cf. Dan. 2:8 for the two latter references.

Thus we see our place with reference to these two truths. Beyond doubt the Lord has, in His infinite goodness, interfered for us in our utter guilt and rain. On the one hand, He has dealt with Satan, who had us enslaved, and brought us clean out of that bitter bondage; on the other hand, we are bought with a price, and have not a single right that is not swallowed up in that purchase by Christ's blood, not only what we have, but ourselves also. “Ye were bought with a price.” The Corinthians were dull to see and own what it is to be thus bought. Therefore the Spirit takes up the truth again and again. In chapter 6 they were reminded that their body was the temple of the Holy Ghost, which was in them, which they had of God; but, moreover, that they were not their own, for they were bought with a price: therefore were they to glorify God in their body; they belonged to Christ the Lord. Thus there is not only a divine power that deigns to dwell and work in answer to Christ in the body: to take our own way, or do our own will, is denying God's title to us as His positive possession through Christ's blood. We are His for all the way, and not merely for the end in glory. We are His to please and glorify Him now in this world, yea, in these bodies of humiliation which the Holy Spirit deigns to make God's temple.

Here the exhortation takes a rather different direction, though grounded on the same truth. “Ye were bought with a price: be not ye slaves of men.” There it was urged against pleasing ourselves, especially against corrupt license and impure passions. Here it is a guard against pandering to others, it might be for ease or honor, or to avoid pain or reproach: a great snare to the Corinthians, not to slaves only, but as much, or more, to the free. Hence the force of this word which embraces both. The Lord's freedman should not become a slave of men; neither should Christ's slave. There is not such a thought as enfeebling the Christian slave in serving his earthly master: grace would rather strengthen him to serve with twofold zeal and honor, for he was now the Lord's freedman. How base again for one who, after the flesh free but now bound to Christ as His slave by the deepest and most durable of ties, should become man's slave by compromising his Master, Who

had bought him with His blood!

All this and more is clenched in the following verses of our chapter. “But this I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use the world as not abasing it.” As the verses before deliver the believer from the spirit of change, so these sweep away every thought of a settling down in the world that now is. Not a word brings in formally the return of our Lord Jesus Christ; but it is all really and profoundly based on that great and most influential truth, as a living constant expectation. What does the entire course of the world depend on? It takes for granted ages to come for man and man's progress here below; it thus denies virtually, and often openly, the Lord's coming as a real hope, or even truth. Do you think that that which fills man with vainglory, or kindles his enthusiasm, or nerves him to labor and endurance—that all or any of these things would be found if he believed the Lord was coming? Clearly not. All the aspirations of the world, all that men here pant after as objects, and push forward as ways and means, are founded on an uninterrupted future. They confidently look for amelioration and advance. Just as infidel but credulous geologists, naturalists, etc., imagine an indefinite past here below, so they generally build all their hopes of the progressive and triumphant future, not on God's word, or Christ's coming and reign, but on an assumed infinite series of improved methods and inventions, till they reach a perfection of their own for the human race on earth.

But the coming again of the Lord at any moment outs up by the root all such unbelieving and presumptuous speculations of men. Hence their angry opposition to that truth. Hence the guilt and shame of the church's failure to walk in that light. Not believing it herself, she says in her heart, My Lord delayeth His coming, eats and drinks with the drunken, and beats most those who have been most faithful in serving Him. The consequence is, she does not confess this grave but also bright testimony of divine truth, as He meant it, before the world; for people must walk and worship in the truth they utter (if even, alas! they do utter it, for Many deny it), in order to have power with others. Everything good flows really from faith working by love, the springs of which are in God. When souls show that the heart is filled with Christ, when the ways are according to the truth they confess, then even enemies feel that for them it is a living reality. We know what the blessed hope was to the apostles and the church of that day: what has it been since?

Here, in the apostle's exhortation to all, we see its influence so mighty that, without a word of direct reference, it shows the time straitened. Not that it does not reveal a period of true and holy blessedness for the earth afterward; but there will be a total change, compared with which the greatest of revolutions is as nothing; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, not the earth only but also heaven, and the world-kingdom of the Lord and His Christ shall come, not to speak of the still brighter portion of the glorified saints in the Father's house. Thus the scriptural expectation effectually blots out from heart and mind a long future for man's enjoyment as he is. “It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use the world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away” (vers. 29-31). It is not, of course, that Christ ignores relationship, sorrow, joy, business, or position; but He brings in an energy of the Spirit for each, which, while deepening sensibility, and respecting everything which God established in nature and on earth, raises superior to all and attaches to Christ in heaven about to come again.

The apostle thus would have the saint true to Christ on the one hand, and on the other to form a just estimate, of the world as already condemned, and only awaiting the Lord's coming to have the sentence executed. For not more surely has He been lifted up from the earth and does He draw all to Him, than the judgment of the world is now, though its prince has yet to be actually expelled. The apostle would have us in faith to see the present form passing away.

This brings in a most sanctifying element for the heart. What a guard for the affections even in the closest ties of life What a check to otherwise unrestrained grief! And, supposing there is an occasion of joy, what solemnity in the hope that the Lord is at hand! Ought the buyers to forget Him? or they that use this world to use it as their own? This is what I would press with all simplicity, the way in which the truth sets us free, holily free, even here on earth, in which we are now to be entirely the Lord's and only for the Lord, waiting for that bright moment when He will make good His every, word. Surely now is the time for faith to confess Him fully; now is the time to exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

May grace then give us to rejoice in this that, as He has set us free, so we may enjoy our liberty for His glory and not for ourselves; and as we are bought with a price, so we may refuse to become slaves to men, and gladly acknowledge Christ's purchase, redeemed from the enemy and bought for God from self and all else.

May God thus endear Christ and the truth to our hearts, proving how it all abides from, the beginning and is needed to the end, to direct and strengthen us in what we do or suffer, in the least things of this life as well as in the greatest that belong to the life to come. Amen.

Chapter 154

The Queen of Sheba

“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn theme for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."-Luke 11:31

This “elect lady” stands in a line of loved and honored women, who, now and again, from the beginning to the end, appear in the varied and wonderful action of the Book of God. We shall find in what is said of her, not only historic information, but both moral and typical instruction. And this is common in the inspired narratives; so that the soul is edified and the mind furnished from the same page.

As to her country or kingdom, I would just observe that we read of several Shebas. One was grandson of Abraham by Keturah (Gen. 25:1-3); another was of the family of Shem, being grandson of Eber (Gen. 10:21-28); another was great grandson of Ham, and nephew of Seba (Gen. 10:7). The Sheba, of which this history speaks, must have been connected with the last of these, the descendant of Ham, because the Lord speaks of the queen as being from “the south,” and “from the utmost parts of the earth,” while Keturah's family was sent to the east, and Shem's portion was more at home or central.

As to herself, we may presume, she had never heard the voice of a prophet, or seen the oracles of God. She had no advantages (as we speak) from education, and was a perfect stranger to the God of Israel. Her soul had, therefore, but a slender stock to trade with. She had simply, in her own land, heard of Solomon, his acts and his wisdom. This was all she had; but, with such small provisions, she was ready to take a long untried journey.

There is something admirable in this. The state of the soul itself was tested. It proved the love of wisdom to be in her heart; since a mere distant report about it so moves her. As the common saying is, “a word to the wise is sufficient.” This is the admirable feature in her which the Lord notices. “A reproof enters more into a wise man, than a hundred stripes into a fool.” It is the faculty within, the sense or taste of the soul, that is approved by this, and that is indeed the important thing after all. “Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom;” while, on the other hand, “a fool hath no delight in understanding” (Prov. 18:1, 2). Here are two different sources discovered to us by the Spirit; and the first of these was that which rose in the breast of this “queen of Sheba.” Her heart was right. She had a “desire” towards wisdom, and, through that desire, could separate herself from her home and her kingdom, to seek it at the distant feet of Solomon.

This is the admirable thing in her, which drew forth the notice of the Lord.

The Pharisees had asked for a sign, the sure witness of a bad state of mind. The Lord “sighed deeply in His spirit” as He heard this, we read in another evangelist (Mark 8:12), and also with such a mind contrasted the mind that was in this “queen of Sheba “; showed her to be one that was because her heart was in it; while these Pharisees moved by a little to do a great deal, just of

course were starving in a land of plenty, just of course because they had no desire. They were asking for signs in the very midst of the wonders of the hand of Christ. She took a long journey from a barren land, at the mere report of God's provisions in a distant country. With a true thirst of soul she used what she had, though it was but little. They were reproaching the Lord, as though He had given them nothing, while they were in the thick of His bounties. Here was the mighty moral distance between them. And the Lord notices it. That which was shining on her table was but a taper (according to the Lord's figure in this passage); but the eye of her body was so single, that it gave light enough for her. Their table was bright with a number of brilliant lamps! but the eye of their body was evil, and they stumbled at noon-day, as in the night.

Here lay the difference. And on this all depends. There is no straitness in God, no lack or indistinctness in the testimony. The candle is not under the bushel, but on a candlestick, and needs nothing in size or brilliancy. Even one raised from the dead could add nothing to Moses and the Prophets. The “signs of the times” for Jesus are as clear as the ordinances of the heavens, as the morning end evening sky. But the question is, what is the state of our vision? Are we willing to do His will? Is the love of God in us, or the love of the honor of man? (John 5, 7.) Is the eye single? Is the body full of light? If so, the whole region around us will be full of light also. Every saying of God, every doing of God, will be approved then: all in Jesus, and about Jesus, and from Jesus, will shine before us then. We shall justify wisdom in all her ways. The whole atmosphere which the Lord spreads will be resplendent, the path which faith takes will be lightsome; “the whole shall be full of light as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.” It was so with this honored woman. She does not complain that her taper was small. It gave some light, and this she followed. She followed a distant report with a wishful desirous heart, and she had neither time, nor taste to complain that her journey was darksome. It was “full of light” under her “single eye.”

This was the admiration of the Lord! Gracious Master! If we did but value His smile, if we did but prize our power and opportunity to refresh His spirit! This was the excellency of her spirit, by which, in the judgment, she condemns the evil-eyed Pharisee.

In this way our souls receive a very important lesson. We may desire for ourselves, though in a land of Goshen, and not in the utmost Sheba, that we may have like hearty value for everything of God. This is the most excellent condition. “To love what is good is better than knowing much about it.” Better to desire wisdom, than to have gathered a large store of knowledge, or of information—better to have the spiritual tastes and senses quick and vigorous, than great provision to feed them with.

We know this in human things. How many may be listening to the same music, or gazing on the same scenery, and yet how various the hidden motion that is produced. The materials have been common to all who have formed the crowd of listeners or spectators. Yes—but the effects have been infinitely various, because the faculty of delight, in each, has been various, the senses have been of a finer, or coarser mold (perhaps too, in a thousand gradations) and in that lies the reason of all this diversity in the impulse or influence produced.

And so I am sure it is in the ways of the Spirit. The Lord can give the faculty within us an improved or a finer tone. And this is excellent praise. We honor Him by this acknowledgment, that He has our spirits within His reach, and that He can sweep the chords there, or quicken the senses there. That is His glorious power. He can impart, it is true, further knowledge, and let in the brighter light

of new mysteries; but is it not more blessed (may I ask) when He gives new energy to the understanding itself, or a more delicate tone to the sensibilities of the spiritual mind?

That is, indeed, I believe, the brightest dearest hour of the soul. And how constantly this may be seen; how constantly do we find that many, who know less, have more fervency! And why? Because, as I have been saying, the faculty within, the spiritual powers of the saint, have been retouched, as it were, by the finger of God. Mary Magdalene, for instance, had but small materials. Her knowledge was not only narrow, but clouded. She ignorantly sought the sepulcher with her spices. But her heart was alive. The faculty, or sensibilities, had been awakened, and her fervent spirit expresses itself in strong, though irregular, action. There was no great entrance of light into the minds of the thousands who were joined together in the day of Pentecost. But there was a fresh visitation to the soul itself. They received the Holy Ghost. And what gladness and what singleness of heart! What victory over the world, and what conscious possession of a kingdom within, is seen in them!

Sure I am that our real power depends on the state of the faculty itself, than on the provision for its exercise, on the “eye” being “unclouded,” than on the extent of the field of vision. It is hearts we want, and then we shall feel the captivating power of Christ. For there is plenty of that in Him, we could but get in contact with it. But there is the mischief. The light that is in as is clouded. Many an attraction finds its way to our minds, which would not dare to show itself there, if Jesus were enthroned already, if our sight of Him had been so vivid as to leave His loved and worshipped image there continually.

It is so; and may our hearts increasingly experience it. And this lesson and these encouragements we gather from the history before us. The moral of a story is always the deepest part of it. There may be the three things, as in this story—

lst.—The event, or historic circumstances;

2ndly.—The type;

3rdly.—The moral.

The moral lies the most within, and it was the glory of the mind of Christ to, draw it forth.

The story is, originally, given to us in 1 Kings 10 and in 2 Chron. 9 She appears at the beginning of it in the character which the Lord, as we have seen, so beautifully and profitably noticed. She trafficked for wisdom, and the Lord's anointed king in Jerusalem was her merchant. With him, and for it, she bartered gold, and spice, and precious stones. So true a disciple of that word was she, in the spirit of her mind (though she knew nothing of it in the book of God), that “the merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.” And the Lord will not be her debtor. He gives her far more than she had bargained for. Solomon, His servant and prophet, does more than answer her questions; he gives her such a sight of his magnificence, that she is “satisfied with fatness.” “There was left no more spirit in her;” and “blessed” was she that hungered and thirsted, for she was filled. And blessed surely it ever is, when our hunger and thirst are of that fine and heavenly quality, that we can bring them into God's presence, when they are such as bear, their own necessary witness with them, that none can answer them but the Lord Himself, His storehouse and fountains.

This was a sister and co-heir of Solomon. Solomon had desired wisdom, and, with it, he had inherited all things. The “queen of Sheba” had desired wisdom, and in like manner, with it, was given all things. They must have understood one another. She came from amid the dark and distant Gentiles, children of Ham; he had been reared in the city of solemnities, in the Goshen of wisdom, and knowledge, and truth; but the spirit in each was the same, and natural distances, and human diversities, are thoroughly lost in the commanding light and energy of the Spirit who knit them with one mind together.

Precious and interesting is the moral of all this simple and unvarnished tale of other days—other, it is true, as to time and place, but the same with our own in the grace and power of the same Spirit. It was the moral of it, which at this time chiefly attracted me. But I would just add, that in this distinguished Gentile we have a sample, or type, of the nations by and by. For as she, in the days of Solomon, the son of David (which were the days of the typical glory), went up to Jerusalem, seeking for the wisdom that was in the anointed of the Lord, so, in the age of the real glory, the millennial ago of the true Solomon, the nations will wait in the acme city, with the same desire, and purpose, of heart. They will say one to the other, “come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.”

J.G.B.

Chapter 155

The Righteousness of God

Man has no righteousness for God, but God has His in His grace for man, sinful and wretched man. Who can stand before the law of God? Who can say, “I have not transgressed it?” Now can a man justify himself by a law he has transgressed? “By law is the knowledge of sin.” What is to be done? Hear what the apostle says: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is made manifest, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.”

It is the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, which is the only answer (which God Himself has to us furnished) to the demand of the justice which condemns the sinner. The righteousness of God revealed in the gospel makes righteous the man who has no righteousness to present to God; so that God is just in justifying him that has faith in Jesus.

What grace! What a blessing for the poor sinner who has a heart broken and cleansed by faith, sufficiently true to God to condemn himself! Boasting is excluded through faith in Jesus; yet peace and assurance are exercised, and holiness follows.

Chapter 156

The Safeguard Against Popery

Popery is a rest for the flesh; and in the many distractions of the day Satan is busy in suggesting it; but in its principles really it is apostasy from the truth and church of God. Not that I think any are safe from it (though God can keep them) till they know redemption. Once I have believed Heb. 10, Popery is the denial of, and hostility to, Christ; till then it may look like piety and humility (but is “voluntary humility”) and what not. It does not tell its heresies and abominations till you are in for it and the spell of Satan is over a person: for its actual wickedness is beyond all belief. But if Christ is my righteousness, it is all a lie from beginning to end. It is really infidelity. Christ became a man to be near my heart; and I trust Him and God thus in Him. They tell me, No: I must have the virgin and saints, because He is so high above me. This denies His gracious tenderness. Men, mortal men and women, are tenderer! This is a horrid denial of what He is. But see you hold fast through grace to a perfect redemption. Study Heb. 9; 10. Learn your own heart; but cast your need on the perfect grace of Christ, and find what His heart is for us in patient and loving mercy. You will find peace and rest. J. N. D.

Instructions in the Way of Salvation

Both by the Right Revelation the Bp. of Truro. London: Wells, Gardner, Barton, Co.

To an instructed soul it is painful to read these little books, though written with affection, clearness, and simplicity, and therefore largely circulated, There is not a little truth in them; but the foundation is not Christ by faith, but ordinance with a priestly order of course behind. “A real power was given you—a spiritual power by the gift of the Holy Spirit, at your Baptism” (Way of S.). It is thus affirmed that all the baptized are born of God; and yet that each of us is “guilty before God” (Way of S. 8). Yet the grace of God in Christ is plainly stated; but the way is wrong. Repentance is urged in trying to give half-an-hour every day this week (Advent); and a prayer added to help. Then take your church catechism, and read your duty to God and to your neighbor,” in prayer asking God to show your wrong doings. “Do this, and you will come up next Sunday with just a new idea of sin.” “Each sin that you thus tell to God will make the cup one drop more empty.”

The second instruction still more presses the work of Christ, and rightly scouts “the presumption” of believing God about it. (21, 22). But in the same page the old and radical error is affirmed boldly: “You have the Holy Ghost. Being baptized, and having had your Christian name given to you, you at least can feel certain, however others may doubt it, that you have (what I believe God often does give, even to the unbaptized) the Holy Ghost.” “Say to yourself, God cannot be a LIAR! And with this will of mine, which my God has given me, I make up my mind that will take my Savior at his word.” “Bring the whole face of your WILL to bear upon this WORD of GOD; and then ask the HOLY GHOST to help you as though you could do nothing!” (23.) The word of God in truth opposes and annihilates this dangerous doctrine so congenial to man's mind, “As many as received him, to them gave he power [or, authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12, 13). Baptism is not the means of life, but the sign of burial with Christ unto death (Rom. 6), and hence of salvation; and the new birth is expressly not of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God. “He that believeth hath eternal life.”

This suffices. The root of the error is, the Son of God head of all mankind by incarnation, the will of man and the sacraments the means of appropriation of Him by each individual.

“How to begin a new life” is just the same ruinous doctrine under an attractive frosting of truth. “God says that we are sinners; this is the first thing that He tells us. The second thing that He tells us is this: He has been pleased to put us into a state of reconciliation with Himself. And then GOD baptized us, in order (among other reasons) to make over to us this glorious deliverance, thus bringing us out of bondage into freedom” (pp. 12, 14). Then, after all this jumble of unbelievers and believers, souls are directed to four things—

1. “Open your lips to God as sinners to a Judge.”

2. “Open your lips to Christ as sinners to a Savior.”

3. “Open your lips to Christ as soldiers to a King.”

4. "Open your lips to somebody, as a witness for God” (p. 22).

What confusion! New birth, not only without the saving action of the Spirit by the word revealing Christ to the soul, but in unconsciousness; and so the child, possessed of all the privileges of grace, called afterward to repent and believe! The scheme consists in the twofold wrong, first of leveling up the world to the peculiar and blessed privileges of the church, and next of leveling down the church to the ruin of the world, which is called to repent and believe the gospel.

Chapter 158

The School of God: Part 1

“He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight,” (1 Sam. 17)

There is one feature common to all those who have been trained of God for His own service; they have had to do with Him in secret before they have become prominent in the eyes of men. The contrast to this is that restlessness of the flesh which seeks to attract attention, before the soul has had this needed discipline. They run without being sent; and have to learn themselves by their own painful failures. If Paul is a chosen vessel of the Lord to bear His name, his training is in the school of trial: “I will show him how great things he must suffer for My sake.” Thus God has His secret ways of training for His service. It was so even with His perfect Servant, His beloved Son. “He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground.”

Just so was it with David. In the previous chapter we find David in perfect obscurity; nothing thought of among his brethren, or by his father; away from the family, keeping sheep; not thought worthy to be called unto the sacrifice. Yet he was the chosen of the Lord. And he had not been alone in the wilderness; he had been under God's teaching; he had been preparing for public service, in the secret school of Him who looketh not on the outward appearance, and who seeth not as a man seeth. Now so it must be with us. There must be a living before the Lord. Unless our souls are exercised before Him, He will not use us as instruments in His service. We may think He will; but it will not be so. God will always have to do in secret with that soul which He intends to serve Him in public. The excellent wisdom of our God in this may be seen in the history of many of His most eminent servants. They come forth in the hour of need, prepared for its peculiar exigencies. They are found calm; wise, and enduring, when all around are perplexed and in fear. All they say and do tells us that they have been prepared for their work. Men who have been living in secret before the living God, can move onward, unhindered through the confusion and strife of men. They have learned how to stand in the breach before terrified Israel; or to meet, face to face, Goliath of Oath. And their preparation for this has been their living in secret before Him who is so infinitely greater than all, even before the living God!

Thus is it here with David. In the desert he has learned the resources which faith has in God; and now he is to be the champion of God against the champion of the uncircumcised. The lion and the bear he has slain already, unseen by men; now he comes forth to triumph over Goliath, in the sight of the armies of Israel and of the Philistines.

How fearful a foe had Israel before them in Goliath! Morning and evening he defied their armies, and his defiance was unanswered, for they were dismayed and sore afraid: Saul might set the army in array; the hosts might go forth to the place of fight and shout for the battle (ver. 19-21), but “behold there came “up the champion (the Philistine of Oath, Goliath by name) out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words, and all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid” (ver. 23, 24). This occurred just as David reached the camp. David heard the proud defiance of Goliath (ver. 23), and he saw the dismay and dishonor of Israel. Their loud shout for the battle was soon Over, and all the people were in utter

consternation. But David was calm and undismayed amidst all. The stripling David is the Only one who feared not—he, whom his brothers despised, and spoke lightly of, in the naughtiness of their hearts—he, whom the Philistines disdained and cursed. Now there was nothing that any could see in David as a reason why he should put himself forward to meet the Philistine, when none else dared to do so: nothing that men who judge by “the outward appearance” could discern as, power, but quite the contrary. The flesh would see power in “the host,” in numbers, and in armor, or in the mighty Goliath; but never in the stripling, just come from his “few sheep in the wilderness!”

Beloved, mark this: David had had to do with the living God; and now he saw that the name of the living God was implicated. Israel looked to Israel's resources; and what were the resources of Israel compared with those of the Philistines! But here was one who had the mind of God, one who looked to the resources of the living God. It was not that there was natural courage in David more than in Saul; but there was faith in David. It was true that David had been in obscurity in the wilderness; but there he had learned communion with God. And now he came forth as one fresh from the living God, and viewed all around him according to God: and what he had learned of God in secret he brought out into the circumstances before him. And this was the secret of his strength and of his victory. The circumstances were well considered, their difficulty and danger weighed; but his faith brought God into them, and acted amidst them in His wisdom, and in His power. Thus it is that David here looks on all around him. He views the army of Israel as the army of the Lord of Hosts. He looks at it in the light of Him from whose presence he had just come (ver. 26).

And I ask whether our failures are not invariably here, that we have not been in secret with the living God? This is the essential and primary matter. Do we esteem communion with God our highest privilege? Do we value living with God, even more than living before the saints and with the saints I believe we prefer living before the saints and with the saints, to living before God and with God. We may be comforted when surrounded by the saints; but our strength is in walking in fellowship with the living God, knowing that we are to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. The flesh itself may seek its own, and find a response too, among the saints; but the flesh withers—it is truly grass—in the presence of God. Hence it is our security as well as our joy, to dwell by faith in “the secret place of the Most High,” and to come forth into service, in strength gathered up there. Then shall we be able to look at every foe, as David here looks at Goliath.: “for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

But the language of faith instantly excites the flesh. So was it with Joseph, when telling his brethren his dreams. So it is here with David and his brethren. This we see in Eliab's words: “I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart.” The moment the flesh sees a power greater than its own (as Eliab here sees in David), all it can do is to talk of it as pride. Now Eliab was the eldest brother, and he stands forth here in that prominence which the flesh always loves and seeks. He was a man distinguished for natural attractions; but however goodly his countenance or his stature, God “had refused him” (chap. 16:6, 7). The Lord's anointed was not he whom man esteemed. And how constantly are we taught this lesson in the word, by God's rejection of the first-born, and His choice of the younger! Eliab stands, therefore, like Ishmael or Esau, as the representative of the natural title of the flesh. In the exercise of this title, he thus scornfully rebukes David. But David was speaking according to a wisdom, and moved by a power, of which Eliab knew nothing. David was speaking the language of, faith. The living God, the Lord God of the armies of Israel, filled his eye; and by Him he measured the Philistines and their champion. Eliab

had no such standard as this; he spoke and felt as a man: and therefore the language of faith was to him “pride and naughtiness of heart,”

And the flesh always thus mistakes faith. The flesh angrily replies to us “It is pride,” as often as we speak of confidence in the living God. That very confidence, which is the deepest humility, is always condemned by the flesh as pride. For there is no depth of humility so great as self-abandonment, in order to bring in the, living God. David, in the whole of this action, loses sight of himself, seeing only God and the armies of God. It is the power and the privilege of faith to have self cast entirely out of sight, and God alone filling its vision. “No flesh shall glory in His presence;” “he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” This is what David had learned; this, David is now displaying; and this it is, which Eliab calls pride. Now the truth is, that the flesh is the proud thing. I trust that we know this; and that we know also, that faith is a self-emptying thing; because faith receives everything from God; yea, beloved, more even than that; faith receives God Himself, as beyond every blessing which God can give.

“David said, What have I done? Is there not a cause?” Had David gloried in himself? No, indeed. And was there not a cause for his speaking as he did? If ever the name of the living God is brought in question, there is always a cause. The very purpose for which we are left here in the world is, that we may confess the name of Jesus before men, and set aside our own name. Oh, that the hearts of all God's saints were united in this one thing, the confession of the name of the Lord Jesus!

But let us follow David as he passes from Eliab to the presence of Saul. What conscious dignity, what entire self-possession, are now seen in David! “And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine” (ver. 32). While the whole army of Israel trembles, one stripling stands before the king and says, “Let no man's heart fail him.” Yes, there is in faith that self-possession which enables us, not only to feel, but also to minister comfort and confidence, amidst the most trying circumstances. Faith draws from resources untouched by circumstances, and therefore, instead of being overcome of trial, it is able, as the apostle says, “to comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Cor. 1:4). David had already gone through trial, and had &Weedy therefore proved the God in whom he trusted. “He knew Whom he had believed.” He had been in danger before, and had been victorious: therefore is he confident now. There had been dealings between his soul and God in the wilderness: dealings, it would seem, never brought out to public life until this moment (ver. 34- 37). O beloved, where is it that the saints learn really to get the victory? I believe, where no eye sees us save God's. The hearty denying of self, the taking up the cross in secret; the knowing the way, in the retirement of our closets, to cast down imaginations, and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; these are our mightiest achievements. The closet is the great battle-field of faith. Let the foe be met and conquered there, and then shall we be able to stand firm ourselves, and to comfort and build up others also, in the hour of outward conflict. He who had already slain the lion and the bear” in the desert is the only one unterrified by Goliath in the valley of Elah.

How does this disclose to us the real secret of David's strength—the true strength of faith! Now we can tell what the apostle Paul meant when he said, “I am a fool.” He was obliged to speak of himself: that was his folly. His great strength in service—the reason why he was able to bear so

much from the petulance of the saints—was because there had been exercise between Paul's soul and the Lord, which no one was a party to, save himself and his God. For the like reason David can now say to Saul, “Let no man's heart fail because of him.”

“And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him.” Saul looks at David and then at Goliath; and, speaking as a man, Saul was right. But Saul knew not the secret of God which David had learned. Saul never knew what David was now going to tell. If Eliab had done such exploits, he would not have kept it secret for a day: but David had learned in another school; a school in which he had been taught to make much, not of David, but of the living God. David therefore, so far as the Scriptures inform us, had never boasted of, or even mentioned, his victory: but when the occasion demands it, he can come forward and tell of the Lord's goodness unto him. So saith the apostle, “I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago,” &c. For fourteen years, no one, it seems, knew he had been up to the third heaven; but when an occasion comes to bring it out for his Master's glory, not for his own glory, then he declares it. A great deal more was going on between the Lord and Paul than anyone else knew. So it was with David. Who knew what this stripling had already done? Who knew that he had delivered the lamb of his flock out of the mouth of the lion, and that both lion and bear had fallen by his hand? Eliab knew not this. Saul knew not this. It might possibly have been known to the keen discernment of individual faith (1 Sam. 16:18), but it had gone no farther. Beloved, be assured that if you would really be strong, it must be by secret living before God. I believe that the reason why we are all so weak is, that we care so little about this secrecy before God. We are ready and eager to ran into some service to be seen of men; but do we esteem unseen communion and discipline before God beyond all? Depend on it, if there is not the slaying of the lion and the bear in secret, there will be no killing of Goliath in public—no power or wisdom in our public service.

This should lead us to understand that little word, “taking up the cross daily.” People can take up the cross, they think, on some great occasion; but doing this on great occasions is nothing like taking up the cross daily, daily denying self, daily hating and losing one's life in this world. God's eye is always on us; it is our privilege to walk always before God, and thus we have hourly opportunity of taking up the cross before Him—confessing Jesus before Him and denying self.

“David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out, of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine” (ver. 37). David knew that one was as easy to God as the other. When we are in communion with God, we do not put difficulty by the side of difficulty: for what is difficulty to Him? Faith measures every difficulty by the power of God, and then the mountain becomes the plain. Too often, beloved, we think that in little things less than Omnipotence will do; and then it is that we fail. Have we not seen zealous and devoted saints fail in some trifling thing? The cause is, that they have not thought of bringing God by faith into all their ways. Abraham could leave his family and his father's house, and go out at the command of God, not knowing whither he went: but the moment he meets a difficulty in his own wisdom, and gets down into Egypt, what does he do? He constantly fails in comparatively small things. Once in a wrong position, one which we have chosen and how weak are we! Faith knows no little things. Faith discerns our own weakness so clearly, that it sees that nothing less than the power of God can enable us to overcome in anything. So that faith never makes light of the danger, for it knows what we are; just as, on the other hand, faith never faints at the danger, because it knows what God is. This true estimate of our weakness and peril always gives a chastened tone to the

confidence of faith. Measuring ourselves by our foes, what do we appear? “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6). And what are we compared with such? what our strength compared with theirs? “We were in our sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight!” “Therefore put on the whole armor of God.” Thus does faith discover the reality of our own weakness, while it rests secure in the might of the Lord. Thus faith knows what the flesh is, though the flesh knows not itself; and consequently he who is most strong in faith will least glory in self. “When I am weak, then am I strong.”

Thus it is here with David. He well knew that he was no match for Goliath. None need tell David that. David was not acting in pride of heart. Far from him was any thought of his own strength, when he saw the terrible giant of Gath. He felt himself to be less than either Eliab, or Saul, or Goliath thought him to be. Nevertheless, he could go forth in most perfect confidence. He knew that he should be delivered. Out of weakness he was made strong.

“And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.” Having said this, Saul clothes David in his own armor. “He put an helmet of brass on his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail,” Saul could say, “The Lord be with thee,” but Saul knew not how to trust in the Lord, as David knew. He sought to arm David as Goliath was armed: he brought forth these his own carnal weapons. But these will not suit the soldier of faith. The moment David had got Saul's armor one he could not move at all. All was constraint; all was effort. Now, beloved, there is no effort in faith. Whenever you and I are acting beyond our faith, we are conscious of effort, we are awkward. Whenever there is simple faith in the living God, we see saints go on quietly, easily, unobtrusively, and (it seems to me) victoriously. There is a happy liberty in the service which faith renders unto God, which no skill or effort of the flesh can assume; and we must watch against mistaking effort for faith. There are many modes in which such effort is made: to imitate the faith of others; for example, to make sacrifices because another has made them, is one mode. I believe that all this is truly, awful. Whenever there is real strength from the Lord, persons move on easily and quietly, laying aside and relinquishing all other resources, because of what they have learned in the cross.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 159

The School of God: Part 2

“And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them.” David feared not to go, the Lord being with him, as Saul had said; but he could not go with these also. Faith never trusts in part to the Lord, and in part to man. David had no helmet of brass, no coat of mail, when he slew the lion and the bear; then he went, the Lord alone being his strength. And, as he says, “The Lord delivered him.” Just as Paul has said, “No man stood with me.....but the Lord stood with me..... and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.” In like manner had David proved the faithful arm of the Lord, but Saul’s armor he had never proved.

But how often have we clothed, ourselves, or allowed ourselves to be clothed, in such encumbrances, without detecting at once, as David did, their unfitness, and casting them from us? Have we not often worn them complacently; yea, gone forth to fight in them? Have we not often acted as though God's work needed help by this or that form of human power; as though what was begun in the Spirit could be made perfect by the flesh? And therefore we have had to learn our folly and unbelief in our discomfiture and loss. But it was not so with David here. He instantly detects that the wrought and polished armor of Saul befits not the soldier of faith. The word of Saul was good, but that word was belied by such arming as this. And I believe that those with whom God deals much in secret will be like David here; they will quickly, intuitively as it were, discern and reject the advances of the flesh. They will thus distinguish between the precious and the vile. There will be an acuteness of spiritual sense (Phil. 1:9) in such, which is acquired nowhere bet in direct communion with God. And hence, when out among the snares and wiles of the foe, if a film pass for a moment over the eye of their faith, and so a false object attract them, its falseness will be felt even when not seen. Thus is it here with, David. He stands a moment, indeed, to put on the whole armor of Saul; but just when Saul must have thought him armed for the battle, David feels himself fettered and burdened! The world's most skilful aids are faith's surest hindrances.

“And David put them off him.” Thus does faith strip itself of all carnal weapons. For faith stands entirely in the power of God. Now our learning this is, often the hardest part, of our lesson—that which we most slowly learn, and soonest forget. But if we knew more of secret dealing with God, we should more speedily rid ourselves of all carnal weapons. The soul which, like David, has been much exercised in secret before God knows the utter worthlessness of everything but God's own strength. And having thus learned this blessed lesson, it readily casts off those things which the flesh so esteems as aids, and feels itself set free by their loss. How far more blessed this way of learning the flesh, and denying it, than any other! But for want of such direct living before God, we have to learn this in painful discipline, and after many failures: and it is the hardest part of our discipline, to be stripped of those things which by habit and education we have all thought necessary; to stand aloof from modes of action, in which, after the manner of Saul, the name of the Lord and human authority or human wisdom are combined. Such combinations, often called judicious and useful, are most delusive and dangerous. How do we see the apostle rejoicing to count all those things, esteemed by men, loss for the sake of Christ! Why was this not a hard thing to him? How could he thus thoroughly renounce, and put from him, these things? He had learned

to “rejoice in Christ Jesus:” to be “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

Remember therefore, beloved, that he who has much to do with God in secret cannot use the carnal weapons. And surely this should show us the importance of coming forth from the presence of the Living God into all our service; that we may be thus prepared to detect and to mortify all the pretensions and advances of the flesh. For it is sad indeed, through want of this, to see a saint trying to fight in the Lord's name, but clothed in the world's armor. Thus the world obtains a place in the church. Its principles and its powers are recognized in the very place where God has written, “Love not the world;” “All that is in the world is not of the Father;” “The friendship of the world is enmity with God!”

This is often done in controversy. Argument is met by argument, instead of the simple use of the word of the Lord; Saul's helmet of brass and coat of mail, instead of the sling and the stone and the arm of faith, are opposed to Goliath's brass and mail. How often does the Lord vindicate His own word, when used in faith, carrying it with divine power to the heart! And low often does He humble us, by showing us how little our strong arguments avail save it be to stir up heats and strife! The Lord in all this make us more simple.

But David goes not forth unarmed to the fight, though he casts from him the armor of Saul. He took his staff, the five smooth stones in his shepherd's scrip, and his sling; thus armed he drew nigh to the Philistine (ver. 40): Thus he strips himself of one sort of armor, only to array himself in another. But what simple armor is this! If David overcomes Goliath with this, surely the victory must be the Lord's. This armor was never wrought by art and man's device: the running brook had given these stones their smoothness. But faith is always thus armed. The armor of faith therefore is always weak and foolish in the eyes of men. God's mightiest victories have been won by instrumentality which man has most despised. The foolishness of preaching (a foolish thing in itself, and a foolish subject, Christ crucified) man treats with disdain; yet it is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Preaching has ever been as foolish as David's sling. But what we want is much more of such simplicity, remembering that we have the truth of God to address to men's consciences. We have weapons “mighty through God,” if we had only simple faith to trust to them alone, rejecting the armor of human energy, wisdom, and authority.

“And the Philistine came on, and drew near unto David” (ver. 41). And, disdaining David and his army, Goliath says, “Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves?” Remember this, beloved, that the flesh always thinks itself insulted, because our weapons are not such as itself uses. The flesh likes to see sword opposed to sword, helmet against helmet; the flesh loves its own. But David said, “Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.” Thus David puts the question on its true basis. It is now a question simply between the Lord of Hosts and the Philistine. David puts David quite out of question, and brings God Himself in, as the antagonist of Goliath. Thus should it always be with us. What are we? What is the foe? It matters not what we are, or what is the power of the foe; it signifies not however mighty the One, or weak the other: will not God vindicate His own name? David came in the name of the Lord of Hosts; and will not God be jealous of His own name? Will He allow the Philistine to triumph over that? Never! Here then is the might of faith. Faith always brings in Omnipotence. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” is over the word of faith.

Now David could never have stood thus at this hour, if he had not learned God as his God in secret: therefore could he say, “Let no man's heart fail him:” and therefore could he thus meet Goliath. The name of the Lord must be our strength against every evil, whether without or within. Suppose the worst kind of evil, sin by a saint (and I trust that we all know that sin in a saint is far worse than sin in another), and what is our refuge? “For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.” You have only to put God in remembrance of His Own name, and He will be jealous for that name. Thus faith can always use the name of the Lord as its strength against every foe. So that, instead of there being pride in David's heart here, he was shrinking himself into nothing, and making God everything. His most confident words are his, most humble ones. And is it not the name of Jesus that we have to set against everything? Against every trial, every anxiety, every enemy? Is it not this which God is teaching many souls in secret now? Leading them into a sense of pollution and weakness they never knew before; into trial they never knew before; in order that they may know the value of what they have in the cross? Not as though they had not got everything, but to prove this in them and unite them. Thus many are proving experimentally what redemption is, by being made to feel the necessity of such an Almighty friend as. God. God is thus in secret now instructing many souls in the value of the cross. And why? In order that they may be strong in the conflict.

And living before God in secret will ever make us act, if I may so speak, on the aggressive. This is remarkable in David. He says (ver. 46, 48), “This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand; and I will smite thee and take thy head from thee, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel! And David hasted and ran toward the army, to meet the Philistine.” David tarried not, faltered not: but instantly used his simple arms and smote his foe to the earth (ver. 49). So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone and smote the Philistine and slew him; and there was no sword in the hand of David” (ver. 50, 51).

It was not then that David merely waited to be attacked, but he hasted and ran to meet the Philistine. The confession of the name of the Lord proceeds most powerfully from as, when we have learned in secret the value of that name. Then grace and wisdom are often given, even to act aggressively against evil. But surely, we have learned how much grace, how much of Christ, it really requires to stand in testimony against evil! How do we fail in this for lack of more cultivated communion with God! Mark how calmly and deliberately, though instantly, David took the stone; there was no show of effort; it was done just as though he had been in the wilderness with no eye upon him but God's. And the Lord directed that stone, just as He had enabled him to overcome both the and the bear! Thus David prevailed; and thus does faith ever prevail.

I believe that at this present moment, there is much opportunity for such service of faith; but power for it must be sought, by secret living before God. Then whatsoever service our hand finds to do, the shall be enabled to do it in God's strength. If a saint be greatly blessed of the Lord in public, we may be sure God has been dealing with him in secret, in a way which we had not supposed. But how often after a Christian has been signally used in service, do we see him failing in some comparatively little matter! Such failure too often comes from forgetfulness of that injunction, “Pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

J. L. H.

(Concluded from p. 230.)

Chapter 160

The Schools of the Prophets: Part 1

It was on the failure of the law, that the value of the priesthood as ordained of God became known to Israel; but, in the days of Eli, the priesthood itself became corrupted—the priest's sons, themselves priests, being the leaders in the most flagitious practices. They ground down the people by their exactions, and men “abhorred the offering of the Lord; wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord.” The feeble remonstrances of Eli himself were not the sharp rebuke which the occasion needed. And solemn warning—Eli himself, as the one responsible for the maintenance of the honor of God in the priesthood, is made to hear the grievous burden that awaited all his family, and at the same time to know that, although man had, pro: famed the ordinance of God in priesthood, and that God would for this set aside His own order: yet He said, “I will raise up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind, and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed forever.” How refreshing to the west, soul thus constantly, to see mercy rejoicing against judgment, and the sure establishment of all that had failed in man's responsibility in the hands or One Who alone is “the faithful and true Witness.” But God raised up in Samuel a most distinct witness of the failure of the priesthood, and then it may be said that the ministry of the Prophets commenced (Acts 3:24). And from this time the heart of faith turned from the priest to the prophet, and it was not that which was in existence which sustained it, but that which was in prospect. The thing announced by Samuel was the execution of summary vengeance on the house of Eli, “because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not.” And now Israel was sustained by an extraordinary energy from God in the person of His prophet. He sacrifices as well as judges, taking as it were the place of both Moses and Aaron. “And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.”

In all this we find God teaching Israel that their alone power of standing was in that energy which was immediately from Him. Samuel raised the stone of Ebenezer; but they understood it not, and vainly thought they could stand in their own strength under another arrangement, and they desired a king. Thus was God's prophet set aside as the priesthood had been corrupted, and surely too with the same end to show that there was only one perfect prophet (Deut. 18.), as well as only one faithful priest and righteous king. But we find not only the willfulness of the people in the rejection of God by rejecting His prophet (1 Sam. 8:7), but their willingness also to have the ministry of the Prophets in having a king. It was too valuable a blessing to do without; and accordingly we find, throughout the history of the kings of Judah and Israel, a class of men known by the name of “sons of the Prophets” or “Prophets,” apart from those immediately raised up by God Himself. Among them there were many whom God owned and used, but in later times they became the great instruments in fostering rebellion against God and causing the rejection of His word. The origin of this class so conspicuous in later times, we are not able scripturally to determine. But doubtless at first it arose from piety and the fear of God. In the days of Samuel those who feared God would have looked to him more than to Saul; and we find a company gathered round the aged seer, either placed there for instruction by their parents or led by the fear of God themselves, who are

distinctly called Prophets (1 Sam. 19:20). “And Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul and they also prophesied.” It is from this that the term “Schools of the Prophets” appears to have so generally obtained. That there were institutions of this character appears clear, but the question is, Were they of divine or human origin! We have no scriptural authority for believing them to be of God, but that these men of God, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, should have gladly given themselves to the instruction of the young committed to their charge, teaching them those things which God had revealed to them, and bringing them up to reverence God in all His institutions, is by no means improbable. God was now with the prophet and not with the priest, and therefore real godliness could only be secured through the prophet. It appears also that these young men were used by the prophets, who were raised up by the special energy of the Spirit of God, on any service or errand they might be pleased to send them. Thus we read, “Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins and take this box of oil in thine hand and go to Ramoth-Gilead: and when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber; then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not. So the young man, even the young man the prophet, went to Ramoth-Gilead” (2 Kings 9:1-4).

There can be little doubt that young men so educated would by degrees have a character attached to them, not according to the actual energy of the Spirit of God in them, but according to the education they had received. And although God from among them might raise up instruments fitted to be employed in His service, yet that is not the thing which would have been regarded so much as their official training. And the influence which they had with the people would not have been that which flowed directly from God, but from that which men had instituted, to perpetuate a class among them, which might be useful to them as expositors of the mind of God. This has been one way of man's waywardness to seek to secure God's blessings by his own wisdom and prudence. If God gave a prophet, man would desire to have this blessing in his own way; and accordingly he contrives an institution for the supply of prophets. God may bless such an institution, and doubtless did under the instruction of Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, who appear in their respective times to have been looked on as the heads of these institutions. It was thus that Elijah was looked upon, “and the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And fifty men of the eons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off; and they two stood by Jordan. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The Spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha” (2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15).

So we have seen Samuel regarded and subsequently Elisha (2 Kings 9). But the attribute of “jealous” belongs to God; and it is in this that He is especially jealous, that He will not allow any human institution to supply the place of His own prerogative grace. And it was not in the power of any of these illustrious men of God to impart to another the energy of the Spirit in which alone they

could act efficiently. Doubtless these schools of the prophets were a means of spreading the fear and knowledge of God. The priest's lips which should have kept knowledge had become corrupted and testified against by the prophets. But when the master-spirit of these men of God had departed with them, the institutions which had been under their superintendence survived; but instead of ensuring the end for which piety had set them up, they became the greatest means of producing corruption and aiding apostasy. These institutions had the same moral power after the death of Elijah and Elisha as when presided over by them. And those who issued from them came to the people with a claim of authority which usage had rendered venerable. And thus, by the very means of perpetuating prophets, was this ordinance of God corrupted, not that He gave it up, but raised up not in these schools, but in the energy of His own Spirit, His prophets to prophesy not only against the priests but against “the prophets of Israel.” And real discernment then stood in distinguishing between the Lord's and the people's prophets. It does not appear that any one of the authenticated prophets of the Lord was raised up from out of these schools. But from hence it came to pass that in process of time there was an accredited class of persons, consulted on special occasions and exercising an immense moral influence, the value of which must have depended on their individual piety and simple subjection to what God had revealed.

But the weight of that influence was speedily turned against God. It was more popular to prophesy smooth things and deceits, and nothing is so dear to the human heart as to have God's sanction to its own lusts. And hence the popularity of the prophets who would say, “Thus saith the Lord,” when the Lord had not spoken. It is not to be supposed that these prophets were always inventing lies, but they corrupted the word of God and rendered it suitable to man's taste (2 Cor. 2:17). They must imitate the real prophets in many of their expressions, and yet after all only produce their own vain speculations.

“I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? Yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams, which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, what is the burden of the Lord? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the Lord. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the Lord, I will even punish that man and his house” (Jer. 23:25-34). And the misery and wretchedness of the people was, that they had not the ability to discern between. the real prophet of God, and the educated prophet of man. Man had taken God's ordinance into his own keeping—he had an institution of his own for supplying that which God could only efficiently supply. Accordingly we find the prophets as much testified against by the special witnesses of God in the midst of apostasy, as the priests. They are both classed together.

But the prophets appear to have been more actively engaged in helping forward the apostasy, and therefore to be more frequently addressed by the real prophets of the Lord. This testimony of the Lord against the prophets increased as the apostasy set in. The nearer the ruin approached (such is the way of His grace), the more testimony He raised concerning it. But in proportion as God multiplied His witnesses, we find the prophets of the people multiplied also.

We have a remarkable early instance of the influence which these prophets exercised, recorded in 1 Kings 22. We find Jehoshaphat in league with Ahab, and persuaded to go against Ramoth-Gilead. “And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord to-day. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me but evil.” So Micaiah “came to the king, and the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go up against Ramoth-Gilead to battle or shall we forbear?” Thus was the case of Israel according to the prophet— “a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak onto us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Isa. 30:9, 10).

But it is more especially in the prophets contemporary with the apostasy, that we find the powerful influence exercised by these prophets: Jeremiah at Jerusalem, and Ezekiel at Chebar, each found in them the greatest hindrance to the effectual reception of the word of the Lord. In Jeremiah we have three distinct features—first, God's testimony against the prophets. “And the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.” (Jer. 4:9). “A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so” (Jer. 5:30, 31). “And from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely” (Jer. 6:13). “Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of naught, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not; yet they say, sword and famine shall not be in this land; by sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed” (Jer. 14:13-15). “I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land” (Jer. 23:14, 15).

A second feature was the influence that these prophets exerted among the people. “The priests ruled by their means.” “Then said they, Come, let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words” (Jer. 23:18). “Hananiah, the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of

Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: and I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the Lord; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the Lord, even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the Lord do so: the Lord perform thy words which thou hast prophesied. Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people; the prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him" (Jer. 28:1-9). These prophets prophesied of peace and present establishment, according to the word in Mic. 2:11, "If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink, he shall even be the prophet of this people." It was thus that man's own institution became a snare unto him, for God taketh the wise in their own craftiness. The very means they had taken of perpetuating a blessing among them became, by their own willfulness, the means of blinding them; as in a subsequent period, the scribes and Pharisees and doctors of the law, in man's estimate so many supports of religion, were the great means of hindering the people confessing Jesus as the Christ.

As a third feature, we notice the virulent opposition of the prophets to God's prophets. "Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears" (Jer. 26:11, compare Acts 6). "Why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth which maketh himself a prophet to you"? (Jer. 29:27.)

The whole of Ezek. 13 applies to the point in question, but is too long to be quoted. It is painful but profitable to trace the progress of religious corruption; it arises not from without, but from within. No means of outward temptation could apparently have brought the people of Judah to rebel with so bold a front, as corrupt prophets and a corrupt priesthood. It was the blinding power of holding certain ordinances of God, not in the power of God, but in the form which human wisdom had substituted for them, that made the people reply, "Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil" (Jer. 44:15-17).

Now these things are recorded for our admonition, and we have the most substantial authority for asserting, that the declension and apostasy of the church would arise from those who are accredited as teachers within the church.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 161

The Schools of the Prophets: Part 2

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). They very early showed themselves, as in the church of Corinth. “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13). And at Galatia, “I would they were even cut off which trouble you” (Gal. 5:12). St. John alludes to them, “They went out from us, but they were not of us” (1 John 2:19). “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not Jesus Christ come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7).

This early attempt of Satan to undermine the church from within, was that which the apostles were constantly guarding against, and formed a considerable portion of the afflictions of the gospel. Trying indeed must it have been to the soul of the apostle, to find all in Asia turned away from him to listen perhaps to those who would set before them doctrines more suited to their tastes. It was thus too at Corinth, where although they had ten thousand instructors, yet not many fathers. Here was the germ of the evil: why not a class of men or a profession of men to be accredited as instructors and teachers, the same as prevailed in their schools of philosophy? This was the readiest. way in man's thought to provide for the instruction of the church; to keep to themselves teachers; and it was thus early in the church that we see its ruin provided for, and the dawning of that season which is not yet fully matured, when they would not endure sound doctrine: The secret is, that we can never be taught except in obedience. “He that hath an ear, let him hear.” Now a recognized class of teachers, as such, relieves from the responsibility laid upon us by the Lord. “Take heed how ye hear.” Men hear what they like to hear—hear after their own lusts, instead of proving what they hear, and holding fast that which is good. Instruction to the church never assumes the ground of ignorance, but that of competent understanding. “I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it"... “and ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1 John 2:20, 21). And the Second and Third Epistles throw the responsibility on Christians, not of receiving teachers as teachers—let them bear what name they might—but of testing their doctrine. In Paul's discourse to the elders of Ephesus, the Spirit leads him to point out the corruption of the church as arising from within. “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 solemn charge of the apostle to Timothy, points out the result of that which he had noticed to the elders of Ephesus. “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Now in all these instances, there was no guard against these teachers by having recourse to another authorized and accredited class—for the teachers marked as characterizing the apostasy, would be authorized and accredited in the eyes of men; but the only way to meet the difficulty and escape the snare, would be individual faithfulness. He alone in Israel who followed Jehovah fully, would have had moral ability to discern between the wheat and chaff—the prophet of the Lord and the prophet of his own heart. Even so at this present time, a single eye to Jesus, subjection to the word of His grace, and regard to the unction—the common possession of the church, will enable us to discern between the teacher, the gift of the ascended Jesus, and the teacher of man's institution. The provision the Lord has made for the church, are the abiding presence of the Comforter, and the word of His grace, and ministry. He presents Himself to the church not only as having the seven spirits of God, the fullness of all spiritual life, but as holding in His hand the seven stars, the perfectness of all ministry. Now the error of the church has been analogous to the sin of Israel. She has not denied to the Lord the possession of all spiritual power; but, ministry as distinctly flowing from Him (Eph. 4), and therefore, only exercised responsibly unto Him as the Lord ("there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord"), was very early set aside by human institutions; arising doubtlessly from real piety, and from the desire originally to perpetuate teachers in the church.

As in the case of the prophets, Jehovah had His servants among those brought up in the schools of the prophets—so surely the Holy Ghost as the sovereign dispenser of gifts of ministry, has raised up many from universities and academies to bear witness to Jesus; but always with the grand characteristic of His teaching, the setting aside, and in the back ground, of all advantages derived from such sources, on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, which He teaches. We may smile at the disputations and subtleties of the schoolmen of a former day, but the principle is the same. It is not whether better instruction is afforded in the schools now, but whether the schools themselves are not institutions of man, for the provision of that which the Lord Jesus most jealously keeps in His own hand. It is not to the purpose to say that many of the most faithful ministers have been raised up out of these schools; this is not denied: because the Holy Spirit will not allow human arrangements to interfere with His own sovereignty. But if these schools furnish a supply of men accredited as ministers, they must necessarily exert a powerful human influence, much more so than perhaps we are disposed to allow. We have seen the Lord raising up prophets, and men having prophets of their own; and the prophet of the Lord brought into instant collision with the prophets of the people. Jesus, as ascended, gives teachers to the church, and men have provided for teachers. in the church. May we not then most reasonably expect that the teachers the Lord has given will find the greatest hindrance from those whom man has provided for himself?

The prophet was not an integral part of the former dispensation, but only came in on the failure of the priesthood; but ministry is the very power of this dispensation (Eph. 4); “pastors, teachers, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Now if God has provided this in one way, even by distinct gift of the Spirit, and man has substituted another way, we see what necessarily must be the result, even the most fearful form of apostasy. “The beast and the false prophet” go together, the former could not prevail without the help of the other. Professing Christians could not easily be persuaded to tell a lie, unless they had found those who would teach them after human tradition, instead of the plain word of God. And nothing could be devised more

effectually to stifle inquiry and to hill the conscience, than a humanly accredited ministry, teaching things only which the hearers expect to hear. When this is the case, the solemn responsibility of speaking and hearing are alike forgotten. And the very means provided for blessing is by Satan's craft turned into a hindrance. We hear constantly of a young man intending to go into the ministry. Now fully granting the honesty of the intention, the very expression shows the popular feeling in the matter. Let such a well-intentioned young man be sent to a university, or academy, or institution, and after a few years he comes forth as an accredited minister. Now all this appears a direct taking of ministry out of the hands of the Lord Jesus into our own hands. We should see the folly of a pious Israelite sending his son to be educated for a prophet, as if God needed human preparation for the instrument he would use. And surely to educate for the ministry is equally more preposterous in a dispensation in which the Holy Spirit, as sovereign divider of His own gifts, is especially manifested.

We read of Samuel being "'established as a prophet of the Lord," but all his education under the aged and indulgent Eli could never have furnished him with what he was commissioned to reveal. We find Paul thanking the Lord for "putting him into the ministry," and unto this his education under Gamaliel profited not. It is not whether on whom the Lord has put into the ministry, may use the aids within his reach to enable him more efficiently to work, for we find Paul not only exhorting Timothy to stir up the gift he had received, but likewise telling him "till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine;" but, whether the most vigilant and wise training can make a minister of Christ. If it be allowed that the various ministries in the church are distinct gifts, then the recognition of the gift must precede the education, if indeed that be needed. And it would be no longer saying, "I think of entering into the ministry," but, "woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!" The very worst evil of human institutions for supplying ministers, is the effect they have of weakening the sense of responsibility to the Lord in the exercise of ministry. And if ministry be not exercised responsibly unto Him, it is not received in responsibility to Him. "Take heed how ye hear." And the result is, that instead of ministry being regarded as that which is for the health of the church, ministers are regarded for their own sake. And trivial as it may be, the practical difference between regarding ministers or ministry is very great. We have seen in two former instances, the accredited organs of religious instruction—the prophets before the captivity, and the scribes and lawyers during the time of our Lord's ministry, all arrayed against the truth. We have solemn warning as to the parallel to be exhibited at the close of this dispensation. And surely it is not too ranch to say, that the virtual rejection of the Lordship of Jesus and of the sovereignty of the Spirit in the gift of ministry, has prepared the way for a most unhealthy state of mind in the great majority of Christians, who are prepared to receive no more truth, than that which unman institutions have thought fit to supply. And it may be safely affirmed, that ignorance of scripture does very generally prevail, and so much insubjection of mind to the word of God, that a plain declaration of scripture is set aside by its supposed contrariety to some received dogma.

The priesthood of Israel stood in order, and we find an early departure from the present order in Nadab and Abihu—awaiting the completeness of its corruption in the sons of Eli. But prophecy stood in power—holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and the corruption was the attempt to establish it in form. Now the whole character of this dispensation is power; we have a priest constituted after the power of an endless life—the word of God is powerful—we have received not the spirit of fear but of love, and of power, and of a sound mind. And the preaching of

the apostle was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The apostasy then is characterized as having the form, but denying the power of godliness. Formal ministry or humanly accredited ministers, must necessarily therefore be the greatest hindrance to the truth. The minds even of professing Christians are not in a moment prepared to believe a lie, and a certain previous training by being taught those things which they ought not, must necessarily bring about that result so fearfully marked in the scriptures— “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in those that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, 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 be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure to unrighteousness.”

The apostasy of natural religion was, reasoning about God, and therefore He “gave them up to their own hearts' lusts” (Rom. 1:19-26). But now it is the departure from the truth by means of human teaching. The real question is often effectually obscured in disputes about office and order—it is, where is the power of either? Can man's institution, at all provide for the presence of the Holy Ghost? Does He still abide according to the Lord's promise, in the church? Let it be granted that human arrangement had secured the exact apostolic order, and that every office in the church was arranged after the apostolic model—what then? there might be the form without the power still. Now spiritual wisdom has ever been exercised in the discernment of where God is present in the midst of man's corruptions. There were holy priests after Eli—there were true prophets amidst Israel's prophets. There are many most valued ministers among those who are accredited by human institutions, but true wisdom will be to acknowledge that which is of God, and to discern that which is of man. Many are not content to be acknowledged as ministers of Christ—they rest on something besides that “grace given to them according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” and demand to be received on credentials simply human. Now the recognizing this would be the same as to recognize Israel's prophets. And would lead us, which is in fact the apostasy of the dispensation; to recognize human credentials, where the Spirit of God was not. It is a much readier way to come authenticated by man, than to make “full proof of our ministry.” And nothing is more unhealthy, than for a believer to be seeking the authentication of his ministry, and demanding to be received as a minister, because he has been educated for the ministry. The receiving any is on infinitely higher grounds than any gift of ministry, and that is, as “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,” — “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” Our highest privileges are our common privileges, and no ministry not even that of an apostle could ever put one so high as the fact of being a child has already put him. It is indeed a most blessed thing to minister to the body of Christ, but a more blessed thing to be of the body. And wherever we see the tendency to exalt ministers into a privileged class or order, of nearer access to God than others, instead of recognizing them as those having a distinct gift of the Spirit, we are in danger of having ministers in name, and not in the “sufficiency of God” in the church (2 Cor. 3:5).

Let the solemn warning in the case of Israel's prophets be looked to by us, and while we seek to honor the Holy Ghost in the thankful acknowledgment of any of His gifts, may we be kept from the sin of acknowledging any office in the church where He is not. “Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth on teaching, or he that exhorteth on exhortation; he that giveth let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth with

diligence; he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness.” May the Spirit be manifested in the church in all His varied gifts for its present need, and in all His manifold grace, that the name of the Lord may be magnified! Amen.

(Continued from page 22).

Chapter 162

Scripture Imagery: 21. Machpelah

There is evidently something very wrong with the world, “the foundations of the earth are out of course.” It is filled with vicarious suffering—the innocent victims bearing burdens, enduring pains and laying down their lives, leaving however legacies of perennial benefits to the race. It is not only a few individual cases, as where Lucilius shall deliver himself to death that Brutus may live, or Selwood dies for Fuller, or Lilla springs forward to receive Eumer's dagger, aimed at Edwin, into his breast; nor is it that a nation shall occasionally inherit salvation from the martyrdom of an innocent benefactor, as when king Cedrus died for Athens, or mail-clad Curtius rides into the gulf for Rome, or Winkelreid dies on the Austrian spears to free the Swiss. It is that there is no human being alive whose existence is not the outcome of vicarious agonies. The child inherits the boons of life, love, and light from the suffering of the mother. And in every direction this strange principle operates; for it may be doubted whether there be a possession that we have worth holding—material, political, or religious—which is not the result of the toil, tears, and blood of sages, prophets, and martyrs, most of whom have died in shame and apparent failure, bequeathing gifts in exchange for blows, and benedictions for imprecations.

He who was to be, above all others, the Blameless and Vicarious Sufferer is everywhere foreshadowed in the Old Testament. And whenever, in any of the types or prophetic Psalms, vicarious suffering is brought before us, we find outflowing therefrom a stream of grace and blessing in which all may participate. Thus from the sacrifice on Mount Moriah flows out a course of divine” favor and benison, beginning with the promise of posterity and dominion, and culminating in the birth of Jacob.

“But not unmixed with pangs” —a long time must elapse before the promise, or even its first syllable, is fulfilled;. and meantime we receive the “sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.” The immediate sequence is the departure of Sarah and Abraham is brought in very personal contact with death. That is, that those who are connected with the sacrifice of Christ, and are the objects of present promises and future blessings by reason of it, should pass experimentally through the fellowship of His sufferings, and bear about in the body the deadness—ν■κρωσιν—of the Lord Jesus Christ. Connected with this is an important surrender of all earthly rights: Abraham owned the whole country, God having given it to him; yet he will not accept—at present—so much as an acre of it without paying for it.

If a man reckon himself dead, he will not be insisting on his earthly rights. The sword of the Spirit is like that with which, in Scandinavian mythology, Wieland clove Amilias through helmet and armor with a blow so swift and keen, that he did not know that he had been struck till he essayed to move, and then he fell asunder in two pieces. It cleaves the natural man to the ground, though he knows nothing of it, nor suspects that he has such a “sentence of death in himself,” till he is moved by the impulses of spiritual, life, and then he has practical experience of death. So much we may learn when we descend from the heights of Moriah and stand in the field, of Ephron listening to the sighing of the wind through the trees of Mature and its moaning and mourning in the caves of

Machpelah.

Observe the courtesy of the man of faith: the dignity with which he declines the gift is noticeable at once. But if he is obliged to act with dignity and reject a proffered gift from the sons of Heth, he does not repulse with harshness but declines with grace. They address him with flattery and friendship— “My Lord, thou art a mighty prince.....in the choice of our sepulchers bury thy dead.” Ephron says, “Nay, my Lord, hear me: the field give I thee and the cave that is therein I give it thee what are four hundred shekels betwixt me and thee?” It is very hard to decline a gift thus proffered, when the refusal will evidently give pain Abraham, however, must be unyielding in purpose, but he is by no means harsh or rigid in demeanor: he “stood up and bowed himself to the people,.....saying, If it be your mind that, &c.....and Abraham bowed down himself.” Thus was conducted the first commercial transaction of human record. Probably it was more painful to Abraham to decline these friendly overtures than to join battle with the king of Chedorlaomer; but in consistency it must be done, and he does it in the most gracious way. The man that is firmest in purpose is generally the most courteous in bearing. We read of an iron hand in a velvet glove: suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.

Chapter 163

Scripture Imagery: 22. Sarah's Death, Eliezer's Mission, the Camels

We should in typical things be much more expecting to hear of Hagar's death (the covenant of law) than of Sarah's (the covenant of grace); but the scriptures record the death of Sarah in much detail, and make no reference to that of Hagar. The fact is that, typically, Hagar never does die: the divine injunction is (not to kill but) to cast out the bondwoman. And we shall do well if we exactly obey the command—to avoid either sheltering or attacking the legal system: to shelter it is legality; to attack it is antinomianism. Unfortunately the swarthy Egyptian woman has some mysterious charm by which she wins her way into many hearts and finds a more cordial reception than is given to her who represents the covenant of grace.

But why this emphasized and detailed record of Sarah's death? Well, there is a sense in which this latter covenant dies. The antitype is found in the beginning of Acts: there God advances a covenant of grace to the seed of Abraham; “Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,” is the proclamation which Peter makes to the Jews. But they reject this covenant, and it expires in the stoning of Stephen. Sarah, however, will rise from the dead and this covenant shall also, in the future day, be resuscitated. The enlarged and general sense in which the Sarah covenant is applied in Galatians has been already referred to.

The dying prayers of Stephen had hardly ceased when the Holy Ghost began an altogether new work amongst the Gentiles, in the call of the church—the bride: and so, immediately after Sarah's death (and distinctly connected with it by the scriptures) we find Eliezer charged with a mission by Abraham to the Gentile lands to find a bride for his son. There is a very solemn determination expressed that she shall not be taken from the land of Canaan: if a Jew be converted in this dispensation, he is incorporated in the bride, and he ceases to be a Jew; that would not be so in any other dispensation.

Eliezer is a well known type of the Holy Ghost “sent down from heaven” on this gracious embassy. He knows the mind of the father; he is in continual intercourse with God; he proceeds with deliberation, directness and dignity; he calls, wins, and adorns the bride; he conveys, and guards her through the wilderness until she is safely home, when he delivers her to the bridegroom, who goes forth to meet her.

Eliezer, in doing this, uses instruments of a humble and imperfect, but, in his hands, effective nature—the camels: they only partially meet the requirements of God; they chew the cud, but do not fully divide the hoof. The Holy Ghost is conveyed, by humble imperfect servants who have not a completely separated walk, but who nevertheless chew the true spiritual cud, and have inward resources of refreshment, which enable them to traverse the parching desert. But observe how defenseless they are! the camel has no means of protection in itself. How trackless the desert is! unless the Holy Ghost guard and guide the servants or the church, they are helpless. Would it be straining the figure for one to say that the time when their mission is being perfected is just the time when they are made to “kneel at the well?”

The sheep represents the believer as an object of protection, equally defenseless but dispensationally perfect— “clean every whit;” but there is no thought of the sheep working: the camel however is an instrument of service and therefore imperfect. The old negro said that “the Lord could strike a straight blow with a crooked stick;” and it is to the greater glory of the Lord that He can do such wondrous work with such infirm instrumentality. It is of no particular credit to anyone to do good work with good tools; but to do good work with bad tools, what patience and wisdom are required! God is carrying on His work in the call of the bride, not by reason of the consistencies, but in spite of the inconsistencies, of His servants.

The Jew Abraham went and came back a Christian. “Ah!” said his friend, “I knew that when you saw the holy lives.” “Well, not exactly that,” replied Abraham, “but I thought a religion must necessarily be divine that could survive so long, in spite of so much inconsistency in its advocates.” Even the best of the agents used by the Holy Ghost in the call and escort of the bride have been thus infirm: Peter denied his Master; James and John “knew not what spirit they were of “; Paul made serious mistakes; Origen instituted saint-worship, Augustine was tainted with Manicheanism, and Thomas a Kempis with monasticism; John Huss was somewhat revolutionary, Erasmus somewhat cowardly, Luther somewhat overbearing, and Calvin somewhat extreme; Wesley and Whitfield quarreled And to look at our own times!—well, let us commence by judging ourselves.

Chapter 164

Scripture Imagery: 23. Eliezer, Rebekah, Laban

How far beyond the poor starveling hope of a bare and precarious salvation—which is the utmost reach of general human thought about the gospel—is the mission of Eliezer to Rebekah! He invites her to share the home, wealth, and love of Isaac, and to be taken also into the affection and adoption of his father. Of course this includes the promise of real sustenance—salvation: but how much more does it include! When Nicolas of Russia sought to win the German princess for his wife, he handed her a piece of bread with a ring upon it, a customary action with some classes of Russians: so Christ not only offers us the bread of life—we must have that, indeed, or perish—but crowns the gift of salvation with the golden pledge of eternal love and union.

Eliezer persuades her to go; yet that persuasion is mot disconnected with the operation of her own will. She is asked, Wilt thou go? That is the question which tests as to whether she has FAITH in what is told her: and her decision is taken and expressed, “I will go.” The journey is rough and tedious, but she goes forth to meet the bridegroom, and is escorted in right lordly fashion. This is how the Father and the Son would have it. Not as the wife of Gilbert a Beckett, who came to her espoused from the far east, knowing only two words of any western language, “Gilbert” and “London." She reached London and met Gilbert eventually, after great sufferings and difficulties, as those also, who can truly pronounce the two divine words “Jesus” and “Heaven,” shall eventually find themselves in heaven and welcomed by Jesus. But this was not the manner in which Gilbert a Beckett would have desired his affianced to come; nor is it the way in which Christ designs that the church should travel. The Holy Ghost has come and has adequate agencies of ministry to support and protect; happy are we if we yield ourselves entirely to His safe and sure guidance.

The Holy Ghost adorns the embryo Bride, as an earnest of what is to come, with symbols of espousal: “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long. suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” When Laban saw the gifts “he said, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord: wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.” This is the natural and frequent, but not universal, result: at least, it is the duly desired order of things; that those amongst whom the believer lives should perceive these spiritual adornments, and welcome to their own hearts and homes the ministrant Spirit “in the day of visitation.” The messenger remained all night, as does the Holy Ghost, departing with the Bride-elect when the bright and morning star arises, to the great regret of impartial and upright men like Laban.

There are in Eliezer the true evangelistic traits: he has always the father's object in view, not to occupy himself in improving Mesopotamia, but to bring away the bride; to speak not of himself but of Isaac. He does everything in prayer, thanksgiving, and seeking the divine guidance; he approaches with courtesy and consideration, but with much directness and energy—he will not eat nor drink till he has told his errand, and, like Philip to the Ethiopian, he ran (ver. 17).

It is very wonderful to consider what this implies typically. In Luke 15 the father of the prodigal also “ran” to meet him. All God's movements in creation are accomplished with that majestic and awful

deliberateness which comports with the august dignity of His Being; yet when it is a question of saving sinful men, the Son is “straitened till it be accomplished.” The descent of the Holy Ghost is like a “rushing mighty wind,” and the action of the Father is typically expressed in that which reveals so emphatically that “the Lord will hasten it in His time!" The seraph “flew” with the coal of fire from the altar. And so “the servant ran;” “Rebekah ran;” and “Laban ran;" for all I know, the camels and sheep ran too—what a commotion to be sure—I am afraid there must have been a little excitement! There are many excellent and well-meaning Christians who are very censorious at any lack of propriety of this sort in gospel work. Let them consider such things as I have referred to. No doubt a spurious sensationalism is much to be deplored and condemned; but there is something worse even than that—the benumbing chill of a criticizing respectability.

But there is no more need to shiver on that cold rock Scylla than there is to flounder in the “sensational” whirlpool of Charybdis.

Chapter 165

Scripture Imagery: 24. Rebecca, Gold, Wrought Gold, Needlework

No doubt the chief outward points in which Rebecca typifies the church are her having been brought from out of the Gentiles to be the bride of Isaac, after his (figurative) resurrection; and her being brought into Sarah's tent after the death of the latter: but the chief moral point is that she believed without seeing. The Son of God wooed the “daughter of Zion” in a different way: He came in bodily presence, though in a manner disguised, to her place of abode, like the Sultan Aliris to Delhi, though not similarly successful. But it is the distinguishing characteristic of the church that she is won to espousal by faith in a message from her absent wooer: hence the highest blessing and closest affection is bestowed upon her. To Thomas (who represents the Jewish remnant) the Lord says, “Because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” Zechariah says of the Jews that they shall repent when they look on Him Whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son. They shall say, “What are these wounds in Thine hands?” But it is different with us, of whom Peter says, “Whom not having seen ye love: in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing” No wonder he calls it “precious faith,” this God-given power to believe in the absent One Whom the world rejects.

When Galileo with his first rude telescope discovered the moons of Jupiter, all the world laughed at his statement except Kepler, who wrote to tell him that he believed his word. Galileo's reply was a pathetic expression of deep gratitude and affection. And we are justified in believing that He, Who has revealed to an unbelieving world the mysteries of the circling orbs of the deeper and more impenetrable heavens, has, and will manifest, a full appreciation of the trust reposed in Him by those who “have not seen and yet have believed.” Even an impostor could be keenly alive to the claim that exceptional and isolated trust had on him. “Now am I not better than Khadijah: she was old and had lost her looks “: said the young and brilliant Ahesha to Mahomet; “You love me better than you did her?” “No,” replied he, “she believed in me when none else would believe. In the whole world I had but one friend, and she was that."

Though the bride of Psa. 45 may not represent the church definitely, yet we find some important principles relating to her—as well as to the Jewish people. She is seen at her Lord's right hand, the place of honor: she is in “gold of Ophir” (5:9); that is in divine righteousness, the work of God entirely, as virgin gold is. She is also “all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold” (5:13); that is the work of the Spirit and its ultimate effects “within” the heart, and without in respect of the “clothing” or eternal character. But there is something besides this glorious investiture. It is a subject of great happiness that she shall be made worthy of Christ by being invested with the righteousness of God, and within and without adorned with the graces of the Spirit, but, by the transcendent favor of the Father, she is brought in “raiment of needlework;” that is to say, her own good works “cannot be hid." When “His wife hath made herself ready” it shall be “to her granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousnesses (plural) of the saints."

There is a place then for personal righteousness, good works: it is not in the justification of the sinner, that is all of God; as God makes the gold and puts it down in the ground, and the only part man has in its production is to stoop and take it thence, so we have to accept forgiveness and life, as a free gift: there is also that spiritual adornment which should be the characteristics of the bride, partly divine and partly of human ministry, “wrought gold “; but beside these there should be in Christian life a perpetual preparation of personal good actions, as an elaborate embroidery in which to appear at the Great Marriage. Even this, however, is inevitably sullied by earthly contacts, and therefore we read, not only that the saved are themselves washed “in His own blood,” but also that they wash their robes and make “them white in the blood of the Lamb."

So that in every respect she is primarily and ultimately dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ for all qualifications for His presence: she will be worthy, but it is Christ Who makes her so, whether by His own personal work, or that of the Father or the Holy Ghost, or by human agency for His sake. As for her she has no dower to bring him: the kings of the earth shall bring gifts; she only brings herself filled with imperfection, but He, by a glorious transformation of “heavenly alchemy” makes her worthy of the high and glorious destiny which His love designs. In the old time, when all Socratians came bringing him gifts, Aeschines said, “I have nothing to give thee; I give thee myself.” “Do so,” said Socrates, “and I will give thee back thyself better than I received thee!”

We do indeed feel gratitude for that which He has done for us, but we do not sufficiently consider what He is doing in us. “I found Rome brick and leave it marble,” said Augustus; and that was the drowning glory of his humanly illustrious life.

Chapter 166

Scripture Imagery: 25. Rebekah, Practical Reflections

There are two verses in the Psalm referred to of very practical and general bearing: I refer to those in which the words occur, “So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.” Surely every disciple earnestly wishes to know what the principles of conduct are which lead—in any dispensation—to such a blissful and glorious result. Let us then deeply consider them. “Hearken, O daughter;” that is the first thing, not merely to hear casually but to listen definitely and specially: “and consider;” the complaint of Isaiah against Israel was that they would not consider, and their hope of future salvation is connected by Jeremiah with the statement that “in the latter day they shall consider;” it is a trait of the devout psalmist that he can say, “When I remember Thee upon my bed and meditate on Thee in the night watches, because Thou hast been my help therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice.” “I will meditate of Thy works.” “O how I love Thy law! it is my meditation all the day” — “day and night.”

“The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting," and the consequence may well be a crude and indigestible diet. A distinguished public man has just been saying that “one of the greatest faults of the age is that thinking is going out of fashion, and that people think less and less: that is partly due to the hurry of life.” Of course there is always a tendency to say, “the former times were better than these,” —in many things very untruly: but it can hardly be doubted that, speaking generally, we are not so rich in contemplative life as those who—like Moses in the desert of Midian, or Elijah at Cherith, or David at Adullam, or Ezekiel at Chebar, or Paul in Arabia, or John at Patmos spent months and years of the old dark ages in meditation. They indeed chewed the cud of spiritual rumination. Plato says that Socrates, when with the army, once stood for the whole day and far into the night wrapt in meditation on some particular thought. But that was a good while ago. If anyone did so now, he would be put in a lunatic asylum, or at the least, told to “Move on.”

Meditation, it must be allowed, is certainly not much in vogue, and many blame printing for it, but unjustly. No doubt printing is not an unqualified boon. When the writing of every book was a tedious and laborious process, when men wrote everything in imprinted capital letters all through, it is likely that they would have more time to think while they were writing. Then the extreme labor would compel them to condense as much as possible what they wrote. And again when men had to read these labored scrawls of drifting letters, without spaces between the words, they would have to take more time and thought to make them out. Besides which there was less tendency, by reason of this labor, either to write or read things of no consequence. But when all that is said, it must be admitted that the use of printing has been of immense service as a means of spiritual ministry since the extremely significant time of its discovery. It does not say that it is the “reading” man who roasteth not what he took, but the “slothful” man, and that indicates the main cause of the mischief.

Of course a great deal depends on what is read. “Beware of the man of one book,” said Thomas Aquinas; but it is certain that T. Aquinas did not keep to one book himself, nor is that the most

desirable course. Paul sends to Troas for his “books but especially the parchments"; which signifies plurality and preference. Still it is true that a few books well chosen and well-studied are infinitely more beneficial than a prodigality of ill-judged or frivolous reading. And here is where the third injunction comes— “incline thine ear.” This exhortation recognizes that there are so many voices in the world clamoring for attention that a distinct earnest and continuous effort is looked for, that we may hear the voice of the Good Shepherd (to mingle the metaphors).

We see then how great an importance our Lord attaches to our hearing His voice. An ancient divine said that a man had two ears and only one mouth that he should hear twice as much as he should speak. This then is the significance of that word, “So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty": not by reason of much intelligence or ability, for that is only within the reach of few; but by reason of that which is within the reach of all, the good part which the beloved disciple Mary chose to sit at His feet and hear His word; and this to the comparative oblivion of all else. “Forget also thine own people and thy father's house.”

“Comparative oblivion;” for there can be no doubt that such sentences as this are to be taken in a relative and not in an absolute sense, or we should not find so many precepts for us to show filial and family care and affection. We need to remember that the oriental character of language is much more absolute and antithetical than ours, or we shall misunderstand such a passage as “If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children he cannot be My disciple;” which simply means that his love and allegiance to Christ should be so great as that his attachment to all else is by comparison hatred. Taking too literal and unqualified a view of such passages is only logically carried out in the life of St. Theresa who denied herself all the claims and joys of kindred; or a St. Elizabeth of Thuringia who, though Landgravine, forsook her own children to wash the feet of beggars; or a St. Francis who, according to Dante, “wedded poverty.” Right noble were many such lives in motive though not in result: while we decline to accept their interpretation of precepts, we may well desire to be filled with their devotion and self-denial.

Chapter 167

Scripture Imagery: 26. Keturah's Family, Abraham's Death

Immediately after the history of the union of Isaac and Rebecca we read of some other children of Abraham by a different line: and so after the episode of the church-dispensation there will be another order of things; and, though an inferior order, yet a dispensation in which there shall be many spiritual sons of Abraham=inheritors of his faith. “In these children of the second wife we get (typically) the Millennial nations." “Abraham gave gifts [to them] and sent them away from Isaac.” Those nations, who in the future shall inherit the blessings of the Millennium, shall be in a far more distant petition from Christ than the church, of course; yet they shall have withal a rich and splendid endowment: “for the earth shall he full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” “They shall not hunger nor thirst: neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.” This is said of the Gentiles; of Israel the refrain is, that “The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall blossom as the rose."

Keturah is the mother of them, and represents the earthly Jerusalem that shall he brought into blessing and union with Jehovah; Hagar answering to the earthly Jerusalem “that now is,” as Sarah answers to the heavenly Jerusalem, “who is the mother of us all.” The writer already quoted compares Keturah's position, in contrast with Sarah's, to that of the Ethiopian wife of Moses, contrasted with Zipporah, a secondary and subordinate one. When, according to the Talmud, the children of Keturah and Ishmael came to the Rabbi Gebiah, claiming part of the inheritance of Israel, he replied that they had had theirs, that no man gives portions to his children in lifetime when he designs to leave them a future legacy: which was true in a larger sense than he wot of. Present and temporal prosperity is the blessing of the earthly peoples; future and eternal affluence the portion of the heavenly.

Then comes Abraham to his “grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season.” A fruitful life indeed, and—typical of the man of faith—a fruitful death. It is characteristic of faith that it plucks the sting from death itself and transforms it into a servant, as a Hindoo charms the serpent from which he has extracted the fang, into obedience. Even the dead body of Elisha when touching the dry bones of a forgotten corpse shall thrill them into life. Death cannot extinguish the light of these noble lives: indeed it brings to effect that which nothing else can; Isaac and Ishmael stand reconciled for a time at their father's grave! The hard untameable nature is touched and subdued at last by “The shadow cloaked from head to foot, Who keeps the keys of all the creeds." “O eloquent, just and mightie Death! whom none could advise, thou hast perswaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered thou only hast cast out of the world and despised: thou hast drawne together all the farre stretched greatnesse, all the pride, crueltie and ambition of men and covered it all over with these two narrow words, Hic jacet!"

The same principles—as fire or water—which are most horrible as masters, become when servants most beneficent. Death is yours, says Paul, and what does it not do for us? “Sin brought in death, which put out Sin.” It has satisfied the demands of justice, silenced the threatenings of judgment, and opened the portals of paradise.

Still, Ishmael and Isaac must take divergent lines; the wolf and the lamb may meet amicably in the Millennium (whereof this is a type in some degree), but they are not likely to travel far together; for even if the wolf did not revive the consideration of that hereditary grievance, with which he considers the lambs have afflicted his race, yet their paces and goals are widely different. Ishmael travels too quickly for Isaac: while the man of faith is waiting for twenty years for the first signs of the fulfillment of his hopes, the man of flesh rapidly develops into a very efflorescence of prosperity; a round dozen of princes in the family in little or no time! Nevertheless the lamb outstrips the wolf in time, like the tortoise of the ancient fable. When a man is in the right path, time is on his side and he can afford to wait. “Time and myself,” said Philip II of Spain, “are stronger than any other two.” It makes a great deal of difference whether we work with time or against it: put a seed into the ground and time will transform it into a forest; put a sword into the ground and time will transform it into a streak of rust.

Chapter 168

Scripture Imagery: 27. Election of Jacob, Competition, Jacob and Esau

Then, in the selection of Jacob in preference to Esau, even before their birth, the great principle of the sovereignty of God is asserted. It is needful sometimes for us to be reminded that God has perfect right and power to select whom He chooses, and to reject whom He chooses; and that no living being has any claim on Him whatsoever, except such claim as He Himself bestows, and the common claim of a creature on a creator, of weakness on power. In no way can this be more fully demonstrated than in the selection of the younger son before the birth of any: for when the younger son is selected—like Joseph or David—after birth, it may be said that their actions or natural characters have entitled them to this preference, or that the actions and characteristics of the other sons have precluded their claims. The important principle is that none of them have claims at all, and they require to be occasionally reminded of the fact, otherwise the instruments which God uses in His service would be apt to be self-complacent and arrogant; as it is there is no ground for anything in regard to the matter but gratitude to the Absolute and Almighty Ruler for His grace in taking up any one of us for service. Nor has Esau any ground for complaint; for if Jacob was chosen before his birth it was not said “Esau have I hated” till long after his birth, nor till his character and the character of his posterity had been fully revealed. To notice this fact removes a difficulty found by some in Rom. 9:13.

It frequently happens that so soon as God is going to raise up a man for some special work or destiny the adversary has another ready to anticipate the true one on the same lines; this is the most important of the two chief characters of opposition which are always being directed against any divine work (the other is violence, which never thoroughly succeeds). It was thus that “Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses “; that Korah withstood Aaron; that Simon Magus would have caricatured Philip, and the Pythoness-soothsayer would “co-operate” with Paul; that Theudas, and many other false Christs have sought in the past, and will seek in the future, to take the ground from under the feet of the true Messiah, or the wind out of the sails of the gospel ship. Where God builds a city the devil develops a Babylon: where there is a Mount Zion there shall presently be a Mount Gerizim. To alter Defoe by one word— “Wherever God erects a house of prayer, The devil always builds [another] there, And 'twill be found upon examination, The latter has the largest congregation.” The heresy of the Nicolaitanes quickly competed with the Gospel, and the craze of Antinomianism with the Reformation.

Often the counterfeit presentation precedes the real one, as where the personality of Nimrod overshadowed Abram, or Ishmael anticipates Isaac: or, as here, Esau is born before Jacob, and for a time evidently takes the lead in prosperity. Under their resemblances there is a vital antipathy and contrast: Nimrod is the man of sight against the man of faith; Ishmael is the flesh persecuting the spirit, and Esau is the “profane person” who “despised his birthright” in contrast with Jacob who, with all his faults, was in the main a devout person who esteemed it.

It is usual to contrast the characters of Esau and Jacob very much to the advantage of the former—to display Esau as of a fine generous disposition, noble, manly and forgiving, and Jacob as the precise reverse. This is done by friends of the Bible to enhance our thoughts of the divine grace in choosing Jacob, and by enemies in order to disparage “God's favorites.” But the truth is that there is no ground for this fiction except the forgiving attitude of Esau when Jacob returned and met him at Peniel; yet there seems little doubt that his conciliatory attitude then was the result of God's interposition, and that Esau had originally started out with the four hundred men in order, to be revenged. Then as to his generosity—it is true he says, “I have enough my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself:” but he takes the present for all that. After making the best bargain he could for his birthright he tries to get it back surreptitiously and only fails because Jacob forestalled him. That he was a brave, strong, capable, energetic man may be admitted, but that is a poor set-off against his counting on his father's death that he might be free to murder his brother, albeit that brother had grievously wronged him. This enmity against God's chosen ones always characterized the Edomites his descendants, until Obadiah's prophecy was, in comparatively recent times, fulfilled in their extermination. Herod the Great (descended from Esau through Antipater and a Philistine slave), and his evil family, are notable members of this line. Nevertheless “God hath spoken in his holiness over Edom will I cast my shoe, over Philistia will I triumph!”

But that in which Esau is representative is that he “despised his birthright,” which carried with it, besides other things, a double portion in inheritance, family rule and the privilege of transferring the “Blessing;” all these he surrenders for a mess of pottage. He barters manhood for animalism, and exchanges immense spiritual wealth and privilege for a morsel of sensuous satisfaction. In all this he is the standing type of the “profane person” who recklessly forfeits the future in grasping at the present, and traffics away the birthright of the spiritual affluence, with which God would endow him, for the momentary indulgence of temporal gratifications. He shall never be able to cancel the contract though he seek it “bitterly with tears.”

“But Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents,” whilst Esau was a somewhat heroic and attractive one dwelling in rocks. Yet God, who judged not by mere outward appearance, “loved Jacob and hated Esau;” and the tents of Shalem prove to have more enduring foundations than Edom's houses cut out of the solid rocks of Petra. The tent, readily moved from stage to stage on the surface of the earth (having no foundation therein) indicates the sojourner and the possessor of a divinely awakened faith. That he was grievously failing and inconsistent on many occasions must be admitted: that in his case “Complaint was the largest tribute heaven received, and the sincerest part of his devotion" that he wronged his brother, deceived his father, cheated his uncle, mismanaged his family and failed in his faith must be greatly deplored: it remains true nevertheless that his life was in the main right and Esau's in the main wrong.

I hold it to be an intensely mischievous error to transfer our sympathies from a right cause to a wrong one because of some repulsive elements in the advocates of the right, or some attractive ones in the advocates of wrong: which has frequently occurred in the case before us. Here is an instance of it: “Jacob was a plain man” &c.; the Hebrew word tahm, here translated “plain” means “perfect” or “upright,” and everywhere else it is translated in that sense, yet it is not corrected in the Revised Version. If Jacob is to be deprived of his general characteristic of uprightness because of some serious failures, what of Noah or David?

As Abraham represents the especial principle of Election; Isaac that of Sonship, so Jacob represents the principle of Discipline in its operations and effects.

Chapter 169

Scripture Imagery: 28. Jacob Banished and the Ladder

Besides illustrating in a general way the life of a believer under discipline—its need, operation, and result, Jacob foreshadows in his history the wanderings and final deliverance of his descendants, the nation of Israel, and, since Christ is the true Israel, of that particular aspect of the Son of God which relates to His earthly inheritance. The promises originally given to Abraham were of the stars (heavenly) and sand (earthly) characters; but we find that they are divided, and that Isaac takes the line of Christ in resurrection, abiding in the heavenly place, to whom is brought the Gentile bride (therefore the repetition of the promise to him is of the stars only); Jacob takes the line of Christ outcast, wronged, and wandering in the earthly places; and to him the promise is of the sands only. Recently in opening the Liverpool Exhibition the Queen was handed a gold key which, being put into a small lock, by some elaborate mechanism, opened every door in the vast building: we know that Christ is the golden key to unlock all the courts of Scripture and lay open to us their opulent treasures of beauty and glory.

Therefore, after the episode of chapter 26, where we find Isaac dwelling in Canaan, blessed with the star-promises and, though not asserting his rights against Abimelech, yet digging again the wells (of hidden, heavenly ministry) which had been choked by Philistines, we read of Jacob traveling out of Canaan, blessed with the sand-promises which are fulfilled in a measure whilst he is in contact with the Gentiles and away from Canaan, and returning finally, having two wives and a great affluent household. In accomplishing this he has (unlike Isaac's yielding attitude) to defend his own cause against such as would wrong him, as will happen in the latter day when the “Kingdom and Patience” of Jesus Christ shall be succeeded, by the Kingdom and Power. He “will gather all nations...and will plead with them." “They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust."

But there must intervene a long period of banishment, labor and adversity; and so we find Jacob “because the sun was set” lying down lonely and obscure on a stone-pillow at Luz. It is all very well for such as Burton (quoting from Seneca and Boethius) to say that “banishment is no grievance at all," and merely to change localities. But it is a bitter sorrow to most people; and especially to those who love their kin, and have the living tendrils of strong affections thus broken. Yet are there consolations and compensations even in this: the daylight of prosperity puts out the light of the heavenly spheres.; but when darkness comes, then do we behold the ineffable glories of the celestial constellations. They were (like Hagar's well) there all the time; but we see them not till the kind night reveals to us the splendor of the stellar radiance. “Wondrous truths, and manifold as wondrous, God hath written in those stars.” It is thus when outcast and lonely, that the servants of God have received their loftiest visions of rapt and holy ecstasy: that Moses in the desert sees the burning bush; that Ezekiel in Assyria sees the gorgeous cherubim; that Daniel in Elam saw the panorama of the world's history; that the ascetic Baptist in the wilderness of Jordan, saw Him on whom the Spirit descended; that John at Patmos, turning to hear the voice that spoke to him in his desolation, saw his Master invested with the loftiest attributes. It was thus in later times that Augustine, secluded at Cassiciacum, Luther at Wartburg, and Farel at Neuchatel, found the same

divine Master in an especial way comforting their loneliness and sustaining their purposes; thus that Rutherford found in his— “sea-beat prison, My Lord and I kept tryst;” and thus when Charles Wesley was mobbed and hunted, he crept into an outhouse and gave birth to that holy poem which has comforted so many millions,

“Jesus, lover of my soul,

Let me to Thy bosom fly!”

Like that banished negro who, wandering in Brazil, found the “Star of the South” diamond, and instantly was prodigiously enriched; so the poor man of the Gospel who was cast out of the synagogue lifts up his new-found eyes, and, in his desolation, sees the Son of God approaching him, “fairer than all the earth-born race:” the wilderness and the solitary place are made glad by this mysterious Presence. And here in Jacob's banishment and darkness he lifts up his eyes and beholds a vision of Christ like that glorious and ecstatic one which his descendants shall see from “the Hill Mizar “—that vision of regal magnificence found in the forty-fifth psalm; he sees in type what Christ Himself sees when standing in rejection— “angels of God ascending and descending ON the Son of Man” — “a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached up to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it; and, behold, the Lord stood above it.”

This ladder then is the “Mediator between God and men, the MAN Christ Jesus” —being set up on the earth. “The top of it reached up to heaven,” which reveals His divinity; as the reaching down to earth shove His humanity— “equal with God” yet “a little lower than the angels.” It is the only means of man's approach to God, and of God's communication with man. Nathaniel understood how that the Messiah was “Son of God and King of Israel” —how that in His highest title He would reign over a smaller country than Italy—but the banished Christ must show him “greater things than these:” that hereafter in the Millennial earth He, Who has been thought unworthy by men to reign over a small province in His highest title, has been thought worthy by God to reign over the whole world in His lowest title. The second Psalm is answered by the eighth. “Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the SON OF MAN!”

Scripture Imagery: 29. Discipline and Attainment Jacob

Everyone recognizes the necessity for discipline—except perhaps for himself—in order to mature character and correct faults. “If folly were a pain,” says the Spanish proverb, “there would be shrieking all over the world": it seems ingrained in human nature, and in the servants of God not less than others; and it is because He is their Father that God chastens His children; not because He dislikes them, but because He loves them; not to injure us, but “for our profit.” All the world knows how great a benefit suffering may be: “He who harasses one teaches him strength,” says the African: Crescit sub ponders virtus, virtue flourishes under adversity, says the classic, alluding to the palm being more fruitful when hung with weights. Sechele, chief of the Bakwains, said to Livingstone that he thought his subjects would all become good Christians when they had been well beaten. Another proverb from the savage tribes is, “The sword does not know the head of him that made it:” if it did, it would understand the reason of all the terrible blows with which he smites it; it glows with burning indignation as he puts it into the fire, it clamors mightily when he hammers it, it hisses a bitter disapproval when he plunges it into the chilling flood, it shrieks over the grindstone. But its maker knows what he is doing all the time: it cannot do its work without all this rough dealing; nor will he strike it one needless blow. Behold it at last keen, strong, symmetrical, glittering and tempered as Excalibur or Balmung. “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.”

Of course all suffering is not sent in the way of chastisement for faults: much of it may be as persecution for Christ's sake or righteousness' sake, and to be welcomed as a high honor; much of it may be of the ordinary casualties of life, incident to all, but “to them that are exercised thereby” all kinds of tribulation work, patience, experience, hope. The word tribulation is itself taken from the tribulum, the little instrument which separated the corn from the chaff; and this is the effect discipline will have on the devout mind. “Certainly virtue is like precious odors, most fragrant where they are incensed or crushed; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue."

In the old parable of “The Hermit “ we find that reverend man troubled as to how it is “That vice should triumph, virtue vice obey. This sprung some doubt of Providence's sway.” Whereon he goes forth to explore the world, and “clear this doubt,” but he only sees things that trouble him more than over. He is met by a youth of attractive mien, who accompanies him. They are first sheltered by a very rich man, who bountifully welcomes them: next morning they go forth again, and the youth steals a golden goblet—a poor return for such generosity, thinks the hermit. The following night they are received by a churlish man; but “half he welcomes in the shivering pair,” giving them “coarse bread and meager wine.” So far from robbing this man, however, the eccentric youth presents him with the goblet! They next are cordially welcomed by a host who has a truly devout and noble mind. Here the hermit is horrified by seeing his fellow-traveler creep over to the cradle and strangle the good man's babe; and, finally, a servant being sent to guide them by the host, who knows not yet of his frightful bereavement), the young man throws him into the river and drowns him!

The hermit can bear it no longer (we are apt to be somewhat surprised that he has borne it quite so long). He, flaming with indignation, “madly cries, Detested wretch!—but scarce his speech began, when the strange partner seemed no longer man! His youthful face grew more scarcely sweet; His robe turned white and flowered upon his feet Celestial odors breathe through purpled air.” In short he assumes angelic guise and explains “the truth of government divine” to be “The Maker justly claims the world He made” —that in the first place He must be allowed to do as He likes with His own. But there were hidden reasons for all these strange proceedings. “And where you can't unriddle, learn to trust.” The first host they went to was a “great vain man, who fared on costly food, Whose life was too luxurious to be good “: he used to force his guests to morning drafts of wine, but now is rebuked by having his goblet, abstracted. The second host was mean and suspicious; but he had relaxed with unwonted generosity on this occasion, and so he was given the goblet to encourage him. The third host was really excellent, and devout, “But now the child half weaned his heart from God “; so it was better for both that the child should be taken from his ruinously fond care. As for the old servant, he had designed to rob his master that night, and it was to save him from a second blow that such vigorous means were taken to prevent it.

Now, this parable is not meant to represent any complete view of methods of divine government: it is neither meant to imply that these things always go contrary to what we should expect, nor that everything is judged according to its merits in this life. But what it does is to illustrate in a singularly picturesque way the difficulties of our, judging of God’s dealings by mere outward events, “And where you can't unriddle, learn to trust.” —As another wrote, who had just been overshadowed by one of the most dreadful of human infirmities, “God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform.....Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him.....Blind unbelief is sure to err.....God is His own interpreter.” In Mincing Lane some of the foreign produce is sold “with all faults,” because of its being in a generally defective and damaged condition. These goods used to be (more formerly than at present) “fired” or “refired,” subjected to the action of great heat, with the result of very remarkable improvement. It is not the best kind of buying, to purchase things “with all faults;” for however badly they turn out, the purchaser has to put up with his bargain. That is, however, how sinners have been bought, and that is how they often have to pass through the furnace of tribulation. Do we not see the whole process when the coal, black and misshapen, is dragged from the depths of earthly darkness, is brought out into the light, is cast into the fiery gas-making retorts, whence it travels through the manifold tribulations of “ascension and dip pipes,” “condenser,” “exhauster” (suggestive names), through the tearing of the “scrubber,” the chilling of the “washer,” the cleansing of the “purifier,” till at last, having gone through a tomb-like “station meter,” it comes under the operation of the “governor,” and behold it then! no longer a black, inert, shapeless mass, but a bright and living flame, to lighten the city's darkness, to illume the palace's banquet hall! How many a black and dead sinner is thus dug up, and thus by fire and water, by death and resurrection, transformed to a burning and shining light in the Lord. “Sweet are the uses of adversity, which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in his head.”

But the effect of fire differs with differing natures; it melts the snow which comes from the skies, but it hardens the mud that comes from the earth: there is the “godly sorrow,” that leadeth heavenwards, and there is “the sorrow of the world,” [that] “worketh death.” David in sorrow goes to the Lord; Saul goes to the witch: and there is no greater outward test of whether there be divine

life in anyone, than in the result of the action of these fires. Like Shadrach and his companions, Jacob had One like unto the Son of God walking with him, albeit, it seemed as if his companions were only Sorrow and Fear, and so the fire consumed but his fetters and his enemies. The latter part of his troubled life was illumined with a holy light, and dignified with the ineffable calm of a sublime confidence. His dim eyes pierced through many a coming century, and discerned in the darkness a radiant gleaming of the coruscation of divine splendor that shines from Shiloh's celestial crown.

Chapter 171

Scripture Imagery: 30. The Pillow, the Pillar and Sympathy

When banished Jacob comes, in weariness and darkness, to Luz, he does not find even a but to welcome him, but he finds a stone, rejected of men, waiting for him on the ground: this stone he makes a pillow of in the darkness; and when the light comes he sets it up with a holy anointing as a pillar of testimony and adoration.

We know that Christ is the “Stone disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious.” We know that though to the natural mind it seems a hard and comfortless pillow, the spiritual mind arriving at Luz (separation) finds a sweet repose and a soft pillow in the bosom of Jesus—a pillow of rest first, and then this same Jesus a pillar of witness and worship, anointed with oil—the Holy Ghost. And so Luz becomes Beth-el—the House of God! This is the wanderer's sanctuary: it is not the home bird, “the sparrow hath found an house;” it is the bird of passage, “the swallow that hath a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts! “

Amongst the “uses of adversity” one of the most important is that which awakens and discloses sympathy. We frequently hear sympathy when unaccompanied with help spoken slightingly of, but indeed it is a priceless quality under any circumstances. The little boy ran into his father's study, and holding up his hand, with trembling lip and troubled brow, said, “I’se hurted my finger.” “Well, my little man,” replied the philosopher, looking up over his spectacles and keeping his hand on the open page of the De Augmentis, “How can I help you?” The little fellow burst into a flood of tears and ran away.

The gentle mother meeting him, and ascertaining the cause, said, “Well but, my darling, what could your father do?” (She was, however, nestling the child's head on her bosom and kissing the tears away.) The little boy sobbed out, “I thought that he'd say, Oh!” And there is no doubt that to him that word “Oh!” sympathetically uttered would have contained as strange and mysterious a charm as the sacred Oh'm to a Hindu priest.

Thus with Jacob, in many places, but specially here at Luz, in the time of his adversity: God comforts him with gracious words and assuring promises, “Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest I will not leave thee!” When the weary wanderer lays his head on the neglected stone of Luz, what celestial visions shall he not see? what holy words of gracious comfort shall he not hear?

Chapter 172

Scripture Imagery: 31. The Stone of Bethel

“And this stone, said Jacob, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house.” At first view what a crude and poverty-stricken thought this appears. Certainly David's idea of what was Suitable for the house of God was a great advance upon it; the contribution towards its construction which, he “prepared in his trouble,” amounted to 5,000 tone of gold and 50,000 tons of silver, besides brass, iron, timber, stone, etc. “without weight.” And as Jacob's single stone is, compared with the splendor, magnificence and solemn grandeur of the Temple of God, so also is that Temple itself, or the highest of human conceptions, to what is ultimately disclosed as the true and eternal house of God.

Yet for all this Jacob's thought is correct; for was not this stone—which had been his pillow of rest was now his pillar of witness—Christ Himself? and whether the possessor's thought of Him be meager or otherwise, yet possessing Him, he has “all the fullness that filleth all in all.” And every disciple has this, Whether he know it or not; but “dove's eyes” —that is, eyes anointed by the Spirit—are required to perceive it. Agassiz looking upon a fragment of fossil bone can build up with accuracy the uncouth and gigantic form, of some monstrous lizard that wandered in the ancient world; Galvani can see in the twitching leg of a frog the revelation of a vast and mysterious power; Le Verrier could see in the perturbations of the planets the approach of a fresh globe; and Galileo looking upon a swinging chandelier, or Newton upon a falling apple, can read the mighty and unbounded laws that govern the solar systems. So a geologist looking 'on Jacob's Stone' may read in it much of a world that is past, and a disciple may read there, in embryo, the history of the world that is future.

Stone is the oldest and most enduring thing on the earth: for the granite was formed, we are told, as the globe cooled from its condition of liquid heat, and it is the foundation of everything else. In Daniel where Christ is spoken of as a stone cut out without hands, He is called the Ancient of Days; and there is no doubt that those are the chief features—Age and Stability. There is also passive strength and weight, the ironstones and ores; with value, the quartz, or diamond. But the type is presented in various ways; not only is he proclaimed as the Rock of Ages for a security for those in the tempests which Isaiah predicts, but also the Rock on which the church shall be built; a rock of habitation (Marg.); the rock of my heart (Marg.); “the rock that followed them,” and other such names of dignity, but also in the humblest aspects of a stone rejected by men, yet chosen of God and made by Him a foundation stone (everything beginning in and resting on Christ), and the head stone of the corner (everything ending and culminating in Him), and also a living stone, a tried stone (tried by death), and an elect stone (elect in resurrection)—a precious stone.

He is also a stone of stumbling on which whosoever shall fall shall be broken and snared (for salvation), and a rock of offense which shall, on whomsoever it shall fall, grind him to powder. It is this that Daniel speaks of in the falling of the stone cut out without hands on the feet of the Image, destroying and supplanting it. The “man of the earth” beginning with the golden head, the Babylonish rule, and deteriorating downwards through the silver chest and two armed

Medo-Persian dynasty, thence through the brass stage of the Greek rule, reaches the iron or Roman age, which, dividing into two legs, finally arrives at its present condition, subdivided into ten toes (kingdoms). The stone falls on the feet (that is, the Ancient of Days descends in judgment at this final stage) and “fills the whole earth.”

The Caaba, or sacred stone of the Mahometans, is black; for the legend says, that though it came from heaven, clear as crystal, the lips of sinners have so often pressed against it that it has thus become changed. How different is that conception of a stone from what the Holy Word discloses—a nature as of One who could touch the leper without defilement. The Caaba touching a sinner contracts his pollution, but the Living Stone, touching a sinner, conveys to him His own holiness.

And not only this, but so conveys His own nature and characteristics that the Holy Ghost can pronounce that “As He is, so are we in this world.” Therefore we are called Living Stones, and dispensationally all that is true of Christ is true of us. Hence, when the ark passed through Jordan, twelve stones, representing the people of God, are placed in the bed of the river, and twelve taken out of Jordan and placed in the Promised Land; so that we are thus seen (extraordinary statement) “raised up together and made sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” The term “living stone” is a very peculiar one, for nothing is so “dead as a stone": it gives us the idea of the immutability of the stone combined with the vitality and energy of the higher natures, an unchanging and yet a developing nature— “growing unto an holy temple.” Elijah carried forward the idea when he built an altar of twelve stones on Carmel, and the special interest there is that, though the tribes were divided and that there were no longer twelve, yet he still represents them—as God sees them and as faith apprehends them— “complete in Him.”

Chapter 173

Scripture Imagery: 32. The Three Flocks, Leah, Rachel, the Servant

Resuming the view of Jacob as typical of Christ in his earthly character, we find him come to the people of the East, where there are “three flocks” waiting around a well which is as yet closed. When it is “high day” he opens the well and the waiting sheep are supplied. Isaiah prophesies of the future time when “Israel shall be third with Egypt and Assyria,.....whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hand, and Israel mine inheritance.” “And thither were all the flocks gathered “—Jew, Gentile, and Church of God—at least these three nations are evidently marked for special recognition and favor.

But for one of them is still more especial favor. Of Israel it is said, “Thy Maker is thine husband,” “saith the Lord; for I am married unto thee: “ so here we find the type in Rachel, so long wooed yet withheld, so long barren, so long idolatrous, so great a cause of sorrow and anxiety, and yet so greatly and ceaselessly beloved. We must remember that it is the course of the earthly Messiah which we are regarding here, and therefore it is in entire consistency that Rachel is the one on whom the chief care and affection seems to be bestowed. Leah (who is regarded as typifying the Gentile) was the first obtained, but was not the first sought, and here, in connection with the earthly Messiah and earthly dispensations, it is seen in a somewhat secondary light. For all that she is the most fruitful, and is honored in the births of Judah and Levi, the Ruler and the Teacher, King and Priest.

If Leah typified the Gentile, it is not surprising that we should read that she was “tender-eyed:” the organs of outward vision were impaired. In this dispensation we walk “by faith and not by sight.” It is a saying as old as Plato, that “when our bodily eyes are at worst, generally the eyes of our souls see best.” Democritus was blind, yet he “saw more than all Greece besides” (if he saw half as much as his namesake, Democritus junior, it is easy to believe that statement). “Some philosophers and divines,” says this last-named, “have put out their eyes voluntarily, the better to contemplate.” Who has heard such lofty anthems, as the two blind musicians Handel and Bach? who has seen such ecstatic visions as the two blind poets Homer and Milton? Leah would appear to have been neither particularly favored either in respect of outward appearance or outward vision; but from the little we read of her, in regard to naming her children, she seems to have had much inward and devout perception. This is what should be all true of the church in its earthly history, like its Lord having no beauty to the outward man that it should be desired; and characteristically and peculiarly-walking by faith and not by sight.

Faith should be of course characteristic of the devout in any dispensation, but there is no dispensation in which it is so emphatically necessary that men should not walk by sight as in this, the church era: for even Israel had to take some cognizance of the providential and national movements around them, and shape their policy to some extent accordingly. But now we are told, “Ye are not of the world.” “Set your affection—or regard, or mind, τ■ ■νω φρονε■τε—on things above.” It is well to be accurate here: walking by sight does not mean the exercise of reason, sight refers to the outward evidences of mere external things, and may be contrary to faith, as every day

we find it may be contrary to reason; for instance, if we look down over the bulwarks of a ship in progress, sight tells us that the water is rushing to the rear and our ship is stationary, but reason convinces us that it is the ship that moves and not the water. Reason—true reason not mere “reasoning” —never can contradict faith but travels in the same line, though in an infinitely lower plane. However much it is condemned in theological writings, the exercise of reason is nowhere condemned in the scriptures, where it is said, “Come, let us reason together,” and that Paul “reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath.”

A powerful opponent of Christianity says in a sarcastic passage, “Our most holy religion is founded on faith, not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it, to put it to such a trial [the trial of reason], as it is by no means fitted to endure.” This foolish kind of attack no doubt has got some encouragement from well-intentioned persons who spend their time in reasoning against the use of reason, as if it were not God's very best providential gift. Nor is sight itself to be condemned; is that not also a divine gift? It is the walking by it that is condemned, for it is a mere “dead reckoning,” and no sailor would travel by such means—that is, by calculation from the log and the steerage, when there is a single star visible in the heavens to guide him.

But in order to effect this union Jacob has to serve through weary years of bondage: he is a typical servant too, in some small sense not unworthy to foreshadow Him “Who took on Him the form of a servant.” He submits to the wrongs of an injurious master in silence, he serves patiently, and suffers without complaint, his wages are changed ten times but he answers not again. Meanwhile the discipline that characterizes his life is steadily developing its effects. “God hath one Son without sin,” said St. Austin, “but none without discipline.”

Scripture Imagery: 33. Jacob's Return

Laban is for a time greatly enriched by Jacob's visit, but turns out in the end ungrateful and fraudulent, seeking by violence to deprive the true servant of his rights. And that is what will happen when the earthly Christ visits the man of the world: for a thousand years all goes prosperously, but at the close of that time the man of the world will seek to grasp Jerusalem. However, in each case Laban's and Gog's—there is signal defeat brought about by God's direct intervention, and thereupon the withdrawal of the Divine Servant with His family and household. To a certain point there is forbearance shown by the servant, but this grace is not at all carried to the extent of yieldingness which characterized Isaac (the heavenly Christ of the present period). The servant is willing to take the speckled and spotted of the flock for his hire—Christ is willing to accept what the world despises: but when it is known that by the contemplation of the rod partly peeled—which may mean the word with its inner meaning partly disclosed—they become strong and numerous, then Laban's cupidity and enmity is excited; and in result he loses one by whom he has received great wealth, and loses his wealth with him. There is a serious controversy, chiefly concerning Rachel (Israel), but the man of God is victor, and finally withdraws from the place to “return to the land of his kindred.”

Not only, however, has Laban to be overcome in Mesopotamia, but Esau at the Jordan: not only the power of the world would hold back the household of Christ; but spiritual powers, malign and benign, barred their entrance to the promised land. Christ overcomes all.

There were many faults in the deceitful and timid way in which Jacob returned to Canaan, but he did proceed thither when God told him; and here we see that a right act may be done in a wrong way, which is certainly better than not at all. It was right of him to go to Canaan, but wrong to tell falsehoods, copious and fluent, on the way. The same principle applies to many other of the notable actions of scripture: it was right of Rahab to hide the spies, and of Shiphrah and Puah to save the male children of Israel; but if they had had the faith and courage to do so without telling deliberate untruths, God would have upheld them. We find that the deed is often approved though the manner of its doing is not; and here is an important lesson: a good deed may be done in a faulty way, and we certainly should—as God has done—approve the action and not let the manner of it blind us to its virtue. There is a great deal too much adverse criticism from people who never do anything on those who are in active service, because these latter do not shape all their methods to meet the approval of the former. The old school of German strategists found perpetual fault with Bonaparte, because he did not fight according to their conventional rules; but he kept on winning the battles somehow, and that was the great thing after all. But now Christ is revealed, and all evil is judged in His cross; and He reigns in our life. Let us, therefore, strive to eschew all wrong and to do right things in the right way, for feeble minds are unable to distinguish these things, being stumbled and hindered by our inconsistencies.

Thus comes he, fearing, plotting and praying, to Jordan and indeed there were terrible dangers before him; a foe strong and vengeful, and Jacob as weak as a reed. But be must be weakened

still more before he can conquer; he must be as weak as a bruised reed: so the angel cripples him, and then he is victorious, and the supplanter becomes a “prince with God.” One of the most stimulating studies in literature would be a record of maimed victors—but there is no such book extant, I think. It would contradict Emerson's discouraging theory that all the notable work in the world has been done by healthy men, with developed “arteries,” and nothing by the weak-arteried and large-veined ones. It would give a history of Pyrrhic victories, and Parthian defeats: it would tell of Ehud, maimed in his right hand, but smiting Eglon such a blow with the dagger in his left, as delivered Israel; of leprous Naaman leading the Syrian hosts; of blind Sampson pulling down the temple of Dagon; of the four lepers who fed Samaria; of what has been done by Paul, imprisoned, aged, infirm and purblind; by such confirmed invalids as Calvin, Melancthon, Erasmus, and John Howard; by Cowper and Cruden, over whose minds brooded the horrors of insanity; above all and distinct from all, eternal victory wrought by One, when wounded in head, hands feet and heart, on a Roman cross.

Even in human histories many of the greatest achievements were performed by men maimed or dwarfed. Caviar was epileptic and headachy; Alexander the Great was a little stooping man; Augustus Caesar and Napoleon very small; Horace “a little blear-eyed contemptible fellow;” Aesop a crooked dwarf; Ignatius Loyola, Epictetus, Agesilaus, Tamer-lane, Shakespeare, Byron and Wedgwood were lame; Homer, Democritus, Milton, Handel and Bach, were blind, Galileo so in later life, Socrates nearly so, and repulsive-looking; Hannibal had but one eye; Nelson but one eye and one arm; Beethoven and Kitto stone-deaf; Demosthenes nervous and stuttering. The two greatest warriors of the 17th century met to fight at Landen: “It is probable that among the hundred and twenty thousand soldiers who were marshalled, the two feeblest in body were the hunchback dwarf, who urged forward the fiery onset of France, and the asthmatic skeleton who covered the slow retreat of England.” It is very well when we can have mens sana &c., but often the sound mind is found in a very unsound body.

Chapter 175

Scripture Imagery: 34. Course of Discipline and Attainment

Jacob is also one of the series of representative men; he represents the course of discipline and attainment; and now the most important point of his life is reached. He arrives at Jabbok (depletion), where he indeed is depleted, humiliated and crippled; yet he prevails with God, and attains to an altitude of spiritual power, for which he is divinely honored and invested with a royal title. He comes thither, it is true, “planning” as well as praying, but I could never see why, he is blamed for that. Is planning, wrong? Do his critics never plan? Planning is only wrong when our plans are substituted for, or traverse God's plans; as “system” —so often denounced is a highly desirable thing, unless it interferes with some divine system already announced., There is no evidence that this was the case here. He feared; yes, perhaps he ought not to have been afraid; but would his critics now, I wonder, feel at all nervous if they had all their loved ones menaced by the appearance of a hostile army led by a wronged and revengeful warrior?

But whether he feared or planned, he prayed, and he also went forward, and this was the important matter after all; like that soldier whose knees used to tremble when going into battle: but it did not stop him; he looked down at them and said, “Ah, you'd tremble more if you knew where I was going to take you.”

He was under the discipline of suffering all his life; it was not he who could write that proverb: Si longa est, levis est; si gravis est, brevis est. His burdens were long and heavy too. And it is remarkable that we have a chapter interjected to show us how Esau and his family were prospering, producing wealth with Midas-like power, and developing kings and nobles by the ton—I suppose that avoirdupois weight is moat suitable here—while blow after blow fell upon Jacob. If we judge by mere outward signs—sight—as Jacob's friends did, we should assuredly conclude that Esau's was the right course and Jacob's was the wrong. A prolonged succession of disasters darken the true servant's life, some of the heaviest of which occur when he is walking in the path to which God called him: the dishonor of Dinah; the cruelty of Simeon and Levi, and the consequent hatred of his neighbors; the death of Deborah; then of the thrice-beloved Rachel; Reuben's wickedness; Judah's profligacy and violence; the loss of Joseph, and then of Benjamin; the famine; and approaching blindness.

The lesson of the first importance here is that outward calamities do not prove that a man is in the wrong place—of course outward persecution rather tends to prove that he is in the right place. Nor is outward success a necessary evidence of God's approval. This is certainly a very rudimentary lesson, yet it cannot be too often undated upon. For there is such a strong tendency in us to judge in that vulgar and childish way, that we are not only likely to submit to the ruling of Job's comforters in judging of the lives of others, but also to be misled by such tests in reference to our own course. How many men, even devout and earnest, have been turned aside from a right course because they thought the calamities falling on them were signs of God's disapproval! This is a mere judging of the outside of things. No man would do anything so stupid in daily life; would he buy a horse without listening to its breathing, or seeing its action, because it was shapely? or an organ without

hearing its chords, because it was well veneered? or a bale of goods because it was nicely canvassed?

But whilst this is all true as to the general course, there was undoubted failure in that course, and many of the ills that befell him probably—and some of them certainly—were the results of such local and temporary failures in a (generally) right courses He promised Esau that he would go and see him at Seir, in the south; but as soon as Esau’s back is turned, he goes away eastward to Succoth, and settles down there, outside Jordan; he builds a house, but not an altar. “Capua ruined Hannibal.” Its luxuries and ease turned the victories of that illustrious conqueror into defeats. And that house at Succoth, the place of compromise, where the Gadites afterward hung back, may have left far-reaching results of evil and misfortune. It is true he moves on to Shechem, within the land; but—even here he “buys a field,” and here happens to him one of the most dreadful calamities of his life: presently it comes out that there have been idols tolerated in the house. His management of his family seems quite faulty: it was lax, petulant, and partial (in justice though we admit that they were always an extremely awkward set to manage); and it is not surprising that heavy sorrows came upon him in consequence. When a young man was profane, Diogenes struck the youth's father: when Jacob's son (or daughter) was wicked, it generally reacted with special force on himself.

But though in his haste and distress he cries, “All these things are against me,” they were “all working together for good.” “The Swedes,” said Peter the Great, “will conquer us for a long time, but they will teach us to conquer them." It was so with Jacob too; and we see him at last having overcome all, resting on his staff, calmly victorious. If Seneca's words be not applicable, at least old Rutherford's last words are “With mercy and with judgment My web of time He wove, And aye the dews of sorrow were lustered with His love.”

Chapter 176

Scripture Imagery: 35. Bethel, The Drink-Offering, Oil

Jacob and his family were in a very low condition at Shechem. In their objectless wanderings and settlements they had contracted a sort of “foot and mouth disease,” a contagious ailment which attacks spiritual as well as physical sheep. There even were “strange gods” in the house, and Jacob seems to have known of it, and tolerated it. But as Luther says, “When we are most ready to perish, then is God most ready to help us.” “He sent His word and healed them.”

Here we see something of the power of the Word, in conveying instruction and, at the same time, conveying strength to receive and respond to that instruction. Acestes of old was said to have shot an arrow with such power that it was ignited in its course; so there is such power in the message sent to Shechem, that “The swift thought kindles as it flies," and, reaching the patriarch's house, burns up fears, vacillations, and false gods, re-creating, phoenix-like, out of their ashes, a new Jacob, who shall no more be called the Supplanter but the Prince. It produces resolute purpose and vigorous action which terrifies the hostility of his foes; it purifies and directs him to Luz (separation), and transforms that place into Bethel (the house of Sod), where he finds Christ (the Pillar), and where he can approach, worship, and commune with the divine Majesty. He is now, and not till now, in his proper place: all his efforts to settle down short of this have been nameless, and the time worse than wasted; hence he is renamed (Gen. 35:10), and starts all over again. They are visited, it is true, by a fresh distress; Deborah dies. But God Almighty blesses him with an extended benediction—the millennial blessing of the earthly Christ— “a company of nations,” —an embryo of the seventy-second Psalm. Therefore he afterward says, that the blessings on him “have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills."

The memorial of God's visiting and talking with him is the Stone Pillar, on which he pours oil—Christ “anointed by the Holy Ghost.” Oil yields light, nourishment, warmth, and lubrication: that which is dark becomes illumined to us by the Holy Ghost; that which is unattractive becomes spiritual food and warmth; and that which is difficult or impossible becomes attainable or facile. Thus when the difficulties of building the second temple were apparently mountainous to Zerubbabel and his companions, Zechariah cheers them with the vision of the two “sons of oil,” the olive trees, supporting the candlestick and affording an exhaustless supply of the “golden oil,” through the “golden pipes;” and accompanying the vision by the explanation, “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.... Who art thou, 0 great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

He also pours on a “drink offering.” This was of wine “which maketh glad the heart of man,” “which cheereth God and man. It is a symbol of joy; and it is associated with all the offerings, except the sin and trespass offerings: there could be nothing of joy connected with these to anyone. But with the other aspects of Christ's life and death, God has appointed that our happiness shall be mingled. The monkish idea that devotion is a gloomy and painful exercise is not divine; it is devilish. Yet it is an idea that, containing as it does a gross slander upon God and godliness, many

excellent persons have done much to encourage and perpetuate. There is no human soul that has not been hindered by harboring this slander. Not only where men have transformed cruelty into Deity, as where Moloch lapped the blood of human sacrifices, or where Kalee decorates herself with corpses for earrings, or Juggernaut crushes the bones of his victims; nor where Simon Stylites wasted on his pillar; nor where devout men like St. Anthony preferred such means of grace as dirt and horsehair, or where in the “cave, Honorius lone did dwell, In hope of gaining heaven by making earth a hell,” —but wherever there lurks in our foolish hearts the wicked thought that God can take any pleasure in our suffering—is this lesson needed, that God wants us to be happy and tells us where happiness is to be found. The philosophers can tell us where it is not to be found, and that is all. “Happiness does not consist in strength,” says Epictetus, “for Myro and Ofellius were miserable; nor in riches, for Croesus was unhappy; nor in power, for the Consuls were never satisfied; nor in all these things combined, for Nero, Sardanapalus, and Agamemnon raved and tore their hair.” But we know where it is to be found. “The kingdom of God is.....righteousness, peace, and joy.” “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,.....” The desire of the Son is “that your joy may be full.”

It was well for Jacob to be at Bethel: that seemed to be his right place. But “they journeyed from Bethel.” Immediately we read of the heaviest sorrow of his life befalling him the thrice-beloved Rachel died. He journeys again (ver. 21), and then comes the fearful wickedness of Reuben. He journeys again, and then comes his father's death. He then “dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger” (and, only sojourned), and we read of the long series of troubles in connection with Joseph.

Chapter 177

Scripture Imagery: 36. Joseph

Joseph is a well-known type of Christ, in aspects differing from the preceding types, and chiefly in these features: he is especially beloved by his father; hated by his brethren, “hated without a cause” hated yet the more for his dreams, the righteous witness of his life and words for God and against them; he is sent a long journey to see after the welfare of his brethren, whom he finds removed from their original position; he follows them, and they seeing him afar off, conspire against him; he is sold for a few pieces of silver by Judah, as the Antitype was by Judas (the same name and descendant of the same man): they kill him (“in a figure”); he passes to the Gentiles, where he is tempted, calumniated, and numbered with transgressors; he is found between “two malefactors,” one of whom is saved and one lost; there he suffers on account of the sin of another; but God exalts him to be a prince and a savior, giving him a new name, Zaphnath-paaneah; he is made head over all, and receives a Gentile bride; after which, his Jewish brethren are brought to him, and he grants repentance to Israel, forgives them their sins, rescues them, and shares with them his honors and wealth. In general he represented the sufferings of Christ and the glories which follow: in particular he foreshadowed the moral beauty and dignity of character which caused him to be “separated from his brethren.”

That Danish parable is pathetic: One day there was noticed in the farm-yard an ugly duckling that seemed quite out of place. Of course the other vulgar little ducklings and goslings pecked and persecuted it; it was so absurdly clumsy, and had such a preposterously long neck—besides they thought it gave itself airs. It was finally excommunicated and driven to wandering about, everywhere ill-used, nowhere at home, nowhere welcome, but somehow battling along, getting bigger, clumsier, and longer necked. At last it wanders in sight of a silver lake, embosomed amongst emerald and sapphire mountains. Suddenly a new impulse carries it striding and struggling to the water. Behold it then, seated upon its liquid throne: the long neck arched in regal dignity, the glittering wings fringed with glistening spray! It was not a duckling at all, but a cygnet, and had become a swan.

And this is all too apt to occur: all human records are full of it—how that, when large and noble natures have arisen amongst smaller and meaner ones, they have been hated for their very characteristics of promise and power; they have been hissed, and pecked, and driven out—not always, alas! to find the placid lake, at least in this life. It was thus that the Greeks poisoned Socrates; the Romans stabbed Caesar; the Israelites drove out Joseph, Moses, David; flogged Paul, stoned Stephen, sawed Isaiah asunder, imprisoned Jeremiah, and exiled those valiant men “who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins: being desolate, afflicted, tormented." How many of the world's greatest leaders have been mocked by “Luke's iron crown and Damien's bed of steel!” Thus the Italians cried, “The Christians to the lions"; the Austrians burnt Huss and Jerome; the English drove away or slew the pilgrim fathers and Scotch covenanters; the French expelled or slaughtered the Huguenots and Waldenses; and the Spaniards killed three millions by the Inquisition. It is a melancholy and instructive record: “they wandered in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth—of whom the world was not worthy.” And yet some of us are

surprised and dismayed when we find ourselves a little slandered or isolated on account of standing for the truth, as though it were not the customary thing.

A man like Joseph is under the disadvantage that very, few can appreciate his character; and therefore we find the prevailing idea of him seems to be that while every body would now say that he was a good young man, they would mean that he was rather a “goody” young man, and somewhat effeminate. But if the history be read with ordinary attention, we can trace a character that, so far from being goody and effeminate, is essentially strong, wise, noble, generous, manly and magnanimous. It is true that he weeps frequently, but in one whose affections were so strong and so violently disturbed, there was nothing unmanly in that. Wherever he was found, God was in all his thoughts: when tempted, he said, “How can I.....sin against God?” When brought to Pharaoh, his first words are, “God shall give..... “; when disclosing himself to his brothers, he says, “Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, for God did send me before you “: when they distrust him, “Fear not, for am I in the place of God?” When he is punished for his honorable conduct by being thrust into the dungeon, his words to the fellow-prisoners are, “Interpretations belong to God.” He did not repine under that great calamity, but looks about to see what he can do to help others, even his jailors: he cannot see his companions in misery desponding, without asking, “Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?”

“The archers sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength.” His confidence and energy were not weakened in adversity; and, on the other hand, when he has overcome all his enemies and difficulties, then we see how powerful a restraint he could put upon himself. He does not disclose himself to his family through weary years, much as he longed to do, until the right time comes. Instead of upbraiding them, he tempers their own sense of abasement; he never says, “I told you so,” or, “A just judgment on you,” or those other “faithful” sayings, which are so unlike the “faithful sayings” of the New Testament (his was not that kind of “faithfulness” which consists in saying disagreeable things to others). He was brave in adversity, and moderate in prosperity: undaunted as Ulysses in defeat; magnanimous as Caesar in victory.

Chapter 178

Scripture Imagery: 37. Joseph: Separate From His Brethren

It was a necessity that Christ should be made “perfect through sufferings.” As men suffer, so it was an important part of His charge that He should be the permanent Sufferer. It is said—and if not true, as the Italians say, ben trovato—that when the devil, pretending to be Christ, appeared to St. Martin in his cell, the saint asked him to show his wounds, whereupon the adversary fled. These wounds are among the signs of the true Christ. Paul loudly claims that he bears about in his body the stigmas of the Lord Jesus. When Lepaux told Talleyrand that he purposed founding the new religion of Theo-philanthropy, the cynical diplomatist replied that to found a new religion was a very difficult matter; but that if he could preach long enough, do miracles, and then be crucified and raise himself from the dead, he might possibly succeed. It is in the “sufferings and glories” that Joseph typifies the Son of God, and especially in one character of suffering—he was rejected by his brethren.

It may be thought that all sufferings are very much alike, and that there is little use in distinguishing them; but this is not correct. “In the world ye shall have tribulation;” this is true of every saint: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;” this is limited to a certain number. Persecution is a cumulative suffering: to the pain and inconvenience of ordinary tribulation is added the pain of seeing, and being the object of, the malignity and injustice of one's fellow creatures; and the more noble a disposition is, the more keenly it will feel this, the more it will be grieved at the malignity and shocked at the injustice.

That is of ordinary persecution, which is the inheritance of all, in every sphere, who do their fall duty—misrepresentation, calumny, hatred, opposition: “Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.” The man that is daunted by being slandered a little, is not fit for any responsible work. But persecution from one's own brethren is a far more virulent and concentrated affliction. Of this Joseph was the prototype, and so it is fit that we should read that God endowed him with an affluence of hidden benedictions— “on the crown of the head of him that was separate from His brethren.”

To be separate from one's brethren is no affliction at all to some natures. In Corinth there were those that seemed to revel in schisms. Jude speaks of such as separate themselves, having not the Spirit— wanton schismatics, who have no love-tendrils, uniting them to their brethren, to be broken; who would rend the church from the Baltic to the Pontus; to, carry some crotchet of their own, such as the shape of a priest's tonsure; or put their brethren wholesale to the sword for dropping their h’s, and calling the word “Sibboleth” instead of “Shibboleth.” But all that is not of God Who gathers, but of the enemy that scatters. Indeed nothing is more emphatic in scripture than the countless exhortations to unity, mutual love and forbearance; and the condemnation of heresies and schisms, among the people of God. Joseph was certainly no wanton separator; he followed his brethren forty miles to be with them and serve them, but “they hated him without a cause.” He was to prefigure One Whose deepest human sorrow was that “His own received Him not:” “He was wounded in the house of His friends:” Who said to those whom He had cherished in

His bosom, “One of you shall betray me;” Who knew that, besides this, another of them would presently deny Him, and the rest desert Him. These events were signally foreshadowed in Joseph's history, and in it we have revealed to us the keenest of conceivable distresses to which a sensitive and noble nature can be subjected—to be separated from those whom he best loved, to be misunderstood, hated, and wronged by them. They said afterward, “We saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear.”

The physical effect of a blow is the same from whose hand soever it comes, but the moral and mental effect is widely different. The mental effect of a blow from an open foe is exhilarating and bracing; but when it comes from “mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted,” then is the heart likely to be cast down in the deepest discouragement. When Casca struck Csesar in the neck with his sword, the veteran warrior turned to defend himself with the dexterity and prowess that had carried him through his five hundred battles: the odds he saw against him he cared little for, and, undaunted, took from his assailants two and twenty wounds; but suddenly his close friend Brutus steps from amongst them and stabs him in the groin. He says, “Thou also Brutus”! It is enough: he covers his face with his mantle, and sinks dying before them. David could calmly face “the complicated wrong of Shimei's hand and Shimei's tongue"; but he never recovered from the blows dealt him by Absalom and Ahithophel.

Chapter 179

Scripture Imagery: 38. Seclusion and Fellowship

SECLUSION AND FELLOWSHIP.

Joseph is one of the chief of those illustrious men who have suffered for righteousness' sake, and consequently his life shows two phases of persecution to which all who stand up for the truth are liable. On the one hand he is disgraced by isolation, being thrust out from kith and kin; and (when he has struggled through those circumstances into honor and independence) he has then, on the other hand, to brave a second disgrace in association. The Israelites were shepherds, and belonged to a class loathed and feared by the Egyptians since the invasion by the Hykshos or “shepherd” kings; yet Joseph, inspired by justice and affection, voluntarily identifies himself with them—they were God's people—and takes a share in their disgrace, whilst he invests them with all that is transferable, of his own prestige.

Some, who have courage to stand alone in a right cause, have not that superlative courage to enable them to associate, themselves with a discredited people, for this is much more mortifying and humbling.

There is something of an appearance of heroism in standing alone against the world; there is nothing of such an appearance in being connected with a derided “faction,” but quite the reverse. There may be, however, a more lofty heroism in being so, for all that.

Erasmus had courage to publish the principles of the Reformation and satirize the priests; but he dared not associate himself with the humble, ignorant, and somewhat disorderly peasantry led by the Saxon miner's son. He said Luther was “too violent and extreme.” And the worst was it was, that this was quite true; Luther often was so, and so were his adherents. It is unfortunately too true that the contemptible few who hold the truth in any age are excessively open to attack, and are—like Israel's family—blemished with great sins, and inconsistencies, which their critics are swift to detect and exaggerate. Nevertheless they are the people of God, and His servant identifies himself with them. He says not only, “I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed,” but, “I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.” Yea, he eats for them the sin-offering in the holy place, and confesses, as the Messiah does in the sixty-ninth Psalm, their sins as his own. The world despises them cordially, but yet fears them, and never tires of chronicling their sins and caricaturing their infirmities; yet, strange to say, the gravest charge against them is a matter in which they are not only innocent, but commendable. The Egyptians hated them mainly because they were shepherds!

It is well to see the truth and declare it as Erasmus did; but how much nobler to be willing to calmly take the consequences of it and identify oneself with its disadvantages and associations. Thus did the courtiers, Joseph, Moses, Mordecai, Nehemiah, and others, sanction the cause of the persecuted and faulty people of God, and identify themselves with it.

How grateful was Paul to Onesiphorus, “for he oft refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain, but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently and found me!” Fancy that for a

position of obscurity as well as dishonor. So John of Gaunt stood by Wycliff, and “three Bohemian gentlemen” by Huss, and Benjamin Franklin welcomed Whitfield, at a time when, as Cowper said of him, he was “Pilloried on infamy's high stage, And bore the petty scorn of half an age.” So Christ did not stand alone; He was the friend of publicans and sinners. His constant association was originally composed of a very few “ignorant and unlearned” laboring men and women. There may be then a further trial than having to stand alone for the truth; and a higher quality needed—in some cases—in being associated with others. The quality needed for the first position is courage; for the second, grace. You may not fear blows: do you fear derision?

When there is such a union of grace and strength, we have indeed a symmetrical disposition. When one has undergone injustice and persecution like Joseph, the mind is apt to be soured: strength alone would not enable it to retain its sweetness. The strong men stand at bay and defy the whole world; but combined strength and grace can stand just as resolutely and pray for the world. The stern, strong spirit of Raleigh is an instance of the first attitude. At his execution he writes a poem, in which he sends forth his soul to give the whole world “the lie “— “Go, tell the Court it glows, And shines like rotten wood; Go, tell the Church it shows What's good and Both no good: If Church and Court reply, Then give them both the lie.” He proceeds like this through all classes with bitter and withering irony: “Tell zeal it devotion, Tell love it is but lust, Tell time it is but motion, Tell flesh it is but dust; And wish them not reply, For that must give the lie.” And this defiance is sustained by an unconquerable faith in his own cause and principles: one that gives the lie he says, deserves stabbing; “Yet stab at thee who will, No stab the soul can kill.”

But that young wife, whose hitherto affectionate husband turned her out of doors because she had imbibed the doctrines of the Reformation, showed, I think, a spirit equally undaunted, but a loftier and more serene courage, “unmoved by poisoning, wrath unchanged in faith, unchilled in love.” She was torn on the rack and burnt to death, but left a noble legacy to us in that holy song which she composed and sang in Newgate prison— “Like as the armed knights, Appointed to the fielde, With this world wil I fighte, And faith shal be my shields.” What a martial ring there is in this! something like that part in Homer where Ulysses stands alone and undaunted, “the Greeks all fled, the Trojans coming on.” But here is something greater than Homer— “Yet, Lorde, I Thee desire, For that they doe to me; Let them not taste the hire Of their iniquitie.”

It is the difference between Zechariah and Stephen. It is the spirit of the new dispensation surpassing the old, as the blood of Christ apeaketh better things than that of Abel. Joseph had somewhat anticipated it, “Unmoved by wrath,.....unchilled in love.”

Scripture Imagery: 39. The Chief Butler and the Chief Baker

THE CHIEF BUTLER AND THE CHIEF BAKER.

The prison episode in Joseph's history seems typical in a peculiar way of the present dispensation. Thus the Son of the Father had been rejected by his own brethren (Israel), sold for a few pieces of silver, put to death (“in a figure"), had risen from the dead and passed over to the Gentiles, to become the Savior of the world and the Revealer of secrets. He is, however, for a long time despised and ill-treated by these Gentiles; and He is found amongst the captive and afflicted, whom His presence and words necessarily separate into the two classes of saved and lost—the butler and baker being separated like the penitent and impenitent thieves on Calvary. When that work is done, Joseph shaves and changes his raiment (i.e., conforms to a new order of things and alters his outward characteristics), ascending from the dungeon to the throne, to inaugurate a new millennial era,'“ until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.” But the millennial time is still future: the prison scene is now going on; and it is of this nature—

Here were two men in the same place of bondage, equally condemned, and, so far as we know, equally guilty—or innocent—just alike in all outward appearance. Christ (Joseph) comes amongst theta and pronounces one saved and the other lost.

This seems strange, and, to the crude mind a hard saying; but in truth it is a process that in nature and art is going on every day and all day long. Persons and things that superficially appear much the same are being continually separated as widely as the poles, by some test judicial, philosophic, or chemical. Two jewels are shown to an expert: they appear exactly the same until he touches them with nitric acid, and then one of them is accepted—it might be for a king's regalia—and the other, with a black smear of condemnation on it now, is adjudged as worse than worthless; for it is an elaborated fraud. I have watched the coins in the mint traveling down the grooves of those exquisitely delicate weighing machines. No human being can see any difference between one and another till they come to the slots, but the machine, with infallible accuracy, slides one of them down the main slot to go forth on its useful and honorable career, with the royal image and subscription on its golden face; and slides another down the light-weight slot condemned, to be cast into the furnace. The two coins that look so entirely alike have been submitted to the test of the great universal law of gravitation. That vast and inexorable law cannot err: it vindicates one and condemns the other.

But while there may be no apparent difference between the position or actions of the two men; there is yet a marked difference in their reception of Joseph's overtures. The butler readily opens his heart to him; but of the other one we read, “When the chief baker saw” He held back till encouraged by some external circumstances: he “saw,” he walked by sight. And there is a much more instructive difference in the elements with which they are seen connected. The butler is brought before a vine, triple branched, living and fruitful. Pharaoh's cup (the symbol of God's judgment) is in his hand; he takes the grapes and presses them into the cup, and then gives the cap into Pharaoh's hands. That is, the man takes his place in the presence of Christ, the true Vine,

and, accepting God's judgment, offers the blood of Christ, according to the measure of that judgment, which God accepts; and the man is forgiven and exalted.

But the baker covers himself with baskets filled with human works; and how fair, sweet, elaborate, and symmetrical Beaver they may be, they are not accepted by Pharaoh: the fowls of the air devour them—and him. The “basket is full of holes” too:? “Work without hope draws nectar (or ambrosia either) in a sieve, And hope without an object cannot live." There were “three days” in each case: death and resurrection delivers one and condemns the other.

Bakemeats are not enough. Though men should pile them, ornate and fragrant, to high heaven, the evil spirits shall waste them, and the baskets are full of holes. The confectionery of human religion is like Cain's sacrifice, his own design and labor—lifeless and bloodless. There was the uppermost basket full of them—the very altitude of spirituality— “prepared for Pharaoh” too: but Pharaoh would have none of them. Bakemeats are not enough.

But that which God has provided is enough—the vine and the blood of the grape; Christ and His work—enough for God and man, enough for time and eternity. Should he not be grateful, that chief butler? And so Joseph says, “Think on me when it shall be well with thee.” Is there anything typical in that?

“Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him!” Is there anything typical in that?

Chapter 181

Scripture Imagery: 40. A Gospel Episode

It is, no doubt, mischievous to pursue types too far, and calculated to weaken our estimate of the literal and historical value of scripture. Still we know from the scripture itself that many parts are to be applied most usefully in an allegorical sense, such as Paul's use of the histories of Hagar and of Melchisedec. Some passages are distinctly stated by the inspired writers to be typical, and in others the typical character is so obvious as to need no further warrant for its adoption. If we have a complicated lock, and only one key opens it, that is the proper key: if we have a cypher manuscript and only one system interprets it and lays all its fumbled letters into intelligible words, that is the true system: if we find passages in the lives of the patriarchs which are all opened and gleaming with light when we apply to them the principles of Christ, then we are justified in using them as types. Where there is evidence of such a design they do not come thus by chance.

“Do you think,” said Kepler, as he sat down to supper with his wife, still revolving in his capacious mind the conflicting problems of chance and design, “Do you think that a salad like this could by any possibility come thus together by Chance?” “No,” replied the wife promptly, “certainly not such a good one, nor so well seasoned.” And the answer has a great deal of philosophy in it though perhaps not much logic.

The details of Joseph's life are especially rich in (if not typical) at least, illustrative passages of much interest and instruction. As, however, they are generally sufficiently obvious, I will only draw attention to one or two farther instances. After his induction as Savior of the Gentiles; we find his own brethren, Israel, being brought to him, as in Rom. 11:25-26. But whereas we have the great principles of salvation illustrated in the former case, we have details illustrated in the latter.

Thus his brethren have already received from him a limited temporary assistance (during the Gentile period, such as the Jews are having now in the proffer of the gospel and providential care). But they will not go to their savior till they have proved every other source exhausted; and even then they go most reluctantly; while there is every indication that, if they had known who he was, they would sooner have gone to the other end of the earth. The Talmud says that they spent three days looking for Joseph when they entered Egypt, but like many other things in the Talmud that is an assertion for which there is no particle of evidence, and at the same time an assertion quite contrary to the general characteristics: “quite curiously the reverse of the truth” is the sentence that would most aptly characterize every independent “fact” of that book. Jacob says first they shall not go; then, “Go again and buy us a little food.” (The words “buy” and “little” are generally associated: one who thinks of buying salvation only expects a little, of it; and indeed there is none upon earth who can pay for more than a little.) At last he says, “If it must be so now, do this: take of the best fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a, little balm and a little honey” and so forth, and “doable money,” and then Benjamin as a kind of make-weight; finally he groans a vague appeal to the general mercy of God: “and God Almighty give you mercy before the man..... If I am bereaved” Here we see in a saint the worst phase of the natural sinful heart, whether in Jew or Gentile. It hates to approach Christ, and will not do so till it feels the pangs of

hunger and the fear of death; then when at last it resolves to go to Him, it approaches with a total misconception of His nature and purpose, with dread in the heart, and a gift scraped from the famine-stricken ground to propitiate and to “buy a little” installment of favor; with balm to soothe, and honey to sweeten. But how little they know of that great heart filled with tender and beneficent” compassion towards thorn! “Do you not know,” said James II to Ayloffe, “that it is in my power to pardon you?” “I know it to be in your Majesty's power, but not in your Majesty's nature,” was the reply. Ayloffe had geed grounds for each an attitude, but Jacob had none.

In some passages we find grouped together several different types of the same Christ, signifying different offices. For instance, in Lev. 16, there is the ram for a burnt offering, the high priest who sacrifices, then the goat of sin-offering and the scape-goat, the bullocks, the incense and so forth. These all are distinct and well-known types, of the same Christ, at the same time, but in varied characters. There is something similar in Gen. 42; 43 Firstly, there is Joseph the receiving and dispensing savior; the dreamer, once rejected but now exalted, to whom they come. Secondly, there is Benjamin, the true propitiation, by whom they come. Joseph could only receive them, in connection with Benjamin: Christ can only receive and pardon those who come on the ground of His own personality and, merits. We come to Christ and with Christ. This is precisely what the “old man,” Jacob, seeks to avoid; and when it Can no longer be avoided, he prepares his gift of balm, honey and the rest, putting Benjamin last, and then groaning an appeal to the general providence of God for mercy. But Benjamin was all that was required; and it is strange that the more Jacob adds to Benjamin, the more uneasy he gets. The sinner that relies wholly and only on Christ has always a more settled peace and assurance (I don't say a more settled salvation) than one who wants to add on his own good works, religiousness, or anything—his money, balm, and honey. The philosophers say that the truths of mathematics must be the same all over the universe; that two and two must make four in the most distant world: but the heavenly arithmetic seems to me quite peculiar—whatever we add to Christ we deduct from Him: so that Christ and my merits are less—less acceptable to, God and less satisfactory for my peace—than Christ alone. It may be true that in heaven itself “two parallel lines will never meet;” yet one and one make nothing there sometimes.

Then, there is Judah, who exemplifies the principle of suretyship; and Simeon the principle of substitution. Finally, there is the corn—the Bread of Life, The case of Simeon is a very fine passage and of much interest. He is put into prison for the sins of others and kept as hostage. When the men came trembling and fearing, with their “little balm,” etc., they of course will do anything rather than go direct to their Savior; they seek out the steward. Now the steward's function is to pay creditors, and demand from debtors—he represents, if not the law itself, yet the principle of law. Of course the men would sooner go to him than to Joseph: what sinner ever at first did not prefer law to grace? So with deep humility, they approach, as sinners mostly affect, to establish two things; that they were innocent and virtuous, and yet that they will atone for their faults—rather inconsistent, but what happens?

The steward ignores their little litany, and says, “Peace be to you. . . Fear not! I had your money, and he brought Simeon out to them." Joseph had paid their debt, and Simeon's deliverance was the proof that there was nothing against them. It is the resurrection of Christ, the Substitute, from the prison of death, that gives the trembling sinner the, assurance that his debt is paid; and the verdict of acquittal is pronounced by the justice of God not by His mercy. Mercy provides the

sacrifice, but Justice accepts it: He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." It is the voice of a satisfied Justice that speaks: it says, not “you are forgiven” (mercy says that), but it says, “Fear not, I HAD your money.” “Payment God will not twice demand, First at my bleeding Surety's hand, And then again at mine.” There will never be stable peace in the soul the resurrection of the Substitute; and what is thus declared, is attained. Everything is unstable till “the third day the, dry land appears,” producing the fruitful trees.

Chapter 182

Scripture Query and Answer

Q. T.C.J. (N.Y.) sends Zion's Watch Tower, Vol. iv. No. 12, and asks whether the following paragraph (p. 2, col. 2) is true. “It is an important scripture; and a line on the subject would be appreciated by many of us.”

“Rev. 20:5, first clause, which reads, 'But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished is the subject of dispute. We showed conclusively that the above text has no support from any authority older than 'the middle of the fifth century.' It is not found in any of the older MSS.—it is not in the Syriac—and the confessedly oldest, most complete, and best of all Greek MSS. of the New Testament, the Sinaitic—does not contain those words. It is wanting too in several of the more recent MSS., among which is the Vatican, No. 1160, a MS. of special clearness and harmony with the most ancient ones.”

The criticism, there need be no hesitation in saying, is unfounded; of which there can scarce be conceived a better proof than the fact that out of more than 500 editions of the Greek New Testament not one known to me exhibits the text desired. All present the clause which these manuscripts and the Syriac V. omit. Every editor of the most ordinary information knew of the various reading in question; yet not a single man of judgment has ever doubted that the omission is an error owing to one of the most fertile sources of variants, homeoteleuton, as it is technically called. The clause before (end of ver. 4) closed with the words χιλια ■τη; and so does the first clause of ver. 5. This naturally misled the eyes of weary scribes. So the critical editors in all lands and times have judged.

But it “has no support from any authority older than the middle of the fifth century”! Can the Ed. of Z.W.T. have weighed his own words? There is but one MS. of the Revelation older, the Sinaitic; which is often and notoriously faulty, and nowhere more so than in this Book. Thus in Rev. 20 only, ■κ το■ ο■ρ. in ver. 1 is omitted; the precisely same sort of error as in 5 occurs in its form of ver. 2, 3, from α■τ■ν to α■τ■ν being omitted. In ver. 6 it adds κα■ in error. In ver. 8 it omits wrongly τ■ς γ■ς τ■ν; and it wrongly adds π■ντα, and κα■ after M. In 9 there is the corrected insertion in error of ■π■ το■ θεο■ and in 10 ■που is falsely repeated. In 11 there is the mistake of ■πανω for ■π’, as the article is wrongly dropt from 12, with ■π■ for ■ν■πιον, with the absurd correction of both inserted later. In 13 is the misreading against all authorities of κατεκρ■θησαν. In 14 κα■ added wrongly and δ as wrongly left out. In 15 the future supplants the aorist. Now large as this list is, all the blemishes of the Sinaitic text of this one chapter are not here registered, but enough surely to prove how little the real character of that document is known, and how precarious it would be to demand support from authority older than the middle of the fifth century.

Next, though the Peschito Syriac was made in very early days, we have no MS. of any great antiquity; and even if we had, 2 Peter 2 and 3 John, with Jude, are supplied from a later version, and the Revelation from a copy in the Leyden library, whose age is so uncertain, and character of text so doubtful, that it ranges very low indeed in a critical point of view.

The Alexandrian Uncial (A) is a capital authority as to the Revelation; and so is the Ephr. Reser. of Paris (C), but here we do not hear its voice after 19:5. But the Alex. is, like it, of the fifth century and is supported by the Basilian Vat. 2066, a MS. of far greater weight than the cursive 40 (=Vat. 1160), by an adequate number of cursives of which more than twenty have the same defect here as ■. All the ancient versions, save de Dieu's Syriac, confirm the clause, as well as the early commentators, Greek and Latin.

Further, the clause is so entirely in keeping with the context that, if we had not these words at the opening of ver. 5, the same truth is conveyed, or supposed, by the first resurrection of the righteous who reign with Christ for a thousand years (ver. 4-6), followed by the little while of Satan's last deceit and war of the external nations, and the standing before the great white throne for eternal judgment of the dead, who had had no part in the resurrection of life and glory.

Chapter 183

Scripture Queries and Answers: The Father’s/Son’s Work; Christ’s Session on the Father’s Throne

Q. 1. Psa. 110:1. Is this, as Mr. J. Gall conceives, the Father's “evangelistic work?” Is the Son's work “by outward judgments?”

Q. 2. Is it true, as Canon Faussett says, that “Christ as the Son of God never gives up His session on the Father's throne"? X.

A. In both statements there seems no small confusion through inattention to scripture.

1. The Father and the Son, as such, do not appear in Psa. 110. It is wise to adhere to scripture. The true correlates here are Jehovah and Messiah. No doubt the persons may be otherwise and elsewhere so regarded; but beyond controversy what the Psalm reveals is Jehovah saying to David's Lord, the Messiah, Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. Nor in fact does scripture ever, that I remember, speak of the right hand of the Father, but of God, and avoids it pointedly as in Acts 2:33. Surely also the N. T. which speaks of “evangelistic work” connects it with the Son yet more than the Father. It was He, not the Father, Who came to seek and to save the lost. It is not said of “the Father,” but that “God so loved the world that He gave” &c. The truth is that in the O. T. Jehovah and His Anointed have perfect communion in “outward judgments,” as in the N. T. Father and Son have in “evangelistic work.” The Law, Psalms, and Prophets prove the former, as the Gospels and Epistles the latter, the Revelation bringing us round transitionally to the world-kingdom of the Lord and His Christ, and the eternal state which follows again confirming their fellowship in judgment as before in grace.

Nor can any interpretation be more egregious than that Jehovah's making Messiah's enemies to be Messiah's footstool means “converting grace.” Subjecting them to Christ it is, but this, as 1 Cor. 15 slums, for actively putting down and annulling all antagonistic power. Such is one of the main objects of “the kingdom,” which is as distinct from the gospel and the church as from eternity.

2. That Canon F. believes Christ will come again, we are assured. It is indeed the common creed of Christendom. This means that Christ will cease to sit at God's right hand, and on the Father's throne, in order to sit on His own throne. The divine intimation which tells us that He, the risen Man, sits there, tells us that He will leave it to tread down, and rule in the midst of, His enemies. His friends will then reign along with Him. When all things have been subjected to Him, then He delivers up the kingdom which is given Him for that purpose, that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) may be all in all. This is the eternal state, the new heaven and new earth (not in the incipient or millennial sense, but) fully and finally, all evil having been judged. But the coming of the Lord is not at the epoch of sitting on the great white throne which follows the millennium; for the earth and the heavens will then have fled, and no place be found for them. His coming, or rather appearing, the second time, is where He came and appeared the first time; and, therefore, as Rev. 19 and many other scriptures show, before the millennium begins. Of course the Father's throne will be left before taking His own throne.

Q. 3. Is it not laid down in scripture that to be an evangelist is much more than to teach? Such seems to be the meaning of 1 Cor. 4:15. J. H. S.

A. Not so, though comparisons are odious; and it is the plain call of grace for the teacher to uphold the evangelist, as for the evangelist to give all honor to the teacher. Each fills up a different and all-important part of ministerial work, each a gift from Christ for the perfecting of the saints to the edifying of His body. But while the evangelist might be a babe, the teacher needs ripe spiritual intelligence. The truth, however, is that the apostle by ten thousand “instructors” in Christ does not refer to the teachers, but to the meddlesome talkers at Corinth, to whom he gives the rather slighting title of παιδαγωγο■. (as in Gal. 3:24). So was called the slave that led the child to and from school, a boy-ward, not his teacher. Paul had toward the Corinthian saints the affections of a father.

Chapter 184

Scripture Queries and Answers: Propitiation

Q. 1. A correspondent writes of “Recent Utterances,” especially pp.40-42, as “most confusing. That is, I know less than ever what Mr. Stuart wishes to prove, as differing from former teaching; I wonder if anybody knows.”

A. The question is not whether Mr. Pinkerton who is criticized is quite justified, when he speaks of Christ's entrance into heaven “in virtue of His own blood.” This would require ■ν not δι■ as here. It was a slip, perhaps from thinking of Heb. 13:20, which does mean “in virtue of the blood of the everlasting covenant,” and not, “through.” Mr. P. would repudiate as cordially and emphatically as Mr. S., all thought of Christ's needing His own atoning blood to enter heaven. But “by” would be hardly less objectionable, if intended to convey the means whereby He entered, in derogation of His. person, as well as inconsistently with the use of δι■ in the early part of the verse. Some who contend for such a rendering are obliged to make the first mean “through” locally, the second and third “through” i.e. “by means of.” But it has been long pointed out that δι■ (with the genitive and even with the accusative) sometimes points neither to the moans whereby, nor to the cause for which, but to a characteristic state in which the person was or acted; as in Rom. 2:25; 4:11; 14:20; Gal. 4:13. In some of these cases “with” seems the least equivocal English rendering, though “in” or “by” may suit other places better when understood as simply characteristic.

But in the course of a singularly unfair comment, harping on a sense given to Mr. P.'s words which Mr. S. owns was not meant, he himself lays down doctrine inexcusably false, which he does mean distinctly and deliberately, on the foundation truth of propitiation. He censures in the most sweeping terms what Mr. P. holds in common with all rightly taught believers, that propitiation was accomplished in this world, not in heaven, and his denial that Christ entered heaven to complete it. The affirmative, is the fundamental error which Mr. S. has embraced and teaches now, if not heretofore. From the type of Lev. 16 he declares boldly that, as propitiation by blood, an essential part of atonement, “was done and only done inside the most holy place, and by the high priest,” so propitiation by blood was made by our Lord “in heaven, and after death!” Thus the plainest and most solemn declarations of Christ's atoning death in the N. T. are annulled, and His work, according to Mr. S., was not finished on the cross, because he is sure that his interpretation of the type so requires! Instead of believing Scripture that the law has only a shadow of the coming good things, he virtually makes it the image itself, thereby overthrowing the gospel truth of Christ's expiation completed here below. Indeed he is not the only one of his company led on, by the same confidence in his own handling of the types, to override the surest anti-typical truth now alone fully revealed.

But this is not all. Some of his staunchest supporters notoriously disapprove of his teaching, yet most hold together though differing wholly on what is only short of Christ's person in vital moment. Not only does Mr. S. wax bolder in his evil view, but the organ of the party for last month (Words in Season, xi. pp. 331, 2) stands committed to it, without the slightest warning of the Editor. And one may add with sincere grief that the statement is misleading enough for more than one upright man

among them to circulate the periodical, in order to show that the matter was misjudged. Here Mr. S. says, “Atonement, then, was completed ere He rose” (p. 331). This was supposed to be a return to orthodoxy. But it is not so. It would have been, had Mr. S. written or meant, that atonement was completed by blood when He died. But he wrote carefully avoiding the truth, and still maintaining his fatal dream that “He made propitiation in the heavenly sanctuary as the High Priest after death, but before ascension” (p. 332)!!

That is to say in plain words, Mr. S. holds and teaches that, after death and before resurrection, Christ went up and by His blood made propitiation in heaven! In the disembodied state He entered on the office of High Priest to effect propitiation, before His present priestly service of intercession on high after He rose and ascended! Every believer, I should have judged, recognizes in the word, as particularly in the Hebrews, but one entrance of Christ on high, risen and glorified, no matter how often the high priest had to enter the holiest in the type. Far from seeing “no difficulty in this” distressingly strange doctrine, every saint sound in the faith will reject it as a different propitiation which is not another. It is not the atonement of the gospel, but an abuse of the type to supplant the truth by what is really a ghastly fable. “We must unhesitatingly answer, “No!” to Mr. S.'s assertion that Christ in the separate state entered the heavenly sanctuary to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Scripture gives it no countenance; and the Epistle to the Hebrews knows of but one entrance, i.e. on His ascension.

Christ's entrance into heaven was in no way to effect propitiation: His atoning blood had already done so. He entered once for all (not once as a separate spirit, and a second time as risen), having obtained everlasting redemption, not to obtain it. For now, in His death, was the Son of man glorified, and God was glorified in Him, and would straightway glorify Him in Himself. But even then, if earth, and hades, and the grave, and the law of God attested the efficacy of His death and blood-shedding, heaven assuredly appraised it no less, without an unworthy tissue of human imagination perverting God's word.

Perhaps the worst part of the bad reasoning and strange doctrine is the argument drawn from putting together Heb. 2:17; 8:4, and 9:12. This would go much farther than the author intends; for, if just, it would confine the entire work of propitiation to Christ on high and deny any part of it to His suffering on the cross! The true answer to such incredible rashness is that Heb. 2:17, like the sacrificial part of Lev. 16, is exceptional and extra-priestly, being peculiar to the high priest in a representative way; which merged in our Lord as the one victim of everlasting efficacy, the basis of, while directly apart from, the regular priestly action which is alluded to in Heb. 8:4.

May the grace of God deliver the author of the scheme, as well as his ensnared companions—more especially such as, knowing the error, practically make light of it to the dishonor of Christ, of the cross, and of the truth as a whole.

P.S. Thus far was written and printed before “The Atonement” by B. F. Pinkerton comes to hand. The chief defect in it is his “difficulty about Heb. 17” (p. 17), and especially Note 1 (p. 47). There is no ground whatever for doubting that this verse does strictly and solely refer to atonement for sins. Compassion of course no one denies; but the true moaning is “to expiate,” or make propitiation for, “tile sins of the people.” This was not the function of the priest in the sanctuary (which alone is the point in Heb. 8:4), but the high-priest's peculiar work on the day of atonement, in the anti-type Christ being alike Victim and high-priestly Offerer. Neither Luke 18:13, nor still less Matt. 16:22,

bears on atonement. Even B. W. N. & Bethesda would be ashamed to put such an affront on Christ's atoning death.

Colossians 1:24.

Q. 2. Though I am afraid you will consider my question more curious than important, I trust you will bear with it as being among the follies of youth.

What is the force of the phrase in Col. 1:24, “Who.....fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake which is the church?”

The main difficulty to my mind is whether ■στερ■ματα connects itself with the sufferings of Christ or with the sufferings of Paul. If the latter, by what grammatical or syntactical rule? If the former, the idea conveyed seems to be somewhat incongruous; for surely Christ did not leave His sufferings unfinished. If so, in what sense? Even if θλ■ψ. το■ Χριστο■ be taken as a generic term. (as in 2 Cor. 1:5 et al.) in opposition to ascetic mortification or any other spurious suffering, a difficulty still remains: for would not this imply that Paul's previous sufferings were not for Christ's sake?

Bloomfield (also quoting Elsner and Newcome), supports the idea of Paul suffering for Christ's sake in a general sense. The French version (S.P.C.K.) also reads, “j' accomplis ce qu'il me reste souffrir dans ma chair pour la cause de Christ.” And so I suppose J. N. D.; though I confess I am hardly sure whether I rightly understand his note in the New Trans. (1st. ed.); nor have I the means of consulting Meyer and others to whom he refers.

On the other hand, Ostervald appears to be equally bold in the opposite direction. He escapes the seeming ambiguity of the A.V. and the R.V. by translating thus:-1'acheve do souffrir en ma chair le reste des afflictions de Christ,” &c.

I am quite ignorant of the value of these versions; but I quote them simply because I have occasionally found thereby help on the meaning of a word. In this case they differ considerably.

A. The meaning seems to my mind clear. Christ suffered in love and holiness from the evil around, as well as in atonement; in the latter He alone, in the former not exclusively so. Paul was filling up part of those afflictions, as he says, in his flesh for His body which is the church. It is not that Christ did not suffer as well as walk perfectly as none ever did; but yet He left us to follow in the same path of suffering love here below, and specially for His body's sake. The afflictions of Christ were not so filled up as to exclude Paul's (or in our measure our) sharing them thus. To suffer with Christ is indeed the common privilege of those who look to be glorified with Him.

Chapter 185

Scripture Queries and Answers: Romans 5:15-17

Q. Rom. 5:15-17. No exposition of this passage which I have seen has appeared to me quite satisfactory. My opinion is, that every one of these verses contains a separate thought, which is fitted, by its position and progression, to magnify the grace of God. The apostle is illustrating the leading truth of the Christian system, justification by divine righteousness accomplished in Christ; and, in order to establish conclusively the gratuitous nature of it, he draws his illustration from the way in which we became guilty, viz., by the guilt of Adam's first sin. As we are reckoned by God, and treated, as in fact guilty persons, before we do anything personally to involve us in guilt, so we are reckoned by God as righteous persons, and are treated as such, before we do anything to make us righteous. There is such a striking analogy or resemblance between guile and grace—the fall and the restoration. But the apostle begins to show, at verse 15, that this analogy does not hold in all respects: by showing that the side of the parallel formed by materials drawn from the new and gracious dispensation is the broader, deeper, and more outstanding and noticeable. It illustrates grace superabounding and triumphing over guilt in three particulars: 1. in its provision (ver. 15); 2. in its communication (ver. 16); and 3. in its consummation (ver. 17).

1. The Source.—Verse 15 points, us to the fountainhead or source of sin and righteousness; of guilt and grace. There is evidently a comparison of stocks or stores in this verse; and grace gets a triumph over guilt when we look to Jesus, in whom, as in a storehouse, all fullness of it dwells. If we are condemned for the sin of Adam, a mere creature like ourselves, shall we not much more be justified by grace for the sake of the Divine One, Jesus, who is “full of grace and truth”? If natural connection with the creature has brought us so much evil, much more shall Spiritual connection with the God-man, Jesus Christ, bring us good.

2. The Communication.—■Verse 16 shows that the communication of grace far exceeds the communication of guilt. Adam shares what is his with his, race, so Christ shares what belongs to Him with His seed; but the righteousness which believers enjoy in Him covers far more than the guilt they inherit from Adam For by Christ we are justified not only from the guilt of this one sin, but also from the aggravated guilt which we have contracted by our “many offenses,” i.e., all our sins. Besides, we were involved in Adam's guilt by generic necessity; we are put in possession of righteousness in Christ as “a free and gracious gift.”

3.The Consummation.—Ver. 17. Here we have the rich excess of grace over guilt in consummation, or in what it will do for believers when communicated to them and possessed by them. The point contained in this verse is this: If all connected with Adam are made subject to death for his one offense, much more shall all connected with Christ (who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of justification) not only have their original condemnation to death removed, but also reign in life with Him, on account of His obedience even unto death, and His resurrection, as their representative and living head, to the enjoyment of an endless life. Their connection with Jesus not only frees them from death, but it gives them a right to life, nor only here, but in the glorious kingdom to come: “Being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” He is now possessed

of an ever-enduring life in resurrection, and all believers are sharers with Him in this life, for “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Just as death began in Adam the moment he sinned, so life begins in believers the moment they believe in Christ: “God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” And as the time is fast approaching when Jesus, the Son of God, Who once suffered for our sins, shall return to reign, so all His saints shall they reign in life with Him: “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.” “Thou hast redeemed us, and made us unto our God kings and priests. and we shall reign over the earth.”

The analogy being thus explained, limited, and illustrated, the apostle resumes his argument, and sums up the whole matter in verses 18 and 19, which contain his main position. This, in nearly the words of these verses, may be thus stated— “As by the offense of one all connected with that one are condemned; so by the accomplished righteousness of One all connected with Him have 'justification of life.' For as by the disobedience of the One (the representative) the many (the represented) were constituted sinners, so by the obedience of the one (the representative) with the many (the represented) be constituted righteous.”

I should be glad to see the above passage in Romans thoroughly examined by you and your correspondents. It is one of the most vital, seeing that it forms the keystone of the gateway of grace.

W. R.

Q. 2. Heb. 6:19. What is “The hope set before us”?

A. It is the expectation of heavenly glory as secured and displayed in Christ exalted on high. Of course, the “hope” implies something yet to be done or manifested; though, being of God in Christ, it has not the smallest shade of uncertainty about it like what men call hope. This hope has present effects too “by the which we draw nigh to God.” (Compare Heb. 10:23, which ought to be “hope” rather than “faith,” as in the Authorized version), as it ought to fill us with joy (Heb. 3:6). It is clearly in the future alone that all will be realized, and therefore it is justly called “hope:” still the work being finished, and Christ having entered within the veil, our hope is said to penetrate there too. That is, besides being sure for us and steadfast in itself, it is heavenly as entering into the immediate presence of God on the basis of the precious blood of Christ. It counts upon God fulfilling all He has promised according to the faithfulness which has raised tip Christ from the dead (like Isaac in the type), and set Him in the atmosphere of unchangeable blessing inside the veil. As Abraham had his son given back as it were, and the promise confirmed by an oath, so have we our hopes confirmed in a yet more precious way in a risen Christ glorified above, though still having “need of patience.”

Chapter 186

Scripture Queries and Answers: The Close of Mark

Q. Is the close, of Mark (ch. 16:9 to the end) authentic and genuine?

A. Having long since protested against those who treat this most interesting passage, and the beginning of John 8 with Suspicion, I proceed to state my reasons, passing over the disputed portion in John, which: has already been well defended in another place by another hand.

Even Dean Alford, who certainly does not err on the side of credulity, admits that the authority of the close of Mark is hardly to be doubted. Eusebius, and the Vat. and Sin. MSS., omit it; and several others note its absence in certain copies, but generally add, that it appears in the oldest and best. All else of the Greek MSS., all the Evangelistaria, all the Versions (except the Roman edition of the Arabic), and a large proportion of the earliest and most trustworthy Fathers are allowed to be in its favor. Lachmann, in spite of his notorious tendency to follow the very slips of the most ancient copies, edits the entire section without hesitation.

In his notes the Dean urges that the passage is irreconcilable with the other gospels, and is disconnected with what goes before; and that no less than twenty-one words and expressions occur in it (some of them repeatedly) which are never elsewhere used by Mark, whose adherence to his own phrases is remarkable, and that consequently, the internal evidence is very weighty against his authorship. That is, he believes it to be an authentic addition by another hand.

Before examining these criticisms, I must object to a reasoning which affirms or allows that to be scripture which is irreconcilable with other scriptures. If its authority be clear, every believer will feel that, with or without difficulties, all must be really harmonious. For God cannot err.

But, it is said, the diction and construction differ from the rest of the Gospel. Did the Dean or those who think with him adequately weigh the new and extraordinary circumstances which had to be recorded? In such a case strange words and phrases would be natural if Mark wrote (nor does he by any means want ■παξ λεγ■μενα elsewhere); whereas, a supplementer, adding to Mark, would as probably have rigidly copied the language and manner of the Evangelist.

Πρ■τ■ σαβ. (ver. 9) is alleged to be unusual. Doubtless; yet, of the two, it is less Hebraistic than τ■ς μι■ς. (ver. 2), and each might help the other to a Gentile or a Roman ear. And, so far from being stumbled by the way Mary Magdalene is mentioned here, there seems to me much force in Jesus appearing first to her out of whom he had cast seven devils. Who so suitable first to see Him and hear from Himself the tidings of His resurrection, Who through death annuls him who had the power of death, that is, the devil? As to the absolute use of the pronoun in 11, 12, is it not enough that the occasion here required what was needless elsewhere? If πορεν is found only in 10, 12, and 15, it is because the simple word best expressed what the Holy Ghost designed to say, whereas elsewhere the evangelist employed its compounds in order to convey the more graphically what was there wanted. Thus, he uses ε■σπορ. eight times, while Matthew, in his much larger account, has it but once. Is this the least ground for questioning Matt. 15:17? So, again, Mark has παραπορ in four different chapters, Matthew once only (27:9), Luke and John not

at all. Leaving these trivial points, the phrase το■ς μετ'α■το■ is to me an argument for, rather than against, Mark's authorship. Compare with it chap1:36; 3:14; and 5:40. As to ■θε■θη ■π'α■τ■ς and its difference from το■ς θ. α■τ■ν, the answer is, that the word is most appropriate here and uncalled for in other places, and if the difference prove anything, it would show two hands instead of one supplementing Mark's narrative! Thus, for instance, the same verb occurs but once in all the Epistles of Paul: are we therefore, to suspect Rom 15? Matthew has θεωρ■ω only twice; are we for a score of such reasons as these to speculate that "another hand" added Matt. 27 and 28?

As to reiterated mention of unbelief and the Lord's upbraiding the eleven with it, what more instructive, or in better keeping with the scope of the context and of the Gospel? It was wholesome for those who were about to preach to others to learn what their own hearts were, and the Lord in His own ministry sets them right before announcing, their great commission. Even if we only look at the word ■πιστ■α, it occurs in Mark 6:6; 9:24. If the verb is found only in chap. 16:11, 16, what more marvelous than Luke's having it only in his last chapter (ver. 11, 41), and never once using the substantive either in the Gospel or in the Acts of the Apostles? It is true that μετ■ τ.. and ■στερον are found in no other passage of Mark, but his customary precision may be one reason why the former is not more common; and the latter occurs once only in Luke and John. It is confessed that τ■ ε■αγ. π. τ■ κτ■σει is in Mark's style. The fact is, neither of the later Gospels contains the noun day. and Matthew always qualifies it as "the gospel of the kingdom," or "this gospel;" whereas, whether or not Mark has the qualified phrases in chap. 1:14 and 14: 9 (for MSS. etc. differ), he repeatedly has "the gospel" elsewhere, as chap. 1:15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10. This, then, affords no slight presumption that the passage is the genuine production of Mark, as well as authentic.

Παρακολ. in 17, ■πακολ. in 20, occur nowhere else in Mark, and that for the best of reasons; the accuracy which the compounded forms impart was demanded here, and not before, where the simple form sufficed. And this is the less surprising, inasmuch as the former appears only in Luke's preface, and the latter nowhere else, as far as the four evangelists are concerned.

As to the singularity of καλ■ς ■ξουσιν, what simpler, seeing that this promise (as well as that about the new tongues, serpents, etc.) is revealed here only, and was unquestionably Verified in the subsequent history? It is the natural converse of a common scriptural designation for the sick ο■ κακ■ς ■χοωτες; and if the occurrence of ■■■ωστος should be here objected to, the reader may find it twice already in Mark 6, while Matthew and Paul use it each only once.

Only one further objection remains worth noticing, the use of k■πιος in 19, 20. In Mark 11:3, I suppose it is equivalent to Jehovah, and at any rate I would not press this as in point. But the absence of such a title before seems to me a beauty, not a blemish, in Mark, whose business was to exhibit the service of Jesus. But now that God had vindicated His rejected Servant by the resurrection, now that He had made Him both "Lord" and Christ, what more natural, or even necessary, than that the same Gospel which had hitherto traced Him as the Servant, Son of God, should make Him now known as "the Lord?" But this is not all. The Lord had uttered His charge to those who were, at His bidding, to replace Him as servants, and in a world-wide sphere; He was received up to heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. Now it was Mark's place, and only Mark's to add that, while they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord was working with them.

Jesus, even as the Lord, is, if I may so say, servant still. Glorious truth! And whose hand so suited to record it as his who proved by sad experience how hard it is to be a faithful servant; but who proved also that the grace of the Lord is sufficient to restore and strengthen the feeblest? (Compare Acts 13:13; 15:38; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11.)

There is no doubt of the fact that this section had its present place in the second century, i.e., before any existing witness which omits it or questions its authorship. And even Tregelles, notoriously subservient as he was to favorite voices of antiquity and to points of detail, owns that the very difficulties it contains (exaggerated as I have shown them to be) afford a strong presumption in its favor. Thought and expression point to Mark only. It is therefore genuine, as well as authentic.

Chapter 187

Scripture Queries and Answers: the Coming of the Lord

Q. 1. Can the Parousia (Coming in Person) of the Lord be separated from His Epiphaneia (shining upon); or from His Apokalupsis (Revelation)?

A. Without doubt, the first is distinct in character and even in time, if scripture is to decide, as it surely ought. Add two other words, Hemera (day) and Phanerosis (manifestation), to give a substantival form to the verb often used in this connection. For the truth is that “coming” or “presence” (π.) as applied to the future of our Lord does not involve display, unless modified by other links such as “Son of Man,” (as in Matt. 24:27, 37, 39), or by a term which openly adds it (as in 2 Thess. 2:8), or by facts like 1 Thess. 3:13. These accompaniments unquestionably intimate not “presence” only, but its display. Now such texts as 1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 7:6, 7; 2 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 1:26; 2:12; as well as the 2 Thess. 2:9, simply prove the general fact of a personal arrival or presence; and 2 Peter 3:12 is not exactly our Lord's own coming, but that “of the day of God,” though no doubt our Lord will then have come also.

It is not contested that Parousia is applied very frequently to our Lord's coming again, as in both Epistles to the Thessalonians, in the First to the Corinthians, and in those of James, Peter, and John. And all admit that Epiphaneia means “appearing” (as it should be in 2 Thess. 2:8), and apkoolupsis “revelation,” both applied often to the manifestation of the Lord, like φανερ■ω, in His “day.” But how do these scriptures prove to a demonstration that Parousia is not distinct in character as well as time from the words indicating display? Mr. B. assumes, but never even approaches, the proof. He marshalls the various occurrences, and forthwith states his conclusion without a reason. What is the worth of this?

The intelligent reader sees that, where grace is in question, the coming, or presence, of the Lord is set out; where responsibility and its results, it is “the appearing,” “day,” &c. This disposes of Mr. B.'s first effort at an argument in p. 15, whilst the revelation of Christ will still be the full favor of the saints in its display. Instead of confounding Christ's Parousia and the connected gathering of the saints unto Him in 2 Thess. 2:1 with the Epiphany of His Parousia which annuls “the man of sin,” the pointed difference of the phrase ought to have led him to distinguish them, If His coming to gather the saints together to Himself were necessarily visible, where is the force of adding the appearing of His coming when it is a question of destroying the antichrist? But there is much more when we take in the light afforded by the second verse, and the context generally. For the error which the Thessalonian misleader taught was that “the day of the Lord was actually present.” This the apostle dissipates, first, by beseeching them by, or for the sake of, the Lord's coming (παρουσ■α) and our gathering together unto Him; secondly, by the declaration that that day was not to be unless the apostasy first came and the man of sin were revealed, whereas a hinderer acted as yet till he should go. Mr. B.'s confusion not only makes the added epiphaneia meaningless, if Parousia in itself is a display, but it renders the motive, urged in ver. 1 against the delusion of ver. 2, not only powerless but unintelligible. For if the Lord's coming and His day coalesce, as they do absolutely in Mr. B.'s view, there is no sense in the passage; whereas to

recall the saints to their hope was calculated to guard thorn from the false rumor that the day had set in. Then we have the plain disproof that follows: the cup of Christendom's iniquity was not yet full, as it must be before the Lord Jesus judges it (not at His coming, but) at the appearing of His coming. What he calls “the secret rapture” deserves to fall, if assumption, and arguments like these, dispose of it completely.

Mr. B. has to learn that Matt. 24, 25 is a large prophecy, which deals with the Jews first, with Christendom in the central parables, and finally with all the Gentiles alive in that day. Hence “Son of man” (Christ's judicial title) is. His title with the Jews and the Gentiles, but disappears in the part that relates to the Christian profession. The critics (Tregelles, like the rest) little knew the service they were rendering to the truth in striking out the spurious clause at the end of chap. 25:13. The Parousia, of the Son of Man is judicial for the earth; the Parousia in 1. Cor. xv. 23 is to raise the saints that sleep for heaven, though all admit they will be manifested with Him in glory at that day. Mr. B. also ignores the fact that the “shout” of the Lord in 1 Thess. 4 is a word, quite peculiar and of special relationship, as of an admiral to his sea-men, or of a general to his soldiers. There would be no propriety in employing such a word if it were a shout for everybody. It is no question of shaking earth and heaven, though this will be also; and it is amazing to see Psa. 1:4, 5; Jer. 25:30; Hos. 11:10; and Rev. 1:7 classed with so wholly different an aim. Those that come out of the great tribulation in Rev. 12 are expressly distinguished from the elders and the four living creatures, who symbolize (one or both) the saints seen glorified in heaven from Rev. 4 and onward. And Rev. 20:4, in the grand description of those saints who share the First Resurrection, gives three classes; those already enthroned (embracing the O. T. saints, and the church), who followed Christ net. of heaven; the early Apocalyptic sufferers (Rev. 6:9); and their brethren who were to be killed as they, after the Beast and the False Prophet ravaged beyond example, as we see also in Dan. 7. “The Consummation of the age,” in Matt. 13, is not an epoch, but a period or season, in which distinct operations take place, beginning with the severing of the darnel and the gathering from the field of the wheat, and ending with the horning of the darnel, the lawless ones, when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, that is, in the heavenly sphere which sovereign grace gave them to share with Christ. The just application of Luke 21:25-36 will be manifest from the context, and is in perfect accordance with the title of the Son of Man seen coming in a cloud with power and great glory. If we fail to distinguish things that differ, only confusion and error can ensue.

Q. 2. What means “the groanings which cannot be uttered"? (Rom. 8:26).

A. The meaning of the passage appears to be this: we do not know what to pray for as we ought, and therefore the grace of God gives us, not only an Advocate on high for us, but the Holy Ghost within us to identify Himself in grace with our sorrowing, suffering condition, so as to put us in fellowship with God as His redeemed ones in bodies withal and a creation not yet redeemed. He accordingly intercedes for us—within us of course—according to God, so as to give a divine and sympathetic character to what otherwise would have been but selfish sorrow. Thus we are entitled to know that our very groanings as Christians is not without the Spirit, though those cannot be expressed in words, and they rise up acceptable to God, and will be surely answered by the revelation of the glory by and by, for which we who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, and all creation also, wait. How sweet to think that the Holy Spirit, who gives and directs the joys of our hearts and makes us bid the bridegroom “come” (Rev. 22), takes equal part in our present griefs and travail of

spirit! And if we do not know what to ask for, we do know that all things work together for good, as the apostle proceeds and proves so triumphantly to the end of the chapter.

Chapter 188

Scripture Queries and Answers: the Testimony of God

Q. What would be sufficient to deprive the assembly of the testimony of God?

A. The question is to my mind a profound mistake—that the testimony they bear is the governing object in the minds of saints. It is no new thought to me, but what I have insisted on, I know not how long—some thirty or forty years—that wherever an assembly, or those within the assembly, set out to bear a testimony, they will be a testimony to their own weakness and inefficiency; because the object of their walk cannot be one which efficiently forms a Christian. When they have a right one, they will be a testimony; but to be one is never the first object.

To have Christ—I mean practically, to walk with Him and after Him, to have communion with the Father and the Son, to walk in unfeigned obedience and lowliness; to live in realized dependence on Christ and have His secret with us, and realize the Father's love; to have our affections set on things above, to walk in patience, yet in confidence through this world—this is what we have to seek. If we realize it, we shall be a testimony, whether individually or collectively, but in possessing the things themselves; and they form us through grace, so that we are one (i.e. a testimony). But seeking or setting up to be it does not. Moses did not seek to have his face shine nor even know when it did; but when he had been with God, it shone.

Whenever Christians, as far as I have seen, set up to be a testimony, they get full of themselves, and lose the sense that they are so (i.e. full of themselves), and fancy it is having much of Christ. A shining face never sees itself. The true heart is occupied with Christ; and in a certain sense and measure self is gone. The right thought is not to think of self at all—save as we have to judge, it. You cannot think of being a testimony save of your being so, and this is thinking of self, and, as I have said before, it is what I have always seen to bring declension.

J. N. D.

Chapter 189

Scripture Query and Answer on Revelation 20

Q. Dear Sir,

A friend of mine says that the living and reigning with Christ refers to those beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and cannot apply to a reign on earth. It is, he says, a vision in heaven. Would you kindly refute this error in “The Bible Treasury” for August? Yours truly,

A Subscriber.

To The Editor of “The Bible Treasury.”

A. The reign of Christ and the glorified saints is heavenly, but over the earth. Only the old Chiliasts, and their modern followers, treat it as “on” the earth, as is wrongly said in the Authorized and even the Revised versions of Rev. 5:10. The local dwelling is properly ■ν, the sphere of rule is ■π■, a distinction maintained in Hellenistic Greek, as in the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament. The vision being “in heaven” determines nothing as to actual place, as we may see from Revelation all and elsewhere. Nor is it confined to those beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, but comprehends, first the general body of saints in those seen seated on thrones, then those beheaded, and lastly such as refused the worship of the beast and his mark. The first general class was already risen; the two other companies only now lived, in order to reign with Christ, as all of course are to do. “Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?.....Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:2, 3)

Chapter 190

Sonship, and Eternal Life: Part 1

By creation God's “eternal power and divinity” should have been known to all men, Jews or Gentiles. In addition to this testimony, however, the Jews had the vastly more important one of the word of God, accompanied by His moral government (see Psa. 19). But God Himself was revealed only in the person of Christ, “in Whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). He was the λ■γος, the Word of God from all eternity, and as such His Spirit was that which gave life by the spoken or written word in Old Testament times (compare 1 Peter 1:11; 2 Cor. 3:17; Psa. 119:50, 130). In the first Epistle of John He is called the “Word of life.” In the Gospel of John 1:1, 2 we find the Divine and Eternal Being of the Word in distinct personality; in verse 3 we get creation by Him (Eph. 3:9), and in verse 4 the statement that, “in Him was life.” This was always true. But the next clause, viz. that “the life was the light of men,” became true only in Incarnation— “I am come,” said our Lord, “a light into the world” (John 12:46). “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (9:5). Now that He is in heaven that light shines—at least to faith—through the rent veil; to sight it should be seen in the members of His body, “Among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15). In Old Testament times God dwelt in thick darkness (Deut. 5:22), in other words, He did not reveal Himself. He gave His word, faith in which was the means of salvation to those who believed. Such therefore had life from the Word—but life without an external object, Who was the life-giver, and consequently, without that subjective consciousness, and intelligence, which those born of God have now. The quickening of the Holy Ghost, and the knowledge of the remission of sins, are both distinct from, though to the Christian necessarily connected with, the gift of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:5, 8; 2:38; 8:12, 13, 16).

Judaism was a testimony to the unity of the Godhead. The distinctness of the persons in the Trinity was rather implicitly than explicitly contained in the Old Testament scriptures. Hence the Son, as such, could not be an object of faith, for He had not been revealed. Sonship was doctrinally linked with Messiahship—with descent from Abraham and David— “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee” (Psa. 2:7; Luke 1:35), and was a matter of hope and expectation, not a present object to faith. When He came the Trinity was revealed, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell. As regards then the condition of souls—the souls of the saints in different ages or dispensations, it is moat important to keep to scripture and to the order of its teaching, for it needs scarcely to be said, that in it, there is no such thing as “a distinction without a difference.” In reference to it, mere human reasonings—logical processes—are altogether out of place, and only make havoc of God's word. Only when subject to the Spirit shall we be able “rightly to divide the word of truth.”

“In Him was life.” He is the Author of all life, from the highest to the lowest, and in all its forms and phases; but this is no assertion either of the identity of life in all cases, or of the Pantheistic denial of a distinct personality, separate from the Deity, though not independent of Him. The mere brute has an animal soul—a soul the existence of which depends upon the blood of the animal, and upon the air which the animal breathes. Man also has an animal soul, but he has a rational soul too, in virtue of God's inbreathing into his nostrils the breath of life. Man's soul therefore is

immortal, his spirit is imperishable. Indeed all rational beings whether angels or men have an imperishable spirit, i.e. have immortality in this defined sense. Yet scripture does not call this “eternal life.” The fall import of this term goes far beyond the mere assertion of an endless life. It is a mode and phase of life in us,” as we see it absolutely in the Incarnate, but now glorified, Son of God; and for which the only suitable and proper abode is His own immediate presence in heaven. In fact the character of life in men and angels differs. Again, as fallen, men need redemption and regeneration; and surely it will not be denied that the character of life, in virtue of which a man is regenerate, differs from that which our first parents had when first created. Life is not characterized as “eternal life,” till manifested in the Son, and eternal life is, in scripture, predicated only of those who are sons—only of those of whom it can be said that Christ is the “first-born amongst many brethren.” Again, life as given by Christ in resurrection when He breathed on His disciples—a life which has passed through and is triumphant over death, was there in this, nothing new, nothing special and specific, nothing in advance of every spiritual privilege or condition which had gone before? Was there no difference in the spiritual condition of the apostles before and after our Lord breathed on them Conversion and the remission of sins they undoubtedly had before. Was there no difference in the condition of the believers in Acts 10 before and after receiving the Holy Ghost? Our Lord's baptism by the Holy Ghost was quite distinct from His conception by the Holy Ghost, and so the gift of the Spirit to believers is quite distinct from the operations of the Spirit, whether in quickening souls, prophecy, &c. So little was the latter for their own personal benefit, that we read in 1 Peter 1:12 it was revealed to the Old Testament prophets that their predictions as regards our Lord, were for us, and not for themselves. But spiritual condition, privilege, &c. are dependent on the revelation which God gives, and according to which the faith is formed; it is this which gives distinctive character to the life. As Creator, God is the Father of angels and of men—in this sense they are His sons; but is there no difference between this and the being made “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1. 4)? or, between this and our being “the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26)? Difference between the Old Testament saints, as being partakers of the divine nature, and our being the “sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” is categorically stated in Gal. 4:1-7.

Take again, any one of the Epistles, and try to apply its statements and teaching to Old Testament saints. The very attempt ends in contradiction and absurdity—not simply because they are not in this world any longer, but because their state and their status were so different to our's, when they were in the world. And the state in eternity depends on the state in time. There is (according to the divine will), a necessary and exact relationship or connection between them. Now, there is an order and a progress in divine rev elation, at least till the time came when God was manifested in the flesh—and a necessarily correspondent advance in the subjective state of souls, for that state is contingent on that revelation. There could for instance be no application of John 1:12 to Old Testament saints, “but as many as received Him... He gave the power to become the sons of God.” They had previously been the sons of God as mere men—they may have been sons of God in the yet higher sense of regeneration (using the word in its etymological sense), but they were not sons of God in the highest sense—the sense of John 1:12; 1 John 1, or in the sense of Gal. 3:26. The teaching of the first Epistle of John has its origin in “the beginning” spoken of in ch. 1:1, i.e. the beginning of Christianity, the appearance of “the Word made flesh,” the manifestation of “the Life.” It is dependent not merely on the existence of the Life, but on its manifestation also, and is therefore distinctly and exclusively Christian teaching, even as regards the “little children.” It

does not and could not apply to Old Testament saints. Quickened they certainly were, or, they would not have been saints; but 2 Corinthians 13 for instance, could not apply to them, there was no such object (much less a heavenly and glorious object), for their faith; nor had they such nearness of position, such conscious relationship to God, as their Father, that we have as a consequence of Christ having revealed the Father to us, and associated us with Himself, as sons. There is, in short, difference of spiritual conditions and privileges, in every conceivable way, whatever there may be in common.

The attempt is not infrequently made, to reduce passages such as “he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than John the Baptist;” and, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,” to a minimum of signification, yet these passages assert in the simplest of words, the truth we are insisting on. Everything in fact depends upon the Sovereign will of God, and if the privileges of the Christian are pre-eminent it is not on account of any merit in himself personally, but because it is Christ, the revelation of Christ, and nearness to Him which confers privilege. A certain witness or record is given) 1 John 5:11-13), and what is stated in these verses is strictly true only of Christians— “And 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. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life,” &c. There is no reference whatever in these verses to any who lived before the time of Christ. God revealed His Son in Paul (Gal. 1:16), and it could therefore be said of him, “he that hath the Son hath life,” and so of every true Christian; but if God's Son is revealed in us, it is because He is first revealed to us. For the Christian, there is first the objective, and then the subjective. But so far from the Son being revealed in converted Jews of old, He was not even revealed to them. Christ, as the Eternal Word, gave them life, but without revealing Himself to them, and consequently such words as those of Paul in Gal. 4:19 could have no application or meaning, in the case of Old Testament saints— “my little children of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you.” When this is the case it can be said, “he that hath the Son hath life,” —in any other case the text is misapplied, and the subject is misunderstood. In short, the unfolding of the purposes and counsels of God has been a gradual process, the successive steps however being clearly defined in scripture; and the wisdom of God thus displayed, will, far from being hereafter obliterated, be marked to all eternity, not simply in a book, but in the living and intelligent subjects of His grace, as is very positively stated in Eph. 3:21; Heb. 11:40, and as seen in the book of Revelation.

Creature life then, whether in angels or in men, is quite distinct from that divine life in virtue of which a man is regenerate, or a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4); and heaven is destined to be the abode of men, as the result of redemption and regeneration; it is in fact the true and proper sphere of eternal or everlasting life, “the righteous [shall go away] into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46). In scripture eternal life is generally looked at as a future thing. Twice in the Old Testament is it spoken of, viz. in Psa. 133:3, and Dan. 12:2., and in the New Testament also it generally refers to the life of the redeemed in heaven. Indeed, I think it will be found that “eternal life” as a present possession is, distinctly and specifically, spoken of only in the writings of John. I do not say that salvation as a present thing, is not elsewhere spoken of, but eternal life, ■ α■■νιος ζω■. Consequently, it is in the writings of John that we see life in the highest and most privileged form in which created beings ever receive it, involving sonship with Christ (John 20:17), and the gift of the

Holy Ghost, “And because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). It is there identified even with the Person of Christ, “he that hath the Son hath life,” though Paul also confirms this when he says, “When Christ Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). Whilst then it is perfectly true that Christ has been the quickener of souls, whilst it is perfectly true that all such will live forever in heaven, it is at the same time true that life, in its highest and most privileged form, is the portion of those who believe in Him now, i.e. between the two Advents. For the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest who lived previously—and further, the privilege of the Christian as a son of God, and a member of the body of Christ, is one which belongs to the Christian only.

Chapter 191

Sonship and Eternal Life: Part 2

Dear Brother in the Lord,

Will you kindly allow me space to state some difficulties I have as to accepting several statements in the article on “Sonship and Eternal Life,” in your last issue?

The writer says, speaking of O.T. saints— “Such therefore had life from the Word, but life without an external object, who was the Life-giver, and consequently without that subjective consciousness and intelligence which those born of God have now.” Where does our brother get scripture for this statement? Has he not mistaken the reason of that lack of “subjective consciousness and intelligence,” as he terms it? Surely it arose, not from the absence of “an external object,” but from the fact that O.T. saints had rather the fall revelation of God or of His mind in Christ which saints now have, nor the Anointing by which we “know all things,” nor the Spirit of adoption by which we cry Abba, Father. These most wondrous and blessed privileges, which they had not, fully account for it, without asking us to believe, for instance, that Enoch, who “walked with God,” and had the testimony that he pleased God,” had not the Life-giver as an object—nay, as the object before his soul. Was not God Abraham's object—his “exceeding great reward”? Had Moses no object when he “endured as seeing Him who is invisible”? Or the Psalmist when he said, “I have set the Lord always before me”?

Again, still speaking of O.T. saints, he says” They had plainly been the sons of God as mere men—they may [does he then doubt that they were born again? or what?] have been sons of God in the yet higher sense of regeneration; but they were not the sons of God in the highest sense, the sense of John 1:12, 1 John 3:1, or in the sense of Gal. 3:26.” What can all this mean? John 1:12 and 1 John 3:1 speak, not of “sons of God in the highest sense,” or in any sense, but of “children of God,” —that is, the nearness of relationship as “born of God,” and not the dignity of, sonship— “which were born not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God:” (John 1:13) “every one who practices righteousness is born of Him” (1 John 2:29). And in what “higher” sense can any mere creature be a child of God than as “born of God”? And is not this true of O.T. saints as well as of saints now? That they had not the enjoyment or consciousness of it, all admit, for they had not the Spirit of adoption; and that the child whilst under tutors and governors has not the dignity and place of the son come of full age is plain enough to the simplest reader of the fourth of Galatians, though the life he has as son be the same as he had when a child.

Our brother need not have thought that your readers require to be informed that the life a saint possesses is not the same as that which Adam had before he fell; or that immortality, as possessed by men and angels, is not called eternal life in scripture or that the character of life possessed by men and angels differs. Indeed one is at a loss to discover the object of a great part of the paper; but I am slow to believe that our brother really means to teach what at times seems implied, viz., that there are two kinds of divine life: one which O.T. saints had which made them partakers of the divine nature; and a “higher” kind of life now, which makes as sons.

The Lord once said to some of old who denied the doctrine of the resurrection (though the word be not found in O.T. scriptures) “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures,” for the doctrine was there, though the word was not. And our Lord's rebuke might perhaps apply to any who assert that O.T. saints had not eternal life because of a certain characteristic way in which the term is used in the New Testament. For we must not forget that in O.T. days, even as now, men were by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and that God, in His sovereign grace, quickened souls then as now out of that dead state. Quite true that then the full extent of man's lost state as a dead sinner was not known to him because not revealed, and that now it is. But this ignorance of it did not lessen or in any way alter the fact of their dead condition. Quite true, too, that then the full extent of God's love and grace was not revealed, the Father was not manifested, the Holy Ghost was not come, nor was life and incorruptibility brought to light. But it is well that saints should clearly see that all this change in dispensation—vast and important as it is—does not at all touch the life which God from the first imparted to all who were born of Him. That life—divine and eternal as it was, is, and ever must be—blessed be God—changes not with changing dispensations. Yours affectionately in Christ, T.W.

Dublin, April 5th, 1886.

Chapter 192

The Suitability of the Evangelists and the Choice of Scene

As a preliminary to any detailed observations on the Gospels, allow me briefly to notice the wisdom of the Spirit in the choice of each workman for his work.

Matthew, “the publican,” was not one whom man would have selected as the apostle and biographer of the Messiah. At first sight he might seem the least eligible for presenting the Lord to the Jews; for, as a class, none were in such disrepute as those Jews who consented to gather the taxes which the Romans imposed on their nation. But, regarded more closely, nothing could have been in more admirable keeping with the line of things which the Holy Ghost traces in his Gospel; for Jesus there is not the Messiah only, but the rejected Messiah. His rejection, with its grave and fruitful results, is just as much the theme as His intrinsic claims, with all God's external attestations. And who so fit a witness of the grace which would seek the least worthy, if those “that were bidden” would not come, as he who was called from the odious receipt of customs?

In the second Gospel the Spirit is evidently developing the perfectness of the Lord's ministry in word and deed. Now “John, whose surname was Mark,” was just the right person for such a task, always bearing in mind that none could be fit unless immediately inspired to write. But, among those who were so empowered of God, John Mark was precisely the one fitted by personal experience to appreciate, when the Spirit gave him to indite that divine account of the gospel-service of Jesus; for he had bitterly known what it was to put his hand to the plow and look back, with its painful consequences on all sides (Acts 13-15). But he had also learned, to his joy, and the blessing of others, that the Lord can restore and strengthen, giving us, through His grace, to overcome wherein we have most broken down. This very Mark subsequently became a fellow-worker of Paul, and a comfort to him, as much as earlier he had been a sorrow (Col. 4). “Take Mark,” says he, in his last letter to Timothy, “and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”

For the writing of the third Gospel, again, Luke was manifestly the most appropriate instrument. From Col. 4 it would seem that he was a Gentile, and by profession a physician, both which particulars, as well as his dedication to Theophilus, wonderfully harmonize with the way in which our Lord is there depicted; not so much the Messiah, nor the Servant, as “the Man, Christ Jesus,” the Son of God, born of the Virgin, in His largest human relations, in His obedience and prayerfulness, in His social sympathies, in miracles of healing and cleansing, in parables of Special tenderness towards the lost. It is this prominence of our Lord's manhood, as brought out in Luke, which to me accounts for the emphatic statements of grace to Gentiles, as it falls in with the special form of his preface, which has been so frightfully abused by rationalists in general, English or foreign. He lets us know his motives, and seeks to draw Theophilus by the cords of a man; but if there be thus a human side of the picture, there is another as divine as in the other Gospels, where the thoughts and feelings of the heart are not so laid bare. The notion that such an opening, touchingly suited as it is to the way in which our Lord is throughout presented in this Gospel, should induce us to regard the writer as a mere faithful and honest compiler, without supernatural

guidance in the arrangement of his subject matter, etc., is worthy only of an infidel. And it is only to cheat oneself or others with vain words to affirm that the occurrence of demonstrable mistakes in the Gospels does not in any way affect the inspiration of the Evangelists. The profanity of these statements scarcely exceeds their folly, nor should I have taken this opportunity to denounce them, if they were not at this moment finding extensive acceptance, especially among young students, not, alas! without the sanction of those who ought to know better.

Lastly, that St. John was eminently the right instrument for his task is most apparent. Who could so fitly, if so it pleased the Holy Ghost, set before us “the only begotten-Son, which is in the bosom of the Father,” as he who leaned on Jesus' bosom—the disciple whom Jesus loved?

It is the difference of design, which, to me, solves the difficulty stated by one objector or another—that Matthew and Mark, in the body of their Gospels, are occupied with the Lord's sojourn and ministry in Galilee; Luke with not that only, but His gradual journey to Jerusalem (9:51; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31.; 19:28); and John with His ways and words in or near Jerusalem itself, yet more than elsewhere, though Galilee and Samaria were assuredly not left out. What Matthew describes is the accomplishment of Jewish prophecy and the witness of Jerusalem's unbelief; while Mark's dwelling on the same arose, I think, from the fact that Galilee was the actual scene of our Lord's service, to which theme his Gospel is emphatically devoted. Luke, on the other hand, brings out the lingering of our Lord's love and pity: His face is steadfastly set on the place where He should accomplish His decease; but His slow steps attest the reluctance and the sorrow with which He visits Jerusalem for the last time, and affords the crowning proof of man's total ruin in His blood and cross. John, finally, regards every place and being, in the light of His personal divine glory. Jerusalem, therefore, is no longer, as in Matthew, styled “the holy city.” He was the Light, the true light all outside, and everywhere else, was but darkness, and Jerusalem needed the Son of God as much as Galilee, and was no more to Him, in that point of view, than any other spot. He could, so far as Himself was concerned, freely speak and work there or anywhere. What was “this mountain,” nay, what Jerusalem, to the Son of the Father? If there was nothing to attract, there was nothing in one sense which could repel. He who was full of grace and truth accepted His entire humiliation, and found objects on which to expend His love wherever. He might move in the boastful city of holiness no less than in the barren wilderness. It is the design impressed by God upon the several Gospels, which thus simply explains a fact which is seen by, but useless to, him who denies that design.

Chapter 193

To One Dying

I have but few words to say to you; as what God has set before us is very simple. And thankful we ought to be that it is so. What is deepest is simplest, that is, the perfect love of God. Our difficulty is to reconcile our state, sinners as we are, with His loving us. Now that is exactly what the gospel shows us. Through that unspeakable fact of the death of the Son of God; His love has been shown to us in what He did for our sins. He commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us—His love brought quite near to us where we are.

Hence it is that it is only when we know where we are that we understand this love. That is, when we have learned by divine teaching that we are mere sinners in ourselves, that in us (that is, in our flesh) dwells no good thing, we find that Jesus in this love has come to us there, and, though the Holy One, has been made sin for us. Oh, what a thought this is! How it opens the heart to guileless confession of what it is, and all the sin that is in it, so that it gets rest and peace with God.

I trust you enjoy this rest of heart. The walk of Christ is perfect. He knew all our sins, and all we were, when He gave Himself for us and put all away—made us if our sins were as scarlet, as white as snow. Think of your being really as white as snow before God! And you are bound to believe this, because it is the sure and revealed value of Christ's blood. Death has put an end to all we were in God's sight. And now, trusting you have the peace, and assured it belongs to you, let me speak of another thing, the love of Him Who has done this work for us. Think of Him, of His love, of His becoming a man for us, that we might escape: how He must have loved you to do it! Do you think He loved you so, as to do it? What a wonderful thought that the Son of God should love a poor thing like you, and want (He who wants nothing) to have you with Himself for your happiness and as a part of His own, the fruit of the travail of His soul! See what a difference this makes of death. It is not dying, as some think it; it is going to Him, to one we know, to One Who has loved and loves us; it is departing and being with Christ.

If your soul has, peace, think much of Him and His love; and may He be very near you! He refreshes the spirit, raises above weakness and pain to think these are but outward things for a little moment; and what we are going to lose is only sickness and what is mental and perishable, to be with One Who has loved us in spite of all, and taken us to be with Himself. Think much on Jesus. I do not mean as if you could think much in your weak state; but look to Him and lean on Him, as a sick child lies in its mother's arms, because it has no strength, not because it can do much. Peace be with you, and much of His presence, the true source of joy and strength. If you go a little before to that blessed One, it will surely not be your loss.

J. N. D.

Chapter 194

The Truth Which Is After Godliness

Titus 1:1.

We are insensibly led by the spirit of the age in which we live; and that which characterizes our own age is a craving desire after the improvement of existing things. Much of the desire for the improvement even of, religious communities is nothing more than this very principle, which is acting in the world, carried into them. The result doubtless will be the manifestation of that lawlessness which is expressly foretold as marking these last days: for self-will (and self-will is lawlessness,) in the church is not less sinful than it is in the world. But while the spirit of the age is undoubtedly working unto this end in religions communities, it is no less true that the Spirit of God is working very markedly in the saints: and it may be profitable to notice the order according to which He works, lest we should be confounding a reckless spirit of innovation with the awakened desire of the re-assertion of the unchangeable holy principles of God's order. It is written, “God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions.” And still are man's powers being put forth on the same materials, moral or physical, to try to produce comfort and happiness from them. At this time his object appears to him more near of attainment than at any period heretofore; for never were his energies so unhindered, or the field so open before him for the trial. Now the spirit of this age is characterized especially by this—the expectation of something that never yet has been: but where the Spirit of God, is at work, it is in the humbling sense of the loss of that which has been, and in the earnest striving after its recovery. Wherever God works He at once shows absolute perfectness: in man, on the contrary, perfectness, which after all is but relative, is always of slow growth. Thus in the church as originally constituted of God there was the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness. Any alteration of this would in fact be deterioration. The faith was only once delivered unto the saints: and the truth is ever the same, because Jesus, Who is the center of all truth and the great object of faith, is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Now it is the recognition of an unchangeable standard which will alone prevent our being carried away by “divers and strange doctrines.” The faith may be departed from, and the truth which is according to godliness be unacknowledged; but neither the tone nor the other can progress either with the mind or with the condition of mankind. Amidst all revolutions the doctrines and laws of Christ must remain stationary. They are superior to improvement: to suppose them otherwise would be to impugn the perfectness of the work of God. It is surprising how slow our minds are in recognizing, so simple a truth; and how much of real learning as a disciple of Christ is unlearning what one has been taught even as a Christian. “The truth” sternly refuses any admixture with error: it is most exclusive in its character. “He that gathereth not with” Jesus according to it, “is scattering abroad.” He is not laboring for gathering wheat into God's garner, but only for chaff which will be burnt up with unquenchable fire. Jesus being the truth, we are enabled to discover what man really is in the sight of God. And what is the great lesson thus taught, but that where God sent forth One in Whom He was pleased—one man acting in consistency with Himself—He was found a singular character, the righteous One, to the exclusion of all others, the Holy One of God. In Him we see the truth which is after godliness: and God's

estimate of man now is his consistency or inconsistency with Jesus. And into what an awful position does infidelity plunge a man! Man may deceive himself as to his not having sufficient evidence, but it is not so before God; he places himself before God as choosing himself in preference to Jesus; and forces, as it were, God to judge between the two. But the truth specially taught by the manifestation of Jesus to the world was the total failure of man—the utter profitlessness of the flesh. It was put under the greatest advantages—the Son of God for its teacher, and the power of Him felt and acknowledged so much that even devils were subject unto the disciples in His name—yet, after all this instruction, when the hour of trial came, it failed completely. “They all forsook Him and fled;” and the one to whom special revelation had been made concerning the dignity of Jesus, was the one to deny with an oath that He knew Him at all. Surely the flesh, that is, human nature—man, simply as man, had never been placed under advantages so great; and, until this last trial, the truth was never brought out into demonstration, “that the flesh profiteth nothing.” Now this is the fundamental point, the very starting point of Christianity: the faith of God's elect is grounded on it: real godliness has no existence at all until this truth be acknowledged, that man, as the creature of God's hand, endued with intelligence, man, as a moral being put under the discipline of God’s own most holy law, has entirely failed of sustaining his standing. Now what have all the attempts of human wisdom effected, but the demonstration of the truth, by making the failure more signal. It is most important to recognize that there can be no godliness but as connected with the truth; and that it is the truth which leads unto godliness. There may be much zeal, but if it be not of the truth, the result will be either most unwarranted expectations, or such a spirit as would call down fire from heaven on those who receive us not. There may be much of religions sentiment, but it becomes superstition where the truth is not acknowledged. There may be busy activity in service, but it may really tend to strengthen the power of Satan's delusions; because the truth is our especial power against him who is a liar from the beginning. The first principle therefore in Christian ethics is, that Jesus is the truth, and real sanctification is through the knowledge of Him. “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.” Before we move a step in Christian morals, that is, in real godliness, how much is necessarily assumed, I mean recognized by faith, which hence becomes the medium of producing this godliness. “Sanctified by faith that is in Me.” There is the total failure and ruin of man—there is God's most righteous judgment on the old man in the crass: there is union with Jesus as risen so as to become a branch in the true vine: there is the Holy Spirit constantly supplying from the fullness which is in Jesus wisdom and strength unto the new man: and hence the grace of God which bringeth salvation is alone able to teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.

The attempt which is now being made to substitute moral restraint for the liberty of truth, is very clearly manifested in a series of tracts published by the Temperance Society, designated the teetotal series, with the text, “Let your light shine before men.” The tract No. 7, is an appeal to Christian principles in behalf of total abstinence, &c., addressed to mechanics who are members of Christian churches. Now, whilst the Temperance Society professedly stood on merely philanthropic ground, it might, as it made no pretensions to be considered Christian, have been suffered to pass unnoticed, soon to yield its testimony to the failure of the combined force of self-interest and moral restraint against the evil which is in man. But since it has come to tread on the hallowed ground of Christianity, and to propose itself as subsidiary to, if not a substitution for, the grace of God, such attempt, whether in ignorance or intentional, to subvert the truth needs a

plain exposure. And in this one tract there is hardly a precious truth left untouched. The invitation is to Christian friends.

“We are anxious to obtain your support: and when we assure you that our sole object is 'Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will to men,' we are sure you will attend while we urge a few reasons why you, as Christians, should come forward in this glorious work. Statesmen have legislated for the suppression of this awful vice; ministers of Christ have exposed the sin and its awful consequences; and benevolent men have exerted their influence in public and private life, to stem the torrent; but all has been in vain.”

Now the first question is, was the object of God in the incarnation, and the cross, and the resurrection, to reform drunkards? Was this the glorious work which God proposed to Himself in this marvelous display of His own wisdom and power? Assuredly not—it was to bring, through this mighty means, man, who had fallen, into a degree of blessedness even higher than that from which he fell—even into fellowship with Himself and His Son, by virtue of the blood which cleanseth from all sin, and through the ins dwelling of the Spirit. It is quite true that the drunkard, or the whoremonger, or the covetous man, who knows the power of this redemption, and is brought to know this glorious work, is thereby delivered from his iniquity, and, through grace supplied, is kept from relaxing into it. This assuredly includes reformation; but reformation is not salvation. And if every drunkard in the world was to put himself under total abstinence, it does not follow that God would be glorified, or that there would be peace to the soul, or that God would rest in complacency upon him—but if Christ be received these results do follow. And surely it is well nigh approaching to the giving of God's glory to another, to lower the whole work of Christ to the reclaiming of a drunkard or of any other sinner. The angels who sang that song saw a much mightier result—a result which leaves moral attainment far, far behind.

Again, it is said, “Ministers of Christ have exposed the sin and its awful consequences.” And this surely, they should do, showing that the drunkard cannot inherit the kingdom of God; but they do not stop here, but they go on to the root of all sin, even the heart; and whilst they show the necessity of a perfect cleansing from all sin, as well as the absolute necessity of renewed will and affections, they leave not man to his own power to effect this, but hold up God's most effective remedy—the blood of the Lamb and the promise of the Spirit. What fearful presumption then is it to assert that the ministers of Christ have failed! and that now man has found something more powerful to produce reformation than the ministry of reconciliation! Surely, if this statement be made soberly, it amounts to the assertion, that moral restraint will effect that which the grace of God and the foolishness of preaching cannot effect. The Lord Jesus has said, “He that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad.” He is now, by the ministry of reconciliation, gathering fruit unto eternal life; and whatever may now be the apparent success of other means, all will appear in that day to have been but scattering.

There is another paragraph in this tract which seems to destroy the foundation on which the whole of redemption rests; and it needs to be set in its true light that Christians may be aware of the principles which many of them are ignorantly advancing. “We shall cordially agree with you that a remote cause of drunkenness lies in the natural depravity of the heart. Here doubtless is the source of all human misery. But this is not all. The natural depravity of the heart alone could never make a drunkard. The moral cause requires some physical one as a medium through which to

operate: and this medium is intoxicating drink. Without this the depravity of man would never make him a drunkard; and you will at once see that by abolishing the use of these liquors we should cut off the spring of a stream which has flowed for ages."

How simply does one word of our Lord expose all this sophistry. "There is nothing from without a man that, entering into him, can defile him: but the things which come out of man, those are they that defile him." "If any man have ears to hear let him hear" (Mark 7:15, 16). And again, "a good tree bringeth forth good fruit; and a corrupt tree, evil fruit." The Lord says the source of the evil is within, the philanthropist, that it is without. The Lord begins with the heart— "make the tree good, and its fruit will be good:" philanthropist would remove the bad fruit and be content to leave the tree just as it is. It is one of the most refined delusions of Satan to make sin appear an accidental or circumstantial thing, rather than the corruption of the whole moral constitution of man—the very law of death. And when once this is affirmed, the atonement, regeneration, and resurrection are necessarily surrendered. Sin may be dormant, but it is still sin; and if a man were in the desert all his life long, and never saw anything but water, drunkenness would exist in embryo in the sin which is in the heart. The cause of one sin and of ten thousand sins is one and the same—sin that dwelleth within. It will be apparent to all who know the truth of God, that every attempt to make sin to consist only in the outward act has led to the nullifying of the atonement and to the substitution of morality for Christian holiness.

As might be expected, these statements are followed by anecdotes of the falling away of Christians, in order to make out a case against the sufficiency of divine grace to keep a man, without the adjunct of self-imposed restraint. But what saith the scripture "How shall we who have died to sin live any longer therein" —invariably bringing in the judicial act already executed in the cross as involving and conveying the utmost moral power. Again, Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace." Surely to be under law is to be under that very restraint under which this Society would put a man: yet man would still be left before God under the dominion of sin. It is confessedly true that there has been a great failure in Christians in this respect, in their not having more plainly exhibited a mightier power in action than moral restraint, even the power of grace. "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."

We have surely to be deeply abased for having given so tortured a picture of Christian grace. The end proposed has often been merely the maintenance of the standard of worldly decency even in Christian communities, and the principle too often acted on in them has been the summary righteousness of the world, rather than the reclaiming power of grace. Christians have not sufficiently recognized that whilst godliness is the guarantee for morals, it is something much higher, something leading the soul into association with God in all things, judging God's judgment on them, and walking in thorn according to that judgment. The apostle says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in truth." This is the great point, a walk which necessarily presents the daily recognition of all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel: a walk which necessarily leads into separation from the world: in other words, a "walking with God," walking in the light as He is in the light, and thus exposing or convicting the unfruitful works of darkness. The attempt to make Christianity subserve worldly morality is a special product of the craft of Satan at this present day, in order to obliterate the distinction between the church and the world. It is doing that in practice which he so early attempted in doctrine, to cause men to turn again unto the weak and beggarly elements of the world. He does not now deny the value of the cross; but he

completely nullifies its power where he succeeds in making it to be thought that a certain something has been effected for all, which still throws us back upon moral restraint for security. Until the cross is known as the actual power of present deliverance from the world and sin and Satan, and as the introduction of the Life in the Spirit, there is not the acknowledging of the truth which is according to godliness. But where these truths are practically acknowledged, the unwilling confession is forced even from the world, that our principles are not the same as theirs. Let indeed the light of Christians so shine before men as to prove the utter failure of their righteousness and the scantiness of their morality. Let it be with well doing that they put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. And let them show that liberty and obedience are to them, strange as it may appear, one and the same thing. They are “led of the Spirit” and “are not under the Law.”

Chapter 195

What Is Succession a Succession of?

I propose saying a few words on the very solemn subject of the apostacy of the dispensation, suggesting the scriptural statements concerning it, rather than making any comment.

This subject has been touched upon connected with the calling of the Apostle Paul, with the raising up of an extraordinary messenger of grace upon Israel's rejection of the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the exalted Jesus. I purpose to advert now to the positive scriptural evidence of the apostacy; and I will merely retrace, with some additional circumstances, the previous point, which, declared its apostacy in its first or Jewish organization. The scriptures I would now refer to are in evidence of the plain fact of direct ecclesiastical apostacy, the revealed existence of that which determined the fate of the dispensation.

The rejection of the Lord Jesus really crowned the sin of the Jewish people—of man; but on the cross the Lord interposed by intercession, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;” and to this expression of the gracious and blessed mind of the Lord the Holy Ghost replies, when by the mouth of Peter He says, “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers; repent ye therefore.” That is, the Holy Ghost now bore testimony to the exaltation of Jesus to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. Hence all the testimony of Peter is to God's exaltation of the rejected Messiah, the Son of man. This testimony, as has been long since observed, was finally rejected in the martyrdom of Stephen. And at this point the Jewish central successional order closed; when Paul (the chief volunteer and agent in carrying the active hatred of, and opposition to, the testimony into effect) is raised up to be a witness of the grace, which in long-suffering overruled it all and surpassed it all. Thus he was at once a messenger to the Gentiles of sovereign grace, and of the union of the church with Christ; and the type of the calling of a remnant of the Jews, by God's sovereign grace in the latter day: in respect of one, designating himself the chief of sinners; as regards the other, first called—or all long-suffering in him first shown forth. He was taken into a solitary place of sovereign grace to show the glory of it to others—the place of the union withal of the church now with Christ.

To his testimony the Jews scattered everywhere opposed themselves. They not only refused the testimony themselves, but opposed its being carried to others. Of this Bar-jesus is the remarkable expression and therefore grace here ceases, and judicial blindness is put on him for a season. As the apostle expresses it in his meet judgment on them, “forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always, for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." This manifestly closed the scene, and many were the sorrowful consequences.

The actings of Satan, by the instrumentality of Jewish principles now passed away, in corrupting the church, must be familiar to any one acquainted with the perfect word of God. Human righteousness, ordinances, succession, and ceremonial observance of times, connecting spiritual religion with human imagination, formed the marked characteristics, but the chief in principle. Of other formal ones I might mention tradition and the centralization of religion upon earth, because it was of the earth, instead of the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, now associating

all with heaven, Jesus being only known there, by the power of a mission not of man nor by men. But upon this I cannot enlarge here.

But while I have thus cursorily referred to the order and progress and entire subversion of the first and earliest organization, or proposed organization, of the church, by the rejection of the testimony on which it was founded, I purpose going a great deal farther as to the extent of statement on this point. Thus, while my references will be very simple, they seem to me to involve a principle of the last possible importance, and (while directing the judgment through a deep sense of our present condition) to guide it into freedom, and security from the apostate snare, now widely spreading its evil force, of successional ordinances. For, if the scriptures plainly testify the apostacy of the dispensation, that which professes to provide for and secure its successional continuance must be a lie of the enemy. This is the point now before us. My evidences of it will be few and simple.

I would clear the point by a few brief explanations of what I mean, endeavoring (though it be connected with many most interesting subjects) to keep it as simple as possible.

In the first place, I would remark, that the responsibility of man, or any set of men under any dispensation of God, is quite distinct from the salvation of any individuals of that dispensation. The confounding of these things renders the apprehension of the dealings of God with man impossible: either the security of the Lord's faithfulness, or the responsibility of man in and by any given economy, is lost. Adam was responsible in innocence. His individual salvation stood clearly on other ground. Noah was responsible for the ordering of his house and family (we may say, then, the world) in holy government. The failure of this, though producing most important results, has nothing to do with Noah's salvation. In a word, if God deals in a process of government here for the manifestation of His character, this and the salvation of individuals, while that process is going on, are quite distinct; though the conduct of the saved may be guided and formed by the dispensation here below.

Nay, so decided is this distinction, it is just where the dispensation entirely fails, that the faithfulness of the saved remnant is most conspicuously manifest. What judge was like Samuel, when Israel failed under that ordering of God's people and God gave them a king in His anger? Thus Israel as a whole, under the law, was put as a dispensation under the responsibility of its observance, and nationally failed, though a remnant all through were of God and saved.

Every dispensation has some special deposit, so to speak, entrusted to it by which its fidelity is tried. And, as it seems to me, every one of them will be made good, and God glorified in them, in Jesus, on the proved failure of man in each. Thus, not to go to other examples, the law—Israel made the golden calf. The law will be written in their hearts hereafter. The dispensation of the Holy Ghost's power, or the manifestation of Christ glorified by the Holy Ghost the Comforter, as against the world which rejected Him, has its responsibility too. It is true effectual salvation, and the grounds of it have been more plainly brought out, so that we can more easily appropriate real and eternal privileges to those who are heirs of them; because the Holy Ghost does manifest them, and acting in power, gathers them to Christ for heavenly glory; and this was not true of what preceded it. The proper manifestation, if everything had been exactly as it ought to be, was of an elect nation, all of whom in any case were not necessarily saved; not of a church chosen in Christ from any and every nation. That was formal and by descent, this by power. But though this be so, it does not take away from the dispensation itself (as a given sphere of the operations of God, in

which all was to keep its first estate) a place of responsibility, and a deposit given to it. The greatest strength and very essence of an apostacy is to affirm of its apostate condition, in which it is the special object of judgment, the security which belongs to the elect congregation of God. It was just the ruin of Israel; it is easier, if not more fatal, in Christianity.

Further, I would remark, that the dispensation is judged on its responsibility, while individuals may be saved by grace. I have further to add that, however great the patience, the first departure is fatal and the ground of judgment, whatever the growth of wickedness into ripeness may be;, and, lastly, that the dispensation of the profession of Christianity, or the name of Christ, stands in this condition and that the scripture never recognizes a recovering from such state, whatever through mercy the “lengthening of tranquility,” may be. For the first failure is departure from God, and proves the existence of evil in the flesh, and is the manifestation that man is in question, and that all is gone in principle. As a corroborative fact, it is solemnly interesting to see that the failure has in every instance been immediate on the responsibility's existing.

Christianity not being a system of formal enactment, and its requirements and powers only of spiritual perception, the evidence of its departure is less palpable, and itself also the object of only spiritual perception. But Israel itself could say, “Wherein have we despised the Lord?” and “Wherein should we return? and “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these:” and even disciples say, “Master, behold, what goodly stones and buildings are here!” though Israel had broken the covenant and gone away backwards, and that from the beginning, and, was filling up the measure of her iniquity, that all righteous blood should come upon her. I shall very briefly trace this just now.

This dealing of God being on responsibility and in justice, it is according to the professing ma h (the body at large or their leaden!) that the judgment takes place, the security of the saints being untouched by it. Moreover, the refuge of the saints is out of the system judged, because an untoward generation; and their place of blessing, the dispensation which supervenes on the judgment of that from which they have been delivered. I will add that knowledge of impending judgments is always adequately afforded to the saints to flee from the wrath to come.

Let us remember that the Lord is “slow to anger;” and that in the midst of outrageous provocations, and himself the subject of much of them—the reproaches of the Lord falling upon him—poor Jeremiah could appeal to God how he had stood in the gap to turn away the indignation from them; till the Lord said to him, “Pray not for this people,” and the indignation took its course. For intercession is always the place for him who has the mind of God to make a way for God's love, till the place for intercession is closed.

If some, attaching everything to the final salvation of the elect, say, If this be not affected by it, all the rest is immaterial and curious, and they do not know anything about dispensations; I answer, that the salvation of the elect is not the great end of any Christian's thoughts, but the divine glory; and that God has been pleased to glorify Himself and display His character in these dispensations for the instruction of the church; and that if the church cuts it aside, she is casting aside the instruction which God has afforded of His ways. Men are making themselves wise without God, and wiser than He; for He has thought fit for His glory to instruct us in these things. I will take only one example (though there are other remarkable ones, as Noah), because we are morally set on the very same ground by scripture, the history of Israel as the elect nation.

Israel was set at Sinai on the condition of their obedience to the law. This the apostle assures us did not touch the promise made to Abraham, &c. and the gifts and calling of God are without repentance as to them nationally. But God glorified Himself, for all that, in all His dealings with them; and they happened to them for ensamples to us on whom the ends of the ages are come. Obedience to God according to the law was the ground they were set on. They made the golden calf. Their apostacy was complete. Long was the patience of God, various His dealings with them in perfect mercy; but the irremediable evil of human nature was there, and displayed itself the rather through it all, until they both rejected the Son in humiliation and refused the testimony of the Holy Ghost to His exaltation at the right hand of power. But then God, having thus dealt in vain by these external dealings of testimony on man, recurs to the original sin in which the apostacy was first shown (just indeed as all the sins of the human heart, aggravated as they are, are but the evidence of its first total departure from God). “Have ye served me, O ye house of Israel,” says the Spirit in Stephen, quoting and applying a more ancient testimony, “by the space of forty years in the wilderness? yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.” They had consummated it towards Jesus, proving themselves irreconcilable; but the apostacy was complete in the wilderness, however “long-suffering” God may have been.

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off,” says the apostle to the Gentiles, as taking the place of the branches out off. That is, the church, as a subject of dispensation here, is subject to the same responsibility as Israel of old, and would be out off on its failure.

Now I shall proceed to show from scripture, that it is revealed that it would fail; and revealed that it has failed. It is perfectly clear that the doctrine of succession, that is the maintenance of grace by succession, if this be so, is an awful departure from the truth of God, founded in falsehood and available only to prop up the character of what God judges as the worst form of evil—departure from what is good.

It is not for me to say what, patience God may have, or how He may use the intercession of His people for the protracting the time of mercy; certainly He is perfect in wisdom in this.

It alters, it is manifest, the whole position of the soul to recognize that we live in an apostacy hastening to its final consummation, instead of a church or dispensation which God is sustaining by His faithfulness of grace.

First, then, it is evident that the condition of apostacy is supposed as to this dispensation in the passage cited from Rom. 11, and made to depend on continuing in God's goodness; making failure, as I have said, ruinous without hope of recovery. God's goodness, in which they are placed, being departed from by man's evil, God never departs from His own goodness. It might suffice to say, that professing Christendom is anything but a continuance in the goodness in which the church was planted; nay, the true people of God have not continued in it, for, had they, such a state of things never would have been; but when it comes, they suffer and are involved in it, though they began it not. God's people are scattered and worldly and divided. Compare their state with John 17 and Acts 2 and iv.; and the saint that loves Jesus and the church, will soon recognize the sad difference.

But the testimonies are far more precise than this. First, generally, “as it was in the days of Noe,” and “in the days of Lot,” “so should it be in the day when the Son of man should be revealed.” Clearly then there was to be an awful apostacy before the close, and the state of the apostacy was the state of the dispensation at the close.

Again, “that day shall not come except there be a falling away—the apostacy—first.” I say not yet when, but before the day come, the apostacy comes. This leaves little room for a day of blessedness between. This, to the apostle's mind, was to precede the day of the Lord—the apostacy, not a period of blessedness. If men say, “It is come,” I dispute not; but I say then cutting off is the consequence, not restoration, as we have seen from Rom. 11. And the promise of blessing and revival is unfounded, though the remnant may be revived and gathered from an evil day.

But there is more than this. “In the last days perilous times shall come: men shall be lovers of their own selves,” &c. If this passage be examined, it is a very solemn and express testimony of the Spirit of God, of the return of professed Christendom to a state such as heathenism was described by the Spirit in Rom. 1. Here the Spirit speaks not of the heathen world, that in the last days it would be so (the Spirit had already proved it was so); but in the last days it would be so of those who had the form of godliness, but denied the power. From such they were to turn away.

Again, as “ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” And this, note, not by the moral evil of the world, but by apostasy— “they went out from us,” —whereby it was proved they were not of us. This proves that in John's time the apostacy had set in, whereby the Christians knew, said he, that it was the last time; not by infidelity (that might condemn individually, and believers be what they ought), but by apostacy (this proved the last time should come)—not wicked people, but antichrists. For the Spirit spoke expressly, that in the latter times some were to depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils. Not only so: the mystery of iniquity already worked. There was a hindrance to the manifestation of the man of sin, but the principles and mystery of iniquity already worked: and it was only a hindrance which impeded the awful result, which when removed, the great agent and instrument of this crowning iniquity, every where manifested, was to be revealed, whom the Epiphany of the Lord's presence was to destroy.

The passages I have hitherto cited prove—

First, the liability of the dispensation to apostacy, as Rom. 11, itself sufficient to teach the result to those acquainted with human nature.

Others, as 1 John 2, show that antichrists were already come; whereby Christians knew that it was then the last time, because evil was found to have its worst form and source from the bosom of Christianity itself.

The evil itself is characterized in the two Epistles to Timothy: first, as departing from the faith, but this, it must be observed, chiefly in practical points; and secondly, in the general result of a character analogous to heathenism in its moral influence, but, though the power was denied, maintaining the form of godliness.

Besides these, we have the testimony to the Thessalonians, that the day of the Lord would not come without the apostacy coming first; and that the mystery of iniquity was already then at work.

To these we may add the testimony of the Spirit by Peter: the scorn of the expectation of the Lord's second coming would be characteristic of the scoffer of these perilous days.

All these passages concur to show that the result of the dispensation would be “apostacy,” “perilous times,” “departure from the faith;” and that the mystery of iniquity, the principles of evil which produced this, were already at work.

The present effects then were different: partly a hidden spirit at work, hindered as yet in its great public manifestation of Satanic power; partly an open apostacy, and going out from the saints—too pure then, too assiduously watched over by apostolic vigilance and spiritual power to allow, when assuming an open form of evil, its continuance among the saints; partly as we shall see, not by going oat, but by the creeping in of corrupt men. But, however manifested in present effects, these are but the signs of a principle at work which should be consummated in the man of sin—of a principle which involved the dispensation in apostasy and excision, whatever the raviolis patience of God: a principle then operating, and thereby affording an opportunity to the apostles to forewarn the church; and by their authority enabling us to say, that the last times were then come, though there might be a prolonging of mercy.

This assertion, that the last time was then come, is of all possible importance. There was a moral departure from God in the bosom of Christianity. The effects of this might be stayed by the hand of the apostle, but forced the apostle to say the last times were come. Theologians may comment on such an expression, and say the last times mean the times of the Messiah. But then the presence of Messiah would prove that; but the proof of the last times here is that, after that, antichrists are come; they were characteristically and really the last times of the dispensation. Men had slept; the enemy had sown tares; and it must be left as it was till judgment, as regards the place it held in the world.

It is admitted, that the present effects and manifestations of the apostacy were then different in form and extent from what they will sesame when judged. The apostolic energy and spiritual life in the body of the church itself on which the energy acted, either cast out the evil or suppressed it; just as the zeal of an untainted Moses rescued Israel from the present effects of the golden calf, and destroyed the present exhibition of the apostacy. But it was not the less really come in, though the patience of God was not yet exhausted by the rejection of His Son. And the apostle was well aware, and the Holy Ghost gave us the expression of His assurance; that it was the presence of the apostolic energy which arrested its display. “I know that after my decease” is the sorrowful testimony of the departing apostle; as Peter also warned them that false teachers would arise among them. Even in the life-time of the devoted apostle, he had to say, “All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's:” a state leaving easy room for the evil and mischief to introduce itself. While men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares.

There remains yet one passage which I have not yet hitherto quoted; and this (as the passage of John has shown us that the last times—whatever their prolongation—were already come) identifies the objects of the revelation as then existing with those who are objects of judgment at the close, on the Lord's return.

The book of Jude may be taken as the history or revelation of apostacy. The very commencement of the Epistle marks the necessity which attracted the testimony of the Spirit of God. “Beloved,” says the apostle, “when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints; for there are certain men crept in unawares, who were of old ordained unto this condemnation.”

This is most distinct. The evil anticipated by the counsels of God had crept in by the neglect of man already in the days of the apostles. While men slept, the enemy had come and sown tares. This infected the susceptibility of the church's conscience; “though ye once knew this,” says the apostle, refers to the excision of the whole body save two, in warning to them; and likens the resulting condition of the church to the angels which kept not their first estate, and to Sodom and Gomorrah. He then intimates to them the different (and, I would add, in some respects progressive) characters of the apostacy (though the entrance of the succeeding ones does not neutralize the former): natural evil and enmity, religions corruption for gain, and open hostility to the priesthood and royalty of Christ, on the part of the religions teachers of the people—Cain, Balaam, and Core. Having thus traced the forms and characters of the apostacy from beginning to end, the apostle gives us the all-important truth, that what had then already found its way into the church was the direct object of the judgment of Christ at His coming, as it had been prophesied from the beginning—the consummation of iniquity in the apostacy of the last form of God's goodness, previous to the coming of the Son of man in glory. Enoch, we are taught by the Holy Ghost, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with myriads of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them—Enoch prophesied of these. Those then, to whom the prophecy of the Lord's coming to judgment applied, were already manifest. As we have said, the patience of God might be long, and He has been not slack concerning His promise, but long-suffering to us-ward; but the apostacy was complete in the eye of God: Christianity had not kept its first estate.

There is another feature remarkable in this, that it was the coming in of these, not the going out, which marked the judicial object of wrath and excision, They were spots in their feasts of charity, feasting with the Christians. They exalted themselves especially, ■πoδιορ■ζοντες, distinguishing themselves, as the Pharisees among the Jews, but did not leave the body; they were its danger and certain rain by being in it.

The judgment of excision then was only in prophecy; but the condition to be judged was actually in existence, so that the apostle could say “Enoch prophesied of these.” Their number might be different, the church might have completely forgotten how the great body of Israel were cut off in the wilderness; but the evil was there, and the judgment already pronounced. The apostles had even told before that there should be mockers in the last time.”

The scriptures we have already cited show, first, the warning of the possibility of failure and excision; secondly, the prophetic declaration that there would be an apostacy; and thirdly, that those positively designated from the earliest ages as the objects of judgment, as such apostacy, were, if not matured in their effects, already there; so that the ever-watchful Spirit of God could descry, designate, and describe them; and evince that the mystery was already at work—the evil to be judged already there in existence.

That which remains of God's word is the warning or the immediate threatening of excision, and the account of a far different scene: not the Father's intercourse with His children to instruct, warn, and comfort; but the revelation of subsequent evil, and arranging government of the world in the hands of the Lamb on the throne, when the church was gone from the scene below, and could no longer be the object of His judgment or His care.

If the testimony of the texts we have cited be such, there cannot be a more solemn consideration for God's children—the failure from the outset, through man's folly and evil, of the economy of the church in the world. Further, the whole organization of succession and its co-ordinate ordinances of church maintenance take their true place. Instruments of blessing in power have become the lever of apostacy against the children of God. The doctrine of succession, and all its accompaniments, become the stamp and mark of recognized and sanctioned, because perpetuated, apostasy; for if the church has failed, as these texts declare, the provision for the perpetuation becomes the provision for the perpetuation of the failure, and the maintenance of the object of the Lord's sure judgment.

I press the testimony of the Epistle of Jude to this point. My object here is not to show the degree of maturity to which the apostasy may be generally or locally arrived, but the fact of its existence from the commencement in the judgment and by the revelation of God, applicable to the entire course and condition of the dispensation as a whole; and instructing us in the trite character of pretension to succession and continuance.

May the Lord give eyes and ears to His children, that they may see what concerns His church as He sees it! J.N.D.

Wilderness Lessons: 15. Prophecies of Balaam

The third prophecy fills the cup of Israel's blessing, yea, it overflows. The imagery is earthly and is most appropriate. For their place is the earth; yet their earthly blessings supply images of blessing higher than peace and beauty. The Holy Spirit in few words gives a picture of Israel at rest in their land. The two former prophecies do not speak of visions, but this with the following is prefaced by the words, “He hath said which heard the word of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling, but having his eyes open” —not hearing only, but seeing. And he saw Israel, not merely as they then were, though beyond doubt there was order and beauty, and their tents never before more goodly than at that moment; for they were enjoying anticipatively the result of the work of Christ which had been fully presented to them. But his eyes were open to the future, and he saw, in the vision of the Almighty, a far greater beauty and a more perfect order. The vision was transient, but complete. The repose of the quiet valley, the beauty of gardens by the river side, where the fragrant lign aloes sheds its perfume, or where the magnificent cedar spreads its cool shade. Nor is there need to interpret these as only metaphors for spiritual warfare. No doubt there will be blessings higher than fullness of all earthly prosperity, to which the national well-being will be a fit accompaniment; the temporal and earthly, the complement to the spiritual, when God in that day will pour out of His Spirit upon them. In both, the merely earthly, or the higher, it will be said, “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel.”

Two trees are used as emblems of Israel; the lign aloes in appearance little more than a shrub, and the cedar whose greatness is unsurpassed. But the lign aloes if lowly is fragrant; and it is said of them, “which Jehovah hath planted.” The perfume shed by these trees is emblematical of the praise that will ascend to God in that day. When Jehovah said of an offering that He would smell a sweet savor, it was a token the offering was accepted. Jehovah has planted the lign aloes, and, as it were, makes provision for His praise in the millennial day. This reference to His planting is special and significant.

If the lign aloes, lowly and fragrant, is the emblem of Israel, in whom God will delight and smell a sweet savor from all their offerings, the cedar proclaims their superiority in the world. In scripture its typical use is always to denote power or exaltation, if not pride. When the king of Israel would pour contempt upon the king of Judah, he compared himself to a cedar and Judah's king to a thistle (2 Kings 14:9). The Psalmist employs it to express the prosperity of the righteous, “He shall grow as the cedar in Lebanon” (Psa. 92:12). When judgment comes upon the great of the earth, the prophet Isaiah says it is the day of Jehovah upon the cedars of Lebanon (Isa. 2:13). These mark the cedar as the symbol of dignity and power. There have been powers and empires in the world, which, as trees, have given shelter to the birds, and their branches covered the beasts of the field; but the trees died. Not so when Israel shall be first among the nations: their glory shall not fade, nor their leaf wither; they are as cedars beside the waters.

Material prosperity and spiritual blessing await Israel. They will also be the means of blessing to others; and with no niggardly hand, for “he shall pour water out of his buckets,” a figure which

shows the lavish profusion of blessing. Wherever the Israelite goes, be carries blessings; and his seed is by many waters, his king shall be higher than Agag, his kingdom exalted. All the earth will be blessed; but Israel, the fairest portion of the coming kingdom, shall flourish as the garden of Jehovah.

In the midst of this coming glory, the people are reminded of their origin. “God brought them forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn.” This is repeated from the second prophecy (23:22), where it is connected with God not beholding iniquity, and Israel protected from enchantment—there also with power against their enemies; but here in this third prophecy, not only victory over the enemy as in battle but the utter subjugation of the “nations his enemies.” God would not have them forget that He brought them out of Egypt. Whatever height they attain of glory and power, they were once a nation of slaves. God is the source of all good, clothing with beauty and endowing with power.

The 9th verse resumes the picture from the 7th verse, but gives another idea, even that of conscious power, but in repose. “He couched, he lay down as a lion and as a great lion: who shall stir him up?” The metaphor is grand; who dares disturb the repose of a lion? It is taking rest after victory.

How bright the portion of Israel in that day! Beautiful gardens in peaceful valleys; fragrant trees which Jehovah has planted, magnificence and stability as cedars by the waters, the power of a lion that overcomes any rebellions spirit among the nations. Nor is this all. The people that God made as a sharp threshing instrument, with which He judged the nations, shall be in the millennial day the channel and dispenser of blessing to all nations. “He shall pour water out of his buckets.” The prophecy says, “he shall eat up the nations;” but afterward God blesses the nations and the whole earth through them. Is not this a happy solution of Samson's riddle, “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness?” This magnificent prophecy closes with the words which in all the history of Israel shaped and modified God's dealings and judgments upon the nations around them: “Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.” Even when God used this or that nation as His rod to chasten Israel, they were afterward judged according to the spirit in which they treated Israel (see Isa. 47:6; Zech. 1:15). When Israel is grafted in again, it will be life from the dead (Rom. 11:12-15).

The fourth prophecy is of Christ as God's King in Zion (Psalm the putting forth of His power when seated upon the throne of David. He is the Star out of Jacob, the Scepter out of Israel. “Israel shall do valiantly” but by His power. Christ alone is before God; as He ever was and is. To exalt Him God brought the people out of Egypt, and now He smiths the corners of Moab and destroys the children of Sheth. It is a vision of the Almighty.

This prophecy is in four parts marked by the words, “took up his parable.” The judgment begins with those nations who are by descent more or less related to Israel. Edom and Moab were also close neighbors. Edom as the son of Isaac was the nearest of all; Moab could not count Abraham as an. ancestor. These two are named together, and named first, for there was a specialty in their enmity. Edom refused to let his “brother” pass through his land, Moab invoked the power of Satan. God resented the enmity of Edom: it is the special charge against them (Amos 1:11 and Obadiah). Moab knew that human power could not avail, and he sought that of Satan; virtually a denial of God. The enmity of Edom is unnatural; of Moab, Satanic. They are the first to feel the vengeance

of God.

Then he looks upon Amalek. In this “parable” Amalek appears, and we see in each “parable” that the sin judged differs in its moral features. Amalek was the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12), and nearer in descent to Israel than Moab. But his was the fatal preeminence to be the first of the nations in open antagonism to Israel after they had passed through the Red sea. And. his judgment is given separate from all others. His kingdom may have been the most powerful on the Canaan side of the Red sea; for it is said of Israel “his kingdom shall be higher than Agag's.” But the words “first of the nations” refer, I apprehend, specially to the fact that Amalek was the first nation that fought against the redeemed people.

He looks on the Kenites and again takes up his parable. They will be wasted. They appear to be a branch of the Midianites, and therefore descendants of Abraham. Midian was a son of Abraham (Gen. 25:2). Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, was priest of Midian, and we read (Jude 1, 16) the children of the Kenite Moses' father-in-law: what is recorded of the Kenites betokens amity. Not a few dwelt among the Israelites, though the greater part remained with the Midianites. And there were those who boasted of their strong dwelling places and put their nest in a rock. They thought themselves secure from Him who must reign over all, and that the gift of the land to Abraham (Gen. 15:19) could not be made good to his children. The sin of the Kenites was self-confidence, they boasted in their fastnesses. Nevertheless they should be wasted until Asshur carried them away captive.

Again he takes up his parable and with a cry of dismay, “Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?” The vision reaches on to the last days, and there is seen that the nations, who at one time were a rod in God's hand for others, are themselves the objects of God's judgment, so that there is escape for not one. And this being so, he might well cry out, “Who shall live when God doeth this?” Asshur might be used to carry the Kenite away captive; but their turn would come. Ships would come from Chittim and afflict Asshur. Asshur, or Assyria, was the power that carried Israel captive, and the, turn of Asshur to feel God's judgment comes. The ships of Chittim afflict Eber as well as Asshur. It is the Western powers that become the instrument of God's wrath against Eber, that is, Israel, or the Jew; but not as Israel, they are “Lo-ammi” and are no more than the children of Eber, Hebrews. They are not acknowledged, their title and name of power is for the time lost. But when the Star out of Jacob comes, and the Scepter from Israel, this name of power shall be given them again, and “Lo-ammi” reversed forever. Then of the ships of Chittim, of the great leader of the West, it is said, “And he also shall perish forever.”

Is not this a wonderful sketch of the history of the no less wonderful people? Who would have foretold of those groaning under the grinding burdens of Pharaoh that they would be the highest and most blessed nation in the world, that every other nation would be proud to do them homage? “In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you” (Zech. 8:28). There is the secret of their power and supremacy: God is with them; their own King, the Son of David, is King over the whole earth, but His portion is His people; Zion is the choice place of all His earthly domain.

Remark that, of the objects of judgment in this prophecy, only two have their evil recorded. Other prophecies declare the sin of Edom and of Moab; here, of Amalek and the Kenites: Amalek,

foremost in his hatred of God; the Kenites, strong in self-confidence putting their trust in nature—in man. These are common traits of the natural man; and when the Lord Jesus' appears to take the kingdom, these two characteristics will be most prominent. After the church is gone, hatred against the godly remnant will be more intense than ever before. Satan in his rage will lead on man and urge him to shed the blood of saints in that day, which will be pre-eminently the day of martyrs. Joined with this will be the extreme of confidence in man, in his boasted progress; like the Kenites of old, they will put their trust in the rocks. In their delusion—that awful judgment of God—they will wonder after the Beast (Rev. 17:8.) and exalt him, saying, “Who is able to make war with him”? (Rev. 13:4) and this joined with the scoffing spirit against the true king, haying, “Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Peter until at the close their hearts will fail them for fear. The latter day will be marked by sevenfold hatred against the godly remnant, and by the extreme of pride in all things human as opposed to the things of God.

But there are sweeter thoughts—though not more true—we may gather up. In some of these prophecies we can read our portion in a more blessed way, and we can rejoice in all. God's people are separated from the nations by ordinances, our separation is after the pattern of our Lord, “they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world:” a more complete separation, and with higher associations. If God would not behold iniquity in them, for us it is not a mere negative declaration—marvelous as this is—but He adds the positive side that we are “justified freely by His race through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). And if the habitations of Israel are goodly, how much more to be in Christ. How much greater the beauty to be clothed with the best robe, and the honor to be chief guests at the Father's table. This is the portion of the church. There is no beauty like hers. But we can also rejoice in that which is the special portion of Israel; for He who leads them to victory, the Star out of Jacob, the scepter out of Israel, who when He reigns over the world, will be God's king in Zion, is the One who has obtained victory for us and who gives us to participate in His glory, and has prepared a place for us in the mansions of the Father's house above. It is our joy, to know that every tongue shall confess Him, and every knee shall bow to Him. “And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are on the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. And the four beasts said Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped [Him that liveth forever and ever].”

Chapter 197

Wilderness Lessons: 16. The Flesh

The last properly called wilderness lesson is another instance of the incurable evil of the “flesh.” Israel falls through the seductive wiles of the devil, from whose open enmity God had so graciously and wonderfully protected them. His care for them as seen in His direct and (if we may so say) His personal intervention, to frustrate the purpose of Satan in the matter of Balaam, was no solitary instance of His watchfulness. All through the wilderness they were the objects of the same care not strikingly displayed after such a manner, but as real, as necessary, and as mighty. When Satan acts and stirs up the power of the world against the people of God, then God is there to turn aside the power of the world, and control the power of Satan as will best suit His own glory; but there is no responsibility attaching to the believer. On the other hand, if Satan's attempts against us are made through the flesh (his most successful way), the responsibility and the danger of the Christian are great. There is only one thing greater, and that is the grace that restores when the wiles of the devil have led to the believer's fall. How often during the forty years did the outbursts of “flesh” bring upon Israel the anger of Jehovah; and ever followed by grace which rose above their sin and triumphed over judgment! These blessed interpositions of grace are recorded for our admonition and profit. For us “this world is a wilderness wide” and here are divine lessons, in the shape of warning and deliverance. Have we taken them to heart? Have we seen in them, as in a mirror, a true picture of our own nature? And judging it in this light of the word do we say with. Job, “I abhor myself?” If we have not come to that, there is at least one important lesson not yet learned.

Here, on the border of the land, when there is but one step more, sin breaks out under circumstances which, make it worse than any before. Truly the generation about to enter the land give fall proof that they are the children of their fathers. The patience, the mercy, and the favor of God had constantly followed them; victory was given them over every opposing foe, the promised rest in view: in presence of all this they join themselves to Baal-peor. It is these favors that make their sin with Moab worse than all previous murmurings and rebellions. For every added mercy increases the guilt of every subsequent sin. All departure from the ways of righteousness is measured by the truth revealed. Light is the measure of darkness.

Balaam is again the instrument of Satan. He could not curse, but he can seduce. Here is the cunning of the old Serpent. Before he was as the roaring lion seeking to devour Israel, now he is the wily serpent. When he roars as a lion, the believer naturally turns to God as a refuge and a strong tower; when the cunning Serpent hides his venom, the unwatchful believer is sure to be ensnared. The “flesh” is in affinity with the world and Satan; it may be corrupt or religions flesh, appearances may differ; but it is the same nature, and if not watched and judged, the saint is taken as a bird in the snare of the fowler.

Unable to curse, Satan attacks the people through the lusts of the flesh; as if he would say to God “See what sort of people Thou art blessing.” God knew them well; but His purpose was to bless; not because they were worthy, but the worth of Christ had been (typically) declared, and this not

so much for Israel's intelligence as for God's delight in the Redeemer of Israel. For Christ's sake the blessing stood fast. Judgment necessarily followed upon their sin, but God's word of grace once spoken could not be reversed.

While learning the incurable evil of our own nature, we see also the unchangableness of the word of God's grace. Are there any two things more needed for the believer to learn? What is more prevalent among professors than the teaching and consequent endeavor to improve the “flesh”? or, that a believer may “fall from grace” (as it is not uncommonly expressed) and thus lose life, eternal life? These errors are twin sisters; and where one is, the other is not far distant. Are they not complementary?

How evident the hand of Satan! Why should Balak seek intercourse with Israel whom we saw he hated and feared? Was it a human way of overcoming and causing their destruction? Nay, it was the wisdom of the serpent. Balaam, the emissary of the devil, instructed Moab in the art of seducing the people who were known as Jehovah's people; and he found in Israel fit material to work upon. For they were familiar with idolatry. Delivered from the land of the grossest idolatry, they carried the love of it in their hearts, and thus went back into Egypt (Num. 14:3; Acts 7:39). Now they join themselves to Baal-peor and sink lower in their idolatrous orgies than when they worshipped the golden calf at Horeb. The ignorant Moabites knew not the power behind the scenes—knew not the aim of Satan to ruin Israel? Did not Balaam know? This wretched man had gone back to his enchantments, and, after his experience of the controlling hand of God, had a more fatal knowledge of Satan's power and aim, and, in confirmed enmity against God and His people, surrendered himself a willing captive to the great enemy. He counseled Balak, and Israel fell before the seductive power of their enemy.

The daughters of Moab (Num. 25:1) drew the people to sacrifices of the idols of Moab, and so “Israel was joined to Baal-peor.” In the 17th verse Jehovah said unto Moses, “Vex the Midianites, and smite them; for they vex you with their wiles wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake.” The Midianites seem to have been more prominent in the sin of Israel as this chapter shows. Balaam no doubt was a Midianite, and there was intimate connection between the Moabites and the Midianites. At the first Balak consulted the elders of Midian, and the elders of both Moth and Midian went together to seek the aid of Balaam and his sorceries. Midian may have been the larger section, as in this matter the more prominent. But Balak was king of both. Be this as it may, the judgment of Jehovah is here upon the Midianites. Moses says (ch. 31: 15) after the slaughter of Midian, “Have ye saved all the women alive? behold these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against Jehovah in the matter of Peor.” But the daughters of Moab were also in the sin (25: 1). Again, we hear the command, “Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites.” Why not of the Moabites? Then the destruction of Moab would, as that of Midian, have been complete. But God had said that Israel should not molest Moab (Deut. 2: 9); and therefore judgment here does not fall upon Moab proper, but does fall unsparingly upon Midian. Is not this an instance of the discriminating judgment of God, Who will have mercy upon whom He will? And since Balaam, the Midianite, counseled the Moabite king, was not the judgment upon them most just?

But let us mark well that before Jehovah said, “Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites,” He had avenged Himself of the children of Israel. By His command Moses said to the judges, “Slay ye every one his men that were joined to Baal-peor.” And this was righteously done, and Moses afterward referred to this as a warning to Israel. “Your eyes have seen what Jehovah did because of Baal-peor; for all the men that followed Baal-peor, Jehovah thy God hath destroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave unto Jehovah your God are alive every one of you this day” (Deut. 4:3, 4). It is said in the New Testament that judgment must begin at the house of God (see 1 Peter 4:17). And so God began with Israel. To begin at home is the true and right way. It is a divine principle, and as it marks God's way here, so does it mark His true servant, whether for closer communion with Him, for greater zeal in active service, or, as in Israel's case, for vengeance upon God's enemies. So Jacob would have his tent cleansed from idols, before he went to Bethel (Gen. 35). See another instance in king Josiah, who by his personal piety stayed the judgment of God upon Jerusalem for a brief period; he was four years seeking after the God of his father David before he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem (2 Chron. 34:3). This same holy principle of beginning with self before attempting to correct others is seen in the Lord's word to take the beam out of our own eye before seeking for the mote in the eye of the other (Matt. 7:3; see also Rom. 2:1, 21). So here, first Israel and then the Midianites. Thus the power of God is with them, and taking vengeance upon the enemy was in fact pronouncing judgment upon themselves, the condemnation of their own sin, but also in conscious restoration.

Often had Israel put the patience of Moses to the test; and none so meek as he. Once he failed, which hindered his passing through the Jordan—a perpetual grief to him. How great his indignation in this matter of Baal-peor Jehovah puts honor upon him and commands him to vindicate His name in Israel, and then upon the Midianites: “afterward shalt thou be gathered to thy people.” Jehovah, Whose great servant he was, gave him the joy of purging the worshippers of the one God, assailed by the gods of Moab, by judgment upon the guilty. Was not this sweeter to him than even entering the good land? It was surely more to the glory of Jehovah. This was his last great act. What a privilege, what grace to one who had not on a former occasion sanctified God before Israel! Many a time he had stood almost alone against the whole congregation for Jehovah's honor, but no former occasion like this, for Jehovah is avenged upon Israel in the presence of the enemy. Such a judgment could not be hidden from them; they were witnesses of God's jealousy for His name; and it was a testimony against them and their idolatry. Moses passes away from the earthly scene, gathered to his people, as vindicator of Jehovah against the unfaithful people and over the foes.

Balaam was slain fighting against God. He had at one time a good desire—as men say. “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;” but there it ended. Further light, even seeing the vision of the Almighty, produced no change in him, save to confirm him in sin—the sure result where truth is resisted. Nor is he unconscious of his condition and doom. “I shall see Him but not nigh.” It is the history of many a lost soul. Resistance to the truth, not ignorance of it, is the sin that characterizes the present day. To go in the way of error for the sake of reward is always accompanied with resistance of the truth, and Christendom bears this stamp of Balaam (Jude 11). Alas! the day of “many stripes” is near.

I now close these papers with one more remark. Of all the lessons unfolded to us by the Holy Spirit in this eventful journey, this last is most important and practical. We learn not only how prone to

evil is nature, but the believer has before him. God's way of dealing with it. Has it broken out? Then first submit to the discipline of the Father. Avenge God upon yourselves. The zeal of the faithful Israelite in the day of Baal-peor has its counterpart in the godly sorrow of the Corinthians, “For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea what zeal, yea what revenge. In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter? (2 Cor. 7:11). When God is vindicated in our own souls, then are we able to appear as His witnesses against evil in the world. The weapons of Israel's warfare were carnal, they contended with flesh and blood; our foes are spiritual foes, and how contend with such? how are we to avenge God upon these spiritual Midianites? Our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. Watch and pray, judging the thoughts of the heart, and watching for His appearing. These and the word are our weapons. We avenge God upon the evil that surrounds by judging it, living separate from it, and showing how by faith we overcome the world.

Beloved brethren, let us beware of the daughters of Moab. We shall only be beyond the reach of flesh and the world's allurements when with the Lord.

R. B.

Chapter 198

Will the Church Escape the Great Tribulation? (Review)

As this pamphlet has been sent for a notice, it is almost enough to say that it is Newtonian prophetically, with the ignorance of the distinctively intimate as well as heavenly relationship of the church to Christ, which characterizes that school. The author must be strangely unacquainted with “Dissenters,” if he believes that what he calls “the secret rapture view” originated among people most of all indifferent to the church and its hopes, as well as to prophecy; perhaps he only means persons who left the English Establishment, or, who, at any rate, were outside it.

He is also surprised that truth so important should only of late have been learned from scripture. How could Mr. Shackleton expect such a thing in the early fathers, if he is really acquainted with their writings? Which of them escaped the Galatian leaven? Now it is remarkable that this Epistle, which aims at clearing the churches of that country from a misuse of the law—the bane of the patristic writings generally, is precisely that in which the apostle never speaks openly of the Lord's second coming. What was the use to those who had lost the virtue of His first coming? The Reformers were too absorbed in contending for justification, as well as against Popery, to search into prophecy or the church. And what real advance has been made since? I fear there has been in general a departure from much that was then recovered. Our appeal must therefore be to scripture only. The fathers invented the miserable system of expunging Israel and Judah from O. T. prophecy: for them, all was “the church “; and so with most Anglicans, and almost all “Dissenters,” to this day. Their lucubrations therefore about the antichrist and the great tribulation are worthless. The Protestant scheme went farther astray in denying the individuality of the antichrist, as well as his literal place in the temple at Jerusalem in the consummation of the age, and converting the days into nothing but years. But both alike Judaized the church by blotting out Israel's true hopes, through misappropriating Jewish scriptures; and Mr. S. is not clear of this error, through which he is bitter against those who would distinguish what is Christian from Jewish.

In vain you adduce some absurd individual, who counted 2 Timothy Jewish, and only Ephesians and Colossians applicable to the church. After knowing the Christians to whom he seems to refer widely and well for more than forty years, I can affirm that no such folly has ever existed among them to my knowledge, with out denying the fact of Mr. S.'s unhappy experience. The only writer I overheard of that applied all the Revelation to Jews was an English clergyman. Mr. S., one presumes, allows that Israel and the Jews as such have a large place in the book. Does he hold that God carries on the church on earth at the same time that he works savingly in that nation as a distinct object? Surely this were confusion and error. That God should save Gentiles as such, simultaneously with His renewed dealings with the chosen people, is exactly what the Rev. attests; whilst all this time the church is never spoken of as on earth, but its symbol is seen in heaven. Here all is harmony, yet so little does Mr. S. understand the matter, that he cites Mosheim and Milner against Origen's allegorizing; whereas he ought to know that, whatever their differences in detail, all three (with the mass of medievals as well as moderns) agree in the blinding error of putting the church, instead of Christ, as the object of the divine counsels in scripture. Take Christ as the true center of all, and room is left for the Jews, and the Menthes, as well as for the church of

God, each in its own time and true relation to Him. Then Zion is Zion, and the church is itself. None more opposed to the vicious spiritualizing of Mosheim Milner, Origen, and the theologians generally, than those he combats.

If Mr. S. desires to read an anticipative answer to almost all his arguments in his pp. 15-83, he can find them in the B. T. i. (second edition) 203, 218, 231, 232, 243, 249, 259. Let me, if I may, recommend to him, however, and others also, the only satisfactory course: instead of arguing, to read, with prayer and care, scriptures which treat of the future tribulation, with this question throughout before God—Of whom in each passage does the Holy Spirit clearly speak? After all, the texts, as has been shown in this journal already, are neither many nor obscure—Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24 (and Mark 13:19); Rev. 3:10, and vii. Now, beyond controversy, the first four treat only of the Jews, and the sixth expressly of the Gentiles; whilst the fifth, which alone certainly speaks of the church, gives the promise of being kept, not in or during, but “from the hour of temptation,” which no doubt includes the last tribulation.

Let Mr. S. shake off his new bias and face these scriptures with simplicity. He will not then misapply John 17:15, to deny the plain force of Rev. 3:10; nor will he confound the sheep and the goats with the brethren of the King, still less with the glorified saints; and he will get to understand the translation of 2 Thess. 2:2 exhibited by the Revisers and all scholars, instead of giving it up as “almost unintelligible.” The apostle beseeches the saints for the sake of (■π■ρ) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him (Whom they were waiting for, as the bright object of hope), to the end that they should not be quickly shaken, nor yet troubled, by any kind of influence, as that the day of the Lord had set in (or is already come). This, and this only, is the true meaning; which Mr. S.'s mistaken theory prevents him from even apprehending. It is the effect of error to exclude the truth. Where God's word is thus made null and void, it ought to raise in a grave spirit the fear of being under some withering tradition of man.

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